



MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION THURSDAY, MAY 4, 2017 6:00 PM

**PLACE: COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7232 E. MAIN ST, REYNOLDSBURG, OH 43068**

A. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: McKenzie, Cullinan, Comeaux, Welday
ABSENT: King

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Planning Commission – Regular Meeting – April 6, 2017

RESULT:	ACCEPTED [3 TO 1]
MOVER:	Jim Comeaux
SECONDER:	Robert Welday
AYES:	Cullinan, Comeaux, Welday
NAYS:	McKenzie
ABSENT:	King

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Agenda stands approved.

4. SWEARING IN OF SPEAKERS

No speakers sworn in.

B. COMMISSION BUSINESS

1. Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Welday: With the approval of the new tax increase for the City, I think as a Commission, I think as we visualize how we want Reynoldsburg to grow or get business or entertain residents or bring people into the community with the moneys now that are coming in we can start thinking about that, and the new Center that will be going in that will draw people in. I do know that there is a need for parking, if we're going to be drawing people in, so as a Commission, maybe we should throw some ideas out, and maybe we can send some ideas Council's way.

Dr. McKenzie: Comprehensive plans really are comprehensive. There is a tremendous amount of possibilities that a city like Reynoldsburg could have going forward. Those can address such ideas as Mr. Welday has done, they can also address such things as the type of zoning that we have. We at present have what is known as quantitative zoning. Hierarchal quantitative zoning plan. But there are also other options to that and depending upon which ones you have will make a big difference about how developers will operate within your

community. So that's one thing to take a look at. There is also philosophical positions as well. No one really has been good at anticipating what the future may bring you may not have gotten that but I did send a email with an attachment that would have been a preview of a panel discussion that occurred about a year ago, end of January. Although Mr. Havener attended that he doesn't really remember that. The one sheet preview that I sent out and I cannot get a video, they did not video tape it, the one person's preview was quite out there and many of the ideas for what the future of the suburbs may be are kind of out there. This person for example was touting the idea that the future of suburbs were to be solar collection sites to power cities for an economic base. So we've got all this space up there with roofs and everything and we put photovoltaic solar on them and then feed the grid to power the cities that don't have that. But if this Commission would like to not pursue those, I would prefer that they would do that, knowing what they are and rejecting them, rather than not considering them at all because they don't know even what sort of radical ideas are. And those people that can find who have done Ted talks and the like on the future of suburbs have been more or less radical and we may not find that agreeable at all but I would still like to make decisions based upon being informed rather than making decisions not knowing what all of the options are. So that would be my intent is. Beyond that, since I first stated this, I have read four books about suburban planning and numerous other articles on the like and I know that many of you are as avid a reader as I am and so the question is what is the best way to get that information to you. I would have gladly have scanned sections from those books and sent those out were it not for copy write infringement problems. But that's a question, whether we want to have as you pointed out, what is it, a 30% increase annual income with the tax levy starting July 1 whether we could free up enough money to free up enough money to purchase a copy or two of these things. I do know the one I'm looking forward to isn't going to be published and talked over this year which is called Infinite Suburbia and it is the product of a series of seminars at MIT last year. That is going to be the most current, up to date view of what suburbs what could become from an academic perspective. Those are some things I had in mind. How many people are familiar with Seaside Florida? They are considered to be the example or archetype of form based zoning codes instead of hierarchal. But they are out there. There are innovations in traffic control. I mean even the roads, by Charter is within the purview of the Planning Commission and the words of the Charter are to advise Council although we've been using the word recommend although the Charter uses the verb advise but when we advise Council on things like that. For example, follow a trend that has been prevalent for the past 15 years or so, that it is desirable to make communities more walkable or pedestrian friendly, there have been ways pioneered to make roads much more amendable to both pedestrian and bicycle travel. This could be applied to Main Street, although it would require a really radical change of ideas of what Main Street should be like. This is a case where MORPC is working against us because Main Street is really a MORPC design as in what they have planned in their... when do they plan for somebody to do Waggoner Road do they know?

