

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: February 10, 2011

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jane Burris, Tyler Fitch, Lew Hopkins, Bernadine Stake, Marilyn Upah-Bant

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Andrew Fell, Ben Grosser, Dannie Otto, Michael Pollock

STAFF PRESENT: Robert Myers, Planning Manager; Jeff Engstrom, Planner II; Teri Andel, Planning Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT: Corey Addison, Rodolfo Barcenas, Eric Van Buskirk, Latonya Hazelwood, Latonya Jones, Jean McManis, Jourdan Nash, Katie Romack, Gabriel Wright

At the beginning of the meeting, the Plan Commission nominated and voted unanimously for Tyler Fitch to serve as Acting Chairperson in the absence of Michael Pollock.

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

Acting Chair Fitch called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m., the roll was called, and a quorum was declared present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the September 9, 2010 Plan Commission meeting were presented for approval. Ms. Stake moved that the Plan Commission approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Upah-Bant seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote as presented.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

- Urbana Zoning Ordinance – 2010 Republication
- Planning Commissioners Journal – Fall 2010
- Planning Commissioners Journal – Winter 2011
- University of Illinois Alternate Proposed Location for Wind Turbine

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

Plan Case No. 2136-T-11: Omnibus Text Amendment to the Urbana Zoning Ordinance.

Jeff Engstrom, Planner II, presented this case to the Plan Commission. He gave a brief explanation of the changes. He then reviewed the more substantial changes being proposed, which are as follows:

1. Article II. Definitions – Add definition for “*Footprint*”.
2. Article II. Definitions – Amend Definition for “*Parking Lot, Accessory Use*”.
3. Article V. Use Regulations – Amend V-2, Principal and Accessory Uses, paragraph D.7.a to allow for a larger area for accessory structures for duplex dwellings.
4. Article V. Use Regulations – Amend V-13, Regulation of Home Occupations, paragraph A to allow home occupations to have a one-square foot in area nameplate.
5. Table V-1. Table of Uses
 - A. Modify certain uses and/or permissions
 - B. Add the footnote, “*See Table VII-1 for Conditional Use Standards*” to certain uses.
6. Article IX. Sign and OASS Regulations – Amend Section IX-4, General Sign Allowances, paragraph B to allow institutions with a street frontage longer than 300 feet to have one 50 square foot sign per frontage.
7. Article X. Nonconformities – Add Section X-1, Continuation of Nonconformities.
8. Article XIII. Special Development Provisions – Amend Section XIII-1, Telecommunications Facilities, Towers and Antennas, paragraph D.2 to allow WI-FI antennas on residential homes.
9. Article XIII. Special Development Provisions – Amend Section XIII-3, Planned Unit Developments, paragraph H.3 to all the City Council to extend the approval period of a preliminary planned unit development.

Mr. Engstrom read the options of the Plan Commission and presented staff’s recommendation.

Ms. Stake wondered if a Planned Unit Development would be approved for an unlimited number of years. Mr. Engstrom explained that staff would make a recommendation for about two years or five years. Then, City Council would make a final decision on it. Robert Myers, Planning Manager, added that a Planned Unit Development case would come before the Plan Commission prior to going to City Council, so the Plan Commission could weigh in on the recommendation for the time period as well as the rest of the approval.

Ms. Stake read an excerpt from an article “Billboards: The Case for Control” which was published in the Planning Commissioners Journal Winter 2011. She is concerned that Article IX, Section IX-4, paragraph B could allow billboard-type institutional signs near residences. She suggested only allowing larger institutional signs along arterial streets. Mr. Engstrom stated that City staff could change into the proposed text amendment prior to presenting it to the City Council.

Ms. Stake asked what the “P” and “C” stands for in Table V-1. Mr. Engstrom replied that “P” means permitted by right, and “C” means that the use is permitted with the approval of a conditional use permit.

Ms. Stake felt the proposed changes were acceptable except for allowing storage permitted by right in the CRE, Conservation/Recreation/Education Zoning District. Mr. Engstrom replied that all of the Urbana Park District properties are zoned CRE, and their equipment is stored in a public storage or maintenance garage. Ms. Stake believes that this change would enable other people to rezone their properties to CRE so they could build a storage building by right. Mr. Myers recalled that there have been two cases in the last five years requesting permission to construct maintenance facilities for vehicles in CRE Zoning Districts, including the Urbana Park District and Champaign County. Ms. Stake commented that the CRE Zoning District is for conservation, recreation and education. The City already has trouble providing enough open space. She does not feel that allowing storage by right would be appropriate. Mr. Engstrom noted that the use is a public maintenance garage, so it would be for a public entity and not for other uses.

