

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING**

**URBANA PLAN COMMISSION**

**APPROVED**

**DATE:** August 20, 2009

**TIME:** 7:30 P.M.

**PLACE:** Urbana City Building – City Council Chambers  
400 South Vine Street  
Urbana, IL 61801

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jane Burris, Andrew Fell, Ben Grosser, Lew Hopkins, Dannie Otto, Michael Pollock, Bernadine Stake, Marilyn Upah-Bant

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Tyler Fitch

**STAFF PRESENT:** Lisa Karcher, Planner II; Jeff Engstrom, Planner I; Teri Andel, Planning Secretary

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Susan Taylor

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**1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM**

Chair Pollock called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m., the roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

**2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

There were none.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Stake moved to approve the minutes of the August 6, 2009 regular meeting as presented. Mr. Grosser seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as presented by unanimous voice vote.

**4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

There were none.

## 5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

### **Plan Case No. 2110-T-09: Request by the Zoning Administrator to amend Section IX-4.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance regarding sign illumination.**

This case was continued to the September 10, 2009 Plan Commission meeting.

## 6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

## 7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

### **Plan Case No. 2113-T-09: Request by the Zoning Administrator to amend Table VIII-3 and Section VIII-4 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance to allow access drives serving a single townhouse unit to be up to 18 feet wide or 45% of the lot width, whichever is greater.**

Jeff Engstrom, Planner I, presented this case to the Plan Commission. He read the definition of *rowhouse/townhouse* from the Zoning Ordinance. He pointed out that the regulations for access drives are found in Table VIII-3. Widths for Access Drives and in Section VIII-4.F of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance. He explained the reason for the proposed text amendment is to improve these two areas to clarify and work better for townhouse units. He discussed the proposed changes in detail. He talked about how the goals and objectives of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan relate to the proposed changes. He read the options of the Plan Commission and presented staff's recommendation, which is as follows:

*Based on the evidence presented in the written staff report, and without the benefit of considering additional evidence that may be presented during the public hearing, staff recommends that the Urbana Plan Commission recommend approval of the proposed text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to the Urbana City Council.*

Chair Pollock commented that people will be building more and more townhomes. Are they actually building townhomes on 20-foot and/or 30-foot wide lots? Mr. Engstrom answered that it is still allowed in the Zoning Ordinance, but practically, most of the new townhomes are being built on lots that are 30 feet or wider.

Mr. Fell pointed out that many zero-lot-line duplexes are built on lots that are 30 to 40 feet wide. According to the current language, they would not be allowed to have driveways that are 18 feet wide. Wouldn't it be illegal? Wouldn't they be considered a townhome if there are only two units? Mr. Engstrom stated that from the way it is currently written, City staff would consider it a single-family duplex. Each unit could have a primary drive up to 35 feet wide. Mr. Fell believed that this should be amended if not now, then at a later time. It seems to him that they should be allowed to have an 18-foot drive also. Mr. Engstrom replied that they can have an 18-foot drive under the current language. Mr. Fell stated that the proposed amendment would only allow 45% of the lot width, which is not 18 feet.

Lisa Karcher, Planner II, pointed out that Section VIII-4.F indicates that for single-family dwellings, the maximum driveway width is 45% of the lot width. It is basically saying that a duplex or single-family unit would have to be built on a lot at least 40-feet wide in order to get an 18-foot driveway. Mr. Fell responded that many of the duplexes in Stone Creek are on lots that are only 35-feet wide.

Mr. Engstrom commented that this is something that they should address. Ms. Karcher mentioned that they can discuss it at staff level. City staff had discussed this issue when they were reviewing the proposed changes prior to the Plan Commission review. It is staff's opinion that duplexes and single-family units are single-family in nature and they want to preserve this type of neighborhood development. It was a decision at the staff level to keep it this way so that a developer/builder would have to have larger lots or less drive widths for this type of development. Mr. Fell stated that he is not sure that he disagrees with this concept. The fact he is pointing out is that there are buildings that are nonconforming.

Mr. Otto referred to Table VIII-3 where it refers to Common-lot-line rowhouses or townhouses with individual drives. He wondered why under maximum width, it states "*no less than 18 feet*". Shouldn't it read "*no more than 18 feet*"? Mr. Hopkins understands this to mean that the driveway can be as wide as 45% of the lot width, but if the lot is too narrow that 45% of the lot width is less than 18 feet, then instead of the maximum being 45% of the lot width, the maximum becomes 18 feet. So, the maximum can never fall below 18 feet. He commented that while the wording is confusing, it is correct. Mr. Engstrom replied that City staff tried different wording, and he recommended changing it to "*the greater of*".

Chair Pollock opened the hearing up for public input and testimony. With no public participation, he closed the hearing for public input and opened it up for Plan Commission discussion and/or motion(s).

Mr. Hopkins suggested that City staff work on some of the issues presented tonight. He is concerned about the following:

1. Wording needs to be cleaned up.
2. We need to account for whether the proposed amendment applies to all zoning categories. If it does not, then to which categories does it apply?
3. There is currently no absolute maximum width for common-lot-line houses. This implies that someone with a 60-foot wide duplex lot would be allowed to build a parking lot in their front yard. We do not want anyone to be able to do this, so we need an absolute maximum for common-lot-line houses.

Ms. Stake commented that we need to do something about new units being built in non-conformity. Mr. Hopkins stated that these units are not non-conforming, but rather non-compliant.

Mr. Otto mentioned that the trend has been for people to have two-car garages. It is easy to understand why people want to have a driveway the width of the garage door. He wondered if

they could write the language to say that a driveway could not be wider than the width of the garage door. Mr. Engstrom said that the City of Champaign does something similar to this. We still need to have an absolute maximum width allowed.

Mr. Otto recommended making the absolute maximum width correspond to the actual need to get in and out of the drive, so people do not pave more of the front lawn than is necessary. Mr. Engstrom replied that City staff discussed this. The reason staff wanted to allow two-car driveways is to make it so that cars can park on the driveways and off the street.

With no further questions or comments from the Plan Commission, Chair Pollock continued Plan Case No. 2113-T-09 to the next scheduled meeting

## **8. NEW BUSINESS**

There was none.

## **9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

There was none.

## **10. STAFF REPORT**

Lisa Karcher gave a staff report on the following:

- ✚ Hazard Mitigation Plan was approved by the City Council on Monday, August 17, 2009.
- ✚ Next Plan Commission Meeting is scheduled for September 10, 2009. The cases to be reviewed include the Sign Illumination Text Amendment, the Driveway Width Text Amendment, and a special use permit request submitted by the Urbana-Champaign Sanitary District for an expansion to their facility on University Avenue.

## **11. STUDY SESSION**

There was none.

## **12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Robert Myers, AICP  
Secretary, Urbana Plan Commission