Mr. Havener: They don't have any definitive plans...

Dr. McKenzie: A couple of years ago, Kristin was in and gave a presentation, in which she gave a year for when they were looking at Waggoner Road. It wasn't coming until 2020s or 2030s or something like that but she did announce a plan for Waggoner Road and that plan

as I viewed it that night was not particularly pedestrian friendly. So, in any case, those are also areas that we could consider that there is information out there that are people have already done this stuff there are case studies done on it, for example, in New York City, one of the things they did, and I mentioned this last time because of the changes to the sidewalks and the apexes of the entrance way on Main Street which has a sidewalk, was that they widened them and while widened road way and corridors make it better for cars, it increases the danger for pedestrians for it increases the distance you have to cross and it also increases the speed of the vehicles making the corner. If you want to know about pedestrian injuries, there is a direct relationship between speed and severity. So the faster a car is moving when it hits someone, the more severe the injuries are. But for example, this was done in New York City in which they narrowed the intersections and there was a complaint made that this would increase travel time, but New York City, because Bloomberg was Mayor at the time, and he's very analytical, very data driven, is that New York City has GPS tracking for all the cabs. And so they were able to keep track of all the changes in the time that it takes transit at all times of the day because the cabs are out there are on the street all of the time. And it wasn't much of reeducation, but what they found was that after the changes, they had a decrease in the time a given trip took. It was only seconds to minutes, but it didn't increase the length of time of travel from point A to point B it actually decreased it. So some of these things are counter intuitive. You think if I'm going to narrow the intersections, traffic is going to slow down, but the data suggests, that it is exactly the opposite of that. So I'm not, I don't want to say that these are ideas that I am promoting, its simply ideas that I know of that are counter intuitive that if you did not look at the research on them you might not even think about considering that as a possibility. As I said when I started this I'd much prefer you reject something knowing what it is than never to have considered it at all.

Mr. Snowden: Gentlemen, this is a really great discussion and I think that if any of those readings interest you, I'd consider going back to school to learn what I do. Because many of those are graduate level reviews that are used in like retrofitting the Suburbs type Graduate level seminars and that's great information. I think kind of living this every day, I think as a City right now; we're sort of at a crossroads about which direction we're going to go. Let me just take two minutes to give you just a brief history just a brief planning history of Reynoldsburg. Every community has a Planning History. But it's good to keep this in mind based on the context. The City enacted a Zoning Code originally in 1955; the technical term for our original base zoning code is Euclidian zoning. Which is a use based zoning code which divides into different use districts. That zoning code was revised in 1969 and reorganized without many significant changes, the city in 1965 did a comprehensive plan probably using federal money that was available at the time that Federal program eventually because the Community Development Block Grant Program that is administered today. The City did a Planning effort in the late 1970s, the city did a Planning effort in the mid-1980s with the assistance of MORPC and the last time a Planning guide of any type was done for the entire city was by MORPC was in 1992. Since then we have done 2 small area plans, one for the Brice Livingston, which was done by some Graduate students one done by my predecessor with a group in Olde Reynoldsburg and those plans have had some results. Going forward from here, I do agree with our chairman that the Commission should advise Council that doing a Comprehensive plan would be beneficial. I think it would also be wise instead of just throwing up a motion that we as the Commission, you as the Commission state

this is important to our City, I think that you all should enumerate the type of things that you think should be evaluated. I don't mean specific solutions, like Dr. McKenzie was just mentioning, although, I think those will come out in the process, but I mean, such a plan should include strategies for transportation, such a plan should include strategies for housing, such a plan should include strategies for economic development and explain why those things are beneficial and send that to Council. There is a possibility, a strong possibility of having more resources to do Planning and let me just state one other thing, I am more than happy to facilitate the process, but if you evaluate my title, I'd like to put emphasis on the Administrator part of my job. At the end of the day, my job is to Administer the process of the Development approval process and there is enough work just simply doing that, that any planner that is brought in is going to probably be doing, we would want to bring in a consultant as the City and Planning Commission to do that work and Planning Commission would be a big part of it. Planning Commission would review and approve any plan that was ultimately sent to City Council and advise City Council that the plan was appropriate for Council so, that sort of in a nutshell my thoughts on the subject and I just think if any document is sent to Council, the Commission should enumerate their thoughts that way Council doesn't feel like "oh, it's just Planning Commission telling us we should do this", Ok we should include transportation, because and I can assist with that or you all can do it on your own but I think we should try to emphasize and you do have some allies on City Council that are open to the idea and do believe that now is the time to make these decisions. At this point the 1992 plan is a memory so anything we're doing is truly the first real effort to bring some quantitative and qualitative analysis to our planning environment in a comprehensive way.