Mr. Hopkins questioned if in the definition for “footprint”, does “uncovered” refer to porches only? Mr. Engstrom answered by saying that it refers to porches, terraces and steps. Mr. Hopkins asked if in Article V, Section V-2, paragraph D.7 refers to 1,500 square feet for the footprint or the lot size. Mr. Engstrom replied that it refers to the footprint. Mr. Hopkins wondered why the accessory footprint is contingent upon the principal footprint. Mr. Myers said it is to ensure that it remains an accessory use and that the accessory use does not overwhelm the primary use. Mr. Hopkins asked if there was language in the Zoning Ordinance limiting the aggregate area of all accessory structures if the footprint exceeds 1,500 square feet. Mr. Engstrom stated that the next paragraph addresses this.

Mr. Hopkins stated that in Article V, Section V-13, paragraph A, it’s unclear why we are deleting “on the premises identifying the home occupation.” The nameplate which we are talking about is restricted to that. He does not feel that they want to say that there are no signs permitted other than a nameplate when we are trying to permit something in addition rather than restrict something. The way to address this issue is to keep the crossed out language. Mr. Engstrom agreed.

In Table V-1, Mr. Hopkins feels that Farm Equipment Sales might have conditions other than AG zoning, such as proper roads for commercial traffic. It's not obvious to him that Farm Equipment Sales & Service should be allowed by right in the AG, Agriculture Zoning District.

Mr. Hopkins mentioned that he did not understand the proposed changes to Table IX-1. Mr. Engstrom stated that in the B-4, Central Business District, buildings have no front yard setback requirements. So for buildings set back less than eight feet from the front property line, the current ordinance would not allow those properties to have a freestanding sign.

Mr. Hopkins did not understand the amendment to Table IX-7. Mr. Myers explained that two years ago the City lowered the maximum height of signage overall from 35 feet to 16 feet, this is one place in the Zoning Ordinance that the change was missed. So this is a housekeeping amendment to bring "for sale/for lease" sign heights in line with all other freestanding sign heights.

Mr. Fitch asked if City staff would give examples of variances that have been requested for larger institutional signs. Mr. Engstrom recalled several variances including Stone Creek Commons Church monument sign, Clark-Lindsey Village monument sign, Vineyard Church, the church located on the northwest corner of Philo and Windsor Roads, a church further north on Philo Road and St. Patrick's Church requested a variance as well.

Mr. Fitch noticed that most of the churches were located on arterial streets. Mr. Engstrom said yes, except for St. Patrick Church.

Mr. Fitch felt that there is a triple negative going on in the amended language for Article X, Section X-1, paragraph C. He suggested that it read as such, "C. Uses, buildings, or structures on a non-conforming lot shall be considered conforming if they meet the requirements."

With no further questions for the Plan Commission, Acting Chair Fitch opened the hearing for public input. There was none, so he closed the public input portion of the hearing and opened it for Plan Commission discussion.

Regarding Farm Equipment Sales & Service use being permitted by right in the AG Zoning District, Mr. Hopkins inquired if a specific case brought about the proposed changes. Mr. Engstrom said no. There is one farm equipment sales business, Arends Bros, LLC on Cottonwood Road, in an agricultural area although it's not currently in the City. This type of business needs a larger lot to have all the tractors. This type of business is most likely to be found in the AG District. Mr. Hopkins stated that if there is not a certain case that the proposed changes are about, then he is not worried about the proposed language. He did not feel it would be an issue.

Acting Chair Fitch asked if there is a definition for "*public maintenance garage*" in the Urbana Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Engstrom replied that there is not a definition, but in cases where something is not defined it is up to the Zoning Administrator's interpretation. Mr. Fitch suggested that City staff add a definition for this.

Ms. Stake commented that she did not feel that the larger institutional signs should be allowed unless they are located on arterial streets. Mr. Fitch stated that the real concern is that the signs do not disturb the residential neighborhoods.

Mr. Hopkins stated that he was not clear about whether the specifics apply to each frontage or the aggregate of frontages. Does Stone Creek Church get a big sign because they have two 300-foot frontages or because they have one 300-foot frontage or do they get two big signs because they have two 300-foot frontages? Mr. Myers explained that it is based on the feet of each frontage. He feels that adding the arterial distinction would be good because where the larger signs are useful is where there are higher speed limits and longer stopping distances for vehicles.

