

## PLAN COMMISSION

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Time and Date: The Plan Commission met on Tuesday, February 16, 2016, at 5:00 p.m. in the Common Council Chambers of Wausau City Hall.

Members Present: Mayor Tipple, Gisselman, Atwell, Oberbeck, Bohlken, Lindman

Others Present: Lenz, DeSantis, Hebert, Lawrence, Preibe, Mudrovich, Morrow, Neal

In compliance with Chapter 19, Wisconsin Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and transmitted to the *Wausau Daily Herald* in the proper manner.

Mayor Tipple called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. noting that a quorum was present.

### **Approve the minutes of the January 19, 2016 meeting.**

Atwell motioned to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2016 meeting. Gisselman seconded, and the motion carried unanimously 6-0.

### **Discussion and possible action on petition for annexation from the Town of Maine: Johnson (petitioner) – 4306 and 4702 County Road K and adjacent property to the west.**

Lindman said that an overall map of annexations from the Town of Maine was distributed prior to the meeting. This went through CISM and was approved unanimously.