Mr. Havener: I would just like to add to the current conversation. I'm not sure if everyone here is aware but we have approached some professional organizations, some consultants on just initial conversations on, because we wanted to get an idea of the cost that might be involved for a master plan and we has some very generic conversations with some firms in the central Ohio area, these firms have done master planning for Grove City, Hilliard, different suburbs in Central Ohio that would be similar in size and character to Reynoldsburg and so, we have started the intial conversations as Eric elluded to, there is a member on Council that has offered to champion this issue and get the rest of Council on board with the rest of the thought process, so we're headed in the right direction and we'll get there.

Dr. McKenzie: So did you get a figure on what these firms were estimating for our 17 squire miles.

Mr. Havener: The estimation for the cost of the Master Plan was, it could range depending on the severity or complexity of the study but we were looking anywhere from \$100-200,000 in that range. We figured we were going to end up right around that \$150,000 range when it's all said and done but that was all to be determined once it's determined the complexity.

Dr. McKenzie: And I would like to point out that the more that the Planning Commission could do, the less work is going to be entailed in having the outside person complete the plan. So it would be within our ability to reduce the final cost to the City. But it is our purpose as a Planning Commission to at least steer the ideas and not simply having a plan that is determined by outsiders for us. For then it becomes very very important which firm you choose.

Mr. Havener: I agree whole heartedly. We would not want to not have the involvement of the Boards and Commissions in the Administration of the City. It would not be a process that would be dictated to the City by any stretch of the imagination. But their professionalism and experience and previous planning would definitely be a benefit to the City.

Dr. McKenzie: So, once again, looking at something that we could at least think about, the Historic Overlay which has been on our minds, or at least on my mind recently, because of that site review that we had to do. Do you know the history of that? Do the rest of the people on the Commission know the history of that? What did Council have in mind, what was the thinking when they made the Historic District Overlay? Do you know what the logic was? And this is just from somebody who was living in the community at the time, but there were a fair number of other communities that were having success with revitalizing their downtowns based upon antique sales and somebody had an idea that it would be a good thing for Reynoldsburg and so that really was the impetus, the beginning motivation to developing that historic district overlay. And it didn't really work out. And it was quite, for someone, like myself, who has depth of knowledge in a variety of areas including architecture, that one could look at the existing shopping center where the new retail place was going and it is now of an age to be considered historic and in fact there are movements in Cities around the country to preserve what is known as mid-century modern architectural design and bemoaning the destruction of that which that shopping center is clearly within that purview. Unfortunately, it is in the cheap end of mid-century modern architecture, but if you'd notice, even looking at the parking lot, from an architectural standpoint, what the applicant was proposing for their parking lot, did not fit with the historical idea of the parking lots of that time and would not because of concerns of surface run off and contamination from automobile drippings. But those are just some complications when we get in this idea of historic preservation that I don't believe from my small observations of Design Review Board, I'm not sure often times come up in the thinking of people when they speak, one cannot find that sensitivity to what it means to be historically conserving within the historic commercial overlay. So those are some of those things you might want to entertain just as a big picture type of thing so if nothing else we can give greater definition to some ideas that are consistent across cities as they would be applying to Reynoldsburg.

