

MINUTES
CITY OF REYNOLDSBURG
PLANNING COMMISSION
MARCH 3, 2011
6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present:	Mr. Lucas Haire Mr. James Comeaux Mrs. Marlene Wirth Mr. David Wall
Members Absent:	Mr. Charles McGrath
Others Present:	Mr. Matthew Hansen, Planning Administrator

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 3, 2010

Chairman Comeaux: Everyone should have received a copy of the minutes from the February 3rd meeting. I think there was a blank or two in there for me but I have no idea what I saying, which is not a big surprise. Are there any additions or corrections to those minutes? Hearing none, they'll be approved as distributed.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Comeaux: And you similarly should have received an agenda for tonight's meeting. Are there any changes to that, Matt, or is this what we're going—

Mr. Hansen: No.

Mr. Comeaux: Okay. Fantastic. No changes to that so it'll be approved as distributed.

4. SWEARING IN OF SPEAKERS

Mr. Comeaux: Do we have any speakers here to address us this evening? (No response.) Okay. Great

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Comeaux: Similarly, we're not going to have public comment. There are no speakers.

B. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mr. Comeaux: And so, no Unfinished Business.

C. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Comeaux: And we move on to New Business which is the recommendation of the Olde Reynoldsburg Strategic Plan. A copy of the plan we received at the last meeting. Matt, would you like to go ahead and lead the charge here?

Mr. Hansen: Sure. And hopefully you were able to receive the memo that I sent everybody this afternoon regarding kind of an update to the process that we've been through since we last met with you. The first thing that we did right after we met with you was met with the Steering Committee of the Olde Reynoldsburg Strategic Plan and we reviewed the document with them one last time. And they had three comments that they would like to have included as strategies and they're listed on that memo, one being to develop more strategies for the promotion of local arts in Olde Reynoldsburg including display of public art. The other is to create a zoning strategy to insure the preservation of the residential neighborhoods. They've recognized that, as we are recommending land use changes along Lancaster Avenue, they wanted to be sure that those land use changes stayed on that road and didn't really encroach upon the more residential character parts of the Olde Reynoldsburg.

The other recommendation was a strategy to direct truck traffic from Jackson Avenue to Graham Road and looking at that potential study, working with the City Engineer to see the feasibility of that. They recognize that Jackson will be a more heavily pedestrian-traveled road, especially with planned public parking improvements that will be at the corner of Jackson and Broadwyn Alley and having that as a safe pedestrian route that's not intimidating to people to travel to Main Street. That was an important goal that they'd like to get accomplished, so that was their last recommendation.

Then in February we had the public open house and if you weren't able to attend, it was a brief presentation that you guys heard at the last meeting and then we had a public question and answer session afterwards. There were not really too many red flags that came up from any of the concepts that we presented. People had concerns over traffic and we're promoting more development in Olde Reynoldsburg and how would that influence traffic on Jackson and Lancaster and 256. There were also questions of what would the impact be on the land use recommendations for office along Lancaster and Graham Roads. Recognizing that currently the office market is not that strong but this is a plan that is 20 years in horizon so that's probably the best recommendation for a land use along those roads if it were to change, so we kind of explained that. There were also questions about Graham Road Elementary and I know we had always just left it as a school and right now it's a charter school. What was the status of that and the--

Mr. Haire: Superintendent.

Mr. Hansen: Yeah, Steve Dadkin did not confirm either way what the future of that is, so in the plan we'll just leave it as future institutional use in the future land use map. People asked about timeframe, how long this is going to take. We explained that it's a very market-driven plan still. We'll have to shop out to developers and see who's interested in the plan, but a lot of the private development stuff that would happen at Main and Lancaster is going to be dependent upon the market. But there are simple things that we could accomplish now as far as striping, parking spaces, adding signage in the District. Those are the sort of stuff that we can do short term.

Mr. Wall: Hey, Matt, I have a question on that.

Mr. Hansen: Sure.

Mr. Wall: Is the City going to be seeking any grant funds? Are you going to be looking for any type of grant?

Mr. Hansen: Sure, and we'll have to explore it to see specifically what matches up with our strategies, whether it be adding signage in the area or some open space funding, but we still have to explore it to see exactly what will match up with what our goals are.

Mr. Haire: Yeah, we're pursuing that but obviously the plan's the first step so—

Mr. Hansen: Right.

Mr. Wall: Oh, sure.

Mr. Haire: --that'll _____ score higher _____ anything you do so.

Mr. Wall: Yeah, I would just think it would make it much more attractive for everyone if you had grant funding associated with it. It takes the burden off of the community.

Mr. Haire: Right.

Mr. Wall: Makes it easier.

Mr. Hansen: And, like I said, explained last time, these are recommendations and they're not affecting any current ordinances at the time-being. The zoning will remain the same after the plan is adopted, but – and, again, when we go back into the strategies and look at what we're trying to implement, we'll go through this approval process just as like we did for the plan for any zoning code changes and then evaluate any rezoning changes based upon this plan, so they're only recommendations. But, overall, I think it was a good meeting and we had some good input. I guess I'd like to

open up to you guys and hopefully you've had a chance to look at the draft and see if you have any comments.