Mr. Hopkins suggested that the proposed language in Article IX, Section IX-4, General Sign Allowances, paragraph B, read as such, "...one wall sign per street frontage with a maximum sign size of 25 square feet per sign, except that properties with an arterial street frontage longer than 300 feet may have one 50 square foot sign per arterial 300-foot frontage. Such monument signs shall ...". Ms. Stake feels this could work most of the time; however, they may be residential homes across the street that would not like it.

Ms. Burris wondered how long a City block is in feet. Mr. Myers responded that in an older neighborhood, a block may be 320 to 350 feet. In a newer developed area, a block could be 600 feet.

Mr. Fitch wondered how many feet in length is the frontage of the Twin City Bible Church on Lincoln Avenue. Mr. Hopkins stated that it is not 300 feet long; however, he would understand if they wanted a bigger sign. On the other hand, given the new street dieting on Lincoln Avenue, traffic would not be going 45 mph like on Windsor Road.

Mr. Hopkins moved that the Plan Commission forward Plan Case No. 2136-T-11 to the Urbana City Council with a recommendation for approval subject to editorial corrections by City staff and changed language by Plan Commission to Section IX-4 to restrict larger signs to arterial streets. Ms. Burris seconded the motion. Roll call on the motion was as follows:

Mr. Fitch	-	Yes	Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes
Ms. Stake	-	Abstain	Ms. Upah-Bant	-	Yes
Ms. Burris	-	Yes			

The motion was approved by a vote of 4 ayes to one abstention. Mr. Myers pointed out that this case would be forwarded to the City Council on March 7, 2011.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Case No. CCZBA-665-AT-10: Amend the Champaign County Zoning Ordinance concerning fences for residential properties.

Jeff Engstrom, Planner II, presented this case to the Plan Commission. He explained the purpose for the proposed County text amendment and how it relates to the City of Urbana. He read the options of the Plan Commission and presented City staff's recommendation.

Ms. Upah-Bant asked if the new fence transparency requirement was more in line with the City’s requirements. Mr. Engstrom mentioned that the City recently changed the transparency requirement for fences in front yards to be at least 50% transparent for the entire fence height. The County is only proposing transparency for the fence above four feet. Fence transparency is for safety purposes such as backing a car out when there is a fence next to a sidewalk and for police to be able to see if they are chasing someone into a yard.

Ms. Upah-Bant moved that the Plan Commission forward Case No. CCZBA-665-AT-10 to the City Council with a recommendation to defeat a resolution of protest. Ms. Stake seconded the motion. Roll call was as follows:

Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes	Ms. Stake	-	Yes
Ms. Upah-Bant	-	Yes	Ms. Burris	-	Yes
Mr. Fitch	-	Yes			

The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Case No. CCZBA-666-AT-10: A request by the Champaign County Zoning Administrator to amend the Champaign County Zoning Ordinance by revising Subsection 6.1 and paragraph 9.1.11D.1 concerning Special Use Permits.

Robert Myers, Planning Manager, presented this case to the Plan Commission. He related the purpose of the proposed County text amendment, which is to allow some specific conditions for particular Special Uses, including for wind farms, to be waived by the County Board at the time of the approval of the Special Use Permit. Certain special uses have requirements which are “above and beyond” the standard conditions. For example some Special Uses require a six-foot fence be installed around the entire site. Mr. Myers sees this as not really affecting the City because under state law wind farms are not even allowed in the City’s 1.5-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction anyway.

Ms. Stake asked if City staff would want the same ability for waivers of standard conditions for wind turbines in the City of Urbana. Mr. Myers replied that the City has a different wind turbine process. Our wind ordinance is set up differently, so he would not see where it would be useful.

Ms. Upah-Bant understood that there cannot be a wind turbine constructed within a mile and a half of the City’s limits, is this correct? Mr. Myers said yes. That’s the case under both the Illinois Municipal Code and in the Illinois County Code.

Ms. Upah-Bant moved that the Plan Commission forward Case No. CCZBA-666-AT-10 to the City Council with a recommendation to defeat a resolution of protest. Ms. Stake seconded the motion. Roll call was as follows:

Ms. Stake	-	Yes	Ms. Upah-Bant	-	Yes
Ms. Burris	-	Yes	Mr. Fitch	-	Yes
Mr. Hopkins	-	Yes			

The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Gabriel Wright asked what criteria City staff used to determine which signs could be larger than the limit. Mr. Engstrom responded that the City had previous variance requests where churches needed larger signs. He researched the size of these church properties and found that most of them were on larger properties and had frontages that are 300 to 600 feet long. City staff then made a recommendation based on his discoveries.