Mr. Cullinan: I will say I haven't been on Design Review Board for several years, my recollection is that there was great sensitivity to what's going on in the historical overlay section to the point where you end up shoehorning almost anachronisms. So for instance, if you drive out past, Graham Road, there is a little medical facility just to the east of that affiliated with Mt. Carmel. What you'll notice is, that is a wood cut sign. But we said, and I know that is a little thing, and I will say, if you go to the Design Review Board, and you listen to someone in the neighborhood who wants to change their house, and if I want to change my house out in my neighborhood, I don't have to come to Design Review Board for the most part. I just paint my house whatever color I want, but those houses.. anyhow.. with respect to the comprehensive plan, the only thing I would say is, and I know this would be part of the plan, but, Reynoldsburg needs to figure out what it does different and what it does better. Maybe the answer to that right now is nothing. If the answer to that is nothing, then it's got to change. Because if we're just Pickerington with a lower millage on our schools, you're going to get one thing, but we do have advantages. We're really close to some of the stuff that's close to Etna Township and I know we aren't related to it, but with the logistics going on in the next 10-20 years and maybe there is something they can do in open space here with that. But we don't have some of the advantages that the other suburbs have because they had investments 20-30 years ago with certain things that we didn't invest in at that point so we need to figure out what our advantages are and what we can do better because otherwise if it's just we're Whitehall without the DSCC, and all we're going to attract, and I have no problem with Dollar General Stores, there's a reason that Dollar General

Stores what to come to our town, but that's not going to get you a commercial, much less light industrial base. I apologize for digression.

Dr. McKenzie: It's not a digression, that is exactly what the Planning Commission ought to be engaged in. That is exactly what a Comprehensive Plan is supposed to do. Now Mr. Havener and I and several other people went to that Columbus 2020 thing 2 years ago? A year and a half ago? And that's exactly what they were talking about. So it's, yes, whether Reynoldsburg has done that or not.. but certainly this is something that people that Reynoldsburg would be told to do, whether there has been any progress on it in the last year and a half I can't see any evidence of it but..

Mr. Havener: All of these things have been discussed, believe me inside the offices. The only thing that has truly deterred us from these things, ever since I've been here, we've been talking about developing a master plan so we could push these ideas forward and incorporate these ideas into a plan that made sense. Otherwise, Eric and I right now, we're addressing things on an as needed basis. We don't have a plan in place and we're addressing each use as it comes to the City and saying, does this fit the code requirements and that's basically what we have to go by right now.

Dr. McKenzie: But the Code and the Zoning requirements are integral to what the City become. They can both aid the development and impede the development. So if the ideas that are coming are constantly being compared or configured within a code that, I would like to say, continues to be out of date, not particularly consistent with what the innovators of future suburbia are saying, then it's not going to get you anywhere. So that's, that integration of those are once again, part and parcel of what a comprehensive plan should entail. It should not simply be a wish list of what we want Reynoldsburg to become, it has to be tailored with zoning such that it would make that possible and it was earlier said that the text that I was referring to Master level or Graduate level text and in fact they're not, there is a movement within schools to make the focus on primary readings rather than secondary readings and the four books that I was talking about not. Not published by text book publishers although often times the people who are writing them are professionals within the field who have PhDs at colleges and stuff. These are including Infinite Suburbia, are not tailored to people who are pursuing Masters Degrees or anything these are tailored at people like us or even just people living in communities in suburbs who want change. I just have a different perspective on this. When I was teaching in College, I was one of the people who believed in not using textbooks but going for primary sources so.. they are not written at Graduate school level, I can tell you that.

Mr. Snowden: Regarding the Code, I don't disagree with you, but let me just state a little bit about my philosophy. Everything you said about the code is absolutely accurate. The plan informs the code. When you lack a plan, in a lot of ways I'm just regulating essentially nothing. I'm regulating a plan from 1965 because that's really what the code..

Mr. Snowden went on to state that he is trying to fix and make the code functional and make the Development process work. He added that if a Planning Commission/City Council wanted to bring forward a form based Code he would support it.