Mrs. Wirth: I'd like to make one. When you're starting all of this process, people get a little turned off because they don't see anything. Why can't you take the corner of Lancaster and Main, work right there, something that would be very visible fairly quickly?

Mr. Haire: Our hope—

Mrs. Wirth: That might create a little more interest—

Mr. Haire: Yeah.

Mrs. Wirth: Good or bad, who knows, you know.

Mr. Comeaux: Something to argue about.

Mrs. Wirth: But you have to take the bad with the good, right?

Mr. Comeaux: Yeah.

Mrs. Wirth: But, I mean that would be something almost immediate that people could see.

Mr. Wall: What are you thinking, Marlene? Were you thinking of something to announce or to make people know that they've arrived at Olde Reynoldsburg?

Mrs. Wirth: Well, whatever process that they take. I mean, take one little area and do it so people can see it. Visibility counts for a lot.

Mr. Hansen: Yeah.

Mrs. Wirth: I mean, fixing the alley down behind those buildings, who cares?

Mr. Comeaux: And that's actually, something that you said – my question is, it's a great plan but obviously, it's too – I think without funding what are you going to do? If a business did come and say, "We want to put something on that corner," obviously there are things that you can do to say, "This is the way we'd like to make it look." You know, between the – if they go through the zoning or whatever else. But if they're consistent with the zoning then it's basically Design Review Board and the guidelines for Olde Reynoldsburg as they exist. I mean, how are you going to leverage whatever you have to get businesses to change because I'm thinking of the open parcels now that could be redeveloped easily and some of the stuff you're talking about, it's going to have to be – obviously, it's long term and I guess how are you going to explain going through this with businesses and encouraging them to see it the way you do? Because,

I mean, I like the vision for it, like over here this place that's like a car repair place, I think your vision for that is to be up close to the road, get foot traffic and I think that's right. If you had where you could walk from the City building down across there and everything else, that's great but how are you – have you thought, and I'm sure you have, how are you articulating that to Council and businesses to encourage them to see the vision the way you see the vision?

Mr. Haire: My hope would be it would be articulated through the plan. I mean, the plan will be used as a tool, but we also have – we have incentives that are available. We have a community reinvestment area in Olde Reynoldsburg that was established in 1984 and it's been very underutilized. It allows us to offer abatements to people that make improvements, so that's a tool to help significantly with the improvements. At points in the past we've had façade improvement money available and that was through grant funding. At some point in the future, hopefully we can obtain that again but the hope overall, I think that is that we're trying to set the business conditions and make it conducive for redevelopment. So, if we can do the small things, if we can do a better job marketing the District, if we can do a better job putting signage out, if we can do a better job creating parking. Right now, that's the number one complaint I get, is how can I ever move a business there because there's nowhere to park. Well, if we show people that the potential is places to park and we can make it safe for on-street parking, then that opens up a whole new segment of businesses that would at least look at locating that wouldn't right now.

Mrs. Wirth: People can see something.

Mr. Haire: Right.

Mrs. Wirth: That's what I mean about that corner.

Mr. Haire: Yeah, if we can start with the small things—

Mrs. Wirth: Some little thing to let people see the potential, maybe.

Mr. Haire: Right now, landlords say they're not going to make any improvements because they can't justify the rent increases because there's not enough quality businesses that want to locate down there, so it's kind of a chicken and the egg thing, so hopefully we can do those small things first and start to create that environment that people want to locate in.

Mr. Comeaux: Right. I will say that I – maybe I didn't read closely. I didn't see the Community Reinvestment Act stuff or area stuff in here. Is it in here and I missed it or—

Mr. Hansen: I don't think it's mentioned in there because it's already established.

Mr. Comeaux: _____ but once you said that to me, I'm like okay, now that explains how you, you know – one of the tools you have to do it which I was unaware of, so. The only other thing I'd say is the notion of kind of encouraging traffic from Lancaster, 256 to Graham, that's going to be a tough sell just because so much of it comes from Broad down old Lancaster and then there. And the other thing you might need to concern yourself with, and the City Engineer can tell you better, but if 256 is a state road, I think, trucks might have to travel that versus traveling Graham and so you'd need to look at – if you are trying to get people to use Graham, you're going to have some other designation.

Mrs. Wirth: But the people on Graham Road put up a big fight.

Mr. Haire: Oh, I'm sure they will.

Mr. Comeaux: Yeah, they—

Mrs. Wirth: No, they did.

Mr. Haire: It's not something that we've looked into—

Mrs. Wirth: They did the last time.

Mr. Haire: --that far but with the school being on Jackson, the middle school on Jackson, that was the concern that was presented is why are we routing truck traffic in front of a school when the roads – when you get school buses out there lined up and things like that, that was the major concern that the folks had, so they just thought it might be a better idea to route it down Graham Road.

Mrs. Wirth: I mean, that fight has been fought before.