Mr. Myers added that the current language in the Zoning Ordinance treats all churches as if they were small and located in residential zoning districts. Things have changed. Not all churches are small, and not all of them are located in residential zoning districts. So the current sign allowances do not seem adequate.

10. STAFF REPORT

Downtown Strategic Plan Update

Mr. Engstrom presented the following update:

Overview

- Update of 2002 Downtown Strategic Plan
- Part of 2010 Council Goals relating to Downtown

Process

- Steering Committee
- Background Research
- Public Input
- Graphics
- Draft Plan
- Public Review
- Adoption

Visioning Workshop

- 40 Participants
- Small Group Exercises
- Answers listed out and mapped

Image Preference Survey

- Online Survey with over 500 responses
- Visioning Questions
- Image Preference Questions

Forums – Stakeholder and Creative Input

Graphics

- Analysis Graphics
- Plan Concepts Map
- Redevelopment Site Plans
- Perspective Illustrations
- SketchUp Model Update

Plan Draft

- Background & Process

- Conditions & Trends
- Vision & Goals
- Plan Concepts & Redevelopment Sites
- Implementation & Priorities
- Appendices

Upcoming Tasks

- Draft Graphics
- Plan Concepts Open House in March
- Revise
- Plan Commission Hearing
- City Council Adoption

Ms. Stake inquired as to where the development sites are located. Mr. Engstrom replied that the development sites include the block just north of City Hall, the former Jolly Roger parking lot, the former Denny's site and School District property, and the block where Blockbuster's Video is located.

Acting Chairperson Fitch commented that he is looking forward to seeing the next step in the process.

Downtown Signage and Wayfinding Update

Mr. Myers presented the following update:

Existing Downtown Wayfinding Synopsis

Primary Recommendations

- Vehicle Sign Messages to be given on a "Need to Know" basis
- Establish a Downtown Urbana District Identity/Logo
- Create Gateways at all Entries to Downtown Urbana
- Link Downtown Urbana to U of I Campus via Springfield and Green Streets
- Encourage Vehicles Travelling Eastbound on University Avenue to take Broadway Avenue
- Incorporate Color Coding into Wayfinding System
- Incorporate Clear Direction Signs to Downtown Destinations
- Where Possible, Utilize Existing Infrastructure for Sign Locations
- Clearly Identify Parking Deck and Parking Deck Entrances
- Incorporate Parking Identity and/or Public Art on Parking Deck Stair Tower
- Surface Lot Parking Identity to Feature Long-Distance Visibility
- Clearly Differentiate Public and Permit Parking
- Establish a Pedestrian Sign System with Better Links to Primary Downtown Destinations
- Incorporate Pedestrian Directions at all Primary Downtown Destinations
- Repair/Enhance Pedestrian Crossing at Main Street

Secondary Recommendations

- Paint Railroad Underpass and Potentially add Downtown Urbana Identity
- Incorporate Green Technologies; LED/Solar Power Throughout System

Tertiary Recommendations

- Incorporate Interactive Technology into Sign System and Bus Shelters

Downtown Pedestrian Circulation Strategy

Initial Concept Recap

- History
- Arts & Eclectic
- Green Sustainable

Recommended Wayfinding Concept

- Historic/Green Image Board
- Type, Color, Patterns, Materials
- Downtown District Identity
- Family of Sign Types
 - Vine Street/Cunningham Avenue
 - Vine Street Underpass
 - University Avenue & Broadway Avenue
 - Green Street Entrance
 - Bus Shelter Directory
 - Parking Stair Tower
 - Parking Garage Entrance

Mr. Myers spoke about the process and mentioned that City Council recently amended the budget to implement the first phase, which would be for the parking garage and other parking locations downtown. The monies would come from Motor Vehicle Parking fund.

The second phase would include areas in the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts. Funding for this phase will be easier than for areas outside TIF districts.

University of Illinois Wind Turbine Project

Mr. Myers presented the following update:

- Wind Turbine Project Purpose
- Process
- Proposed Tower Sites
- Handout of Alternate Proposed Location
- Project funding

Mr. Fitch asked how tall the proposed wind turbine tower would be. Would it exceed the maximum height for a tower that the City would allow? Mr. Myers replied that it would be about 400 feet to the tip of a blade at its highest point. The City of Urbana's Zoning Ordinance would allow a wind turbine up to 400 feet.

Additional Staff Report

Mr. Myers pointed out that the three cases presented earlier during this meeting would go before City Council on February 21, 2011.

11. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Myers, AICP, Secretary
Urbana Plan Commission