Dr. McKenzie said that it is possible that everything that Planning Commission recommends to Council could be rejected as the job of the Planning Commission is to advise Council. He would not feel that it would be a waste of time even if there were a consensus on something that Council would reject. He said he would not consider the Brice Road and the Olde Reynoldsburg sub-plans as applicable, but good case studies in what won't work. He feels that if the Commission becomes more

knowledgeable about the Comprehensive plan, it will inform decision making even if the future just includes zoning and site review.

Mr. Comeaux stated that he will definitely be reading up on the types of zoning and that the plan should drive any changes. He stated he doesn't feel that the City isn't getting the kind of Development is because of the Zoning because it isn't that different from other communities. He feels that the Commission should keep an open mind and fully intends to keep an open mind himself and when looking at the Seaside, Florida example, what is driving them is not the zoning but something else be it business, education, something.

Dr. McKenzie responded that he believes it is the zoning code first and foremost that drives everything in Seaside Florida as it is a planned community and that Reynoldsburg is a great example of housing developments gone wrong which has a big impact on behavior of people that live in those communities.

Mr. Comeaux responded that New Albany is also a planned community who's zoning is not that dissimilar from that of Reynoldsburg. He stated that they had something, being a wealthy man that wanted to develop in a very particular way and that communities need to take advantage of their competitive advantage.

Mr. Havener said that Reynoldsburg's strong point is logistics.

Dr. McKenzie asked for a definition of logistics.

Mr. Havener responded ease of access, transportation, means of getting product from one place to another.

Mr. Snowden asked Chairman McKenzie for time to cover item 2 on the agenda.

The Commission moved on to item 2.

RESULT: HELD

Next: 6/1/2017 6:00 PM

2. Design Review Board/Planning Commission Merger

Mr. Snowden gave a report to the Planning Commission regarding the Design Review Board it is created by Zoning Code. It typically reviews building architecture. When Reynoldsburg's Design Review Board was created, there was no major site plan review. The only review of a project for which a zoning district was not changing by a city body was Design Review Board essentially reviewing what we call major site plan. That is why Design Review Board has the power to review building architecture and parking and landscaping and all of those things that they don't have in other models. He continued that the problem is now, that there is a lot of redundancy in the reviews. He said that options for these issues are to change Design Review Board responsibilities to only cover building architecture and Planning Commission wouldn't review building architecture and meeting order would need to be reversed. So building architecture would be approved, and then site plan would be approved. The building then could go anywhere and Planning Commission would ultimately approve the entire site. Design Review Board would have other duties such as signage, residential within the historic district and so forth. Mr. Snowden went on to state

that model B which is staff preference is that Planning Commission would do all of the reviews. They would do Certificates of appropriateness and all that Design Review currently does. The advantage is that there is only one stop for these items; the disadvantage is that one body handles all of it. Mr. Snowden stated that this is just the beginning of the discussion and that if the groups went with the "model B" expansion of Planning Commission would need to be an option.

Mr. Comeau stated that he thought that a one location might be a good idea. He also agreed that the panel should be bigger that that perhaps the way that panel members are selected might need to be different. He felt that the ability to get members with the eye for the job would be important.

Mr. Snowden responded that if there were more positions there would be that ability to have that. He said also that with one body, some of the signage (with the exception of the comprehensive sign plans) and paint color changes could be done by staff to keep the volume down on the Planning Commission down.

Mr. Cullinan stated that from the applicant side, the second option is definitely more streamlined and it seems like there is more progress. He said that would be his preference.

Dr. McKenzie stated that combining the two boards is generally frowned upon because they were hard to manage internally. He said there is a greater chance of Boards "blowing up" over strongly held preferences. He added that he agreed with Mr. Snowden that the way things are being done now can be improved upon.

Mr. Snowden said whichever model A or B, is chosen, it needs to be done quickly as possible or there will continue to be problems down the road and they will get more complex. Mr. Snowden asked for both Planning Commission and Design Review Board to provide him with questions so that a consensus can be reached on this topic.

RESULT:	HELD
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C. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman



Planning and Zoning Administrator