Mr. Haire: I know it has.

Mr. Wall: Matt or Luke, either one, if you could answer. The businesses in the Olde Reynoldsburg District, how were they – I remember there was some discussion on it, but how was the overall reception to this plan? Did you see a lot of positive reception to it or kind of hesitant?

Mr. Hansen: No, I think it was – every business that we spoke with, they're excited that something is being planned for the future.

Mr. Wall: Okay.

Mr. Hansen: It's kind of hard. They want more businesses down there because they know that more businesses will bring them more business, too, and so I think they're kind of anxious to get it started but then, again, it's the small steps that we need

to take first in order to make the bigger changes happen to draw more businesses down there.

Mr. Haire: I've talked to a few business owners down there that, since we even had the public meeting, that said you know, "I'm thinking about making these improvements" and a lot of business owners don't want to invest that much money if they don't feel like other people are going to invest money, too, in the neighborhood, so hopefully this will kind of get that ball rolling and people will see that others are committed to improving the area, so that they'll improve the area.

Mr. Hansen: Including the City.

Mr. Wall: Were you able to talk with all the business owners down there? Did you reach out to all of them?

Mr. Hansen: Not all of them, but there were a number of people that we spoke with. They were on our Steering Committee. We did stakeholder interviews where we met with a couple of business owners down there.

Mr. Haire: And then we invited them all to the public meeting. You guys went door-to-door in every business in Olde Reynoldsburg and dropped them off a flyer—

Mr. Hansen: Yeah, and we dropped off flyers.

Mr. Haire: encouraging them to attend public meeting. So, they're at least aware of the process.

Mr. Comeaux: Any other questions for Matt or for Lucas?

Mr. Wall: We have two pictures here. What's that?

Mr. Hansen: Oh, well, when we had our last Steering Committee meeting, we ended up narrowing them down to two choices, so. We don't have to vote on one specifically right now, but if you are voicing a preference for either one of these, we'll take note of that. It's kind of we're still gathering input for all of them.

Mrs. Wirth: I like the top one.

Mr. Wall: Yeah, I think the top one is very nice, for what it's worth which is about not much.

Mr. Comeaux: And those are tomato leaves, is that right?

Mr. Hansen: Yes.

Mr. Comeaux: I just want to make sure that no—

Mr. Hansen: It's a rendering of a tomato leaf.

Mr. Comeaux: --no sneaky person in the printer's office snuck something else in there. Okay. Is there any other discussion about this item, then?

Mr. Hansen: No.

Mr. Comeaux: So, you have on our agenda a recommendation. Is it something – what are you guys asking for us to do, I guess?

Mr. Hansen: To officially bring it forward to City Council, we need a recommendation from the Planning Commission in the form of a vote and we can put conditions on that recommendation, however you would like. So you can recommend the draft plan that you've been presented at the last meeting and with the conditions that we'll add the three strategies as mentioned in the memo from the Steering Committee meeting and then any other additional comments that you would like to add. And we can wrap that up into a motion and then have a vote on it.

Mr. Comeaux: Okay. Does someone want to give a motion?

Mr. Wall: Matt, if I can just ask one more question. It's just a simple one and I should have asked this probably off mic instead of during the meeting here, but I had raised some comments in regards to formatting and things like that. Have they all been addressed before the report goes to Council? Not having seen the final draft—

Mr. Hansen: Yeah, it will.

Mr. Wall: Okay.

Mr. Hansen: Yeah, I'm working on final drafts now so a lot of that stuff I'm going to have to move pages and move contents, so that's why. I would go and number and all that sort of stuff. But, no, it'll be finalized when we get to Council.

Mr. Wall: Great. And I know that seems kind of simple but we haven't seen the final draft so we're making a recommendation on a preliminary draft, so.

Mr. Hansen: Right. Yeah. No, those'll definitely be taken care of.

Mr. Wall: All right.

Mr. Haire: Just formatting issues but the_____.

Mr. Hansen: The numbering and – yeah.

Mr. Wall: References to _____

Mr. Hansen: Yeah, the references.

Mr. Wall: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Hansen: No problem.

Mr. Comeaux: Okay, with that, someone want to make a motion?

Mr. Wall: I make a motion to send the Olde Reynoldsburg Strategic Plan final input – or final – excuse me, the Olde Reynoldsburg Strategic Plan back to the City Council with a recommendation for approval with the inclusion that the Steering Committee meeting February 3, 2011 recommendations for consideration, the three that were discussed during this meeting are included in the document.

Mr. Comeaux: That's fine. We have a motion. Do we have a second?

Mrs. Wirth: I'll second.

(Mr. Hansen called the roll. Mr. Comeaux voted "yes." Mrs. Wirth voted "yes." Mr. Wall voted "yes." Mr. Haire voted "yes.")

Mr. Hansen: Thank you very much, guys.

Mr. Comeaux: Thank you.

D. OTHER BUSINESS - None

E. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:56 o'clock p.m.

James Comeaux, Chair

Matthew Hansen, Planning Administrator

This document was transcribed by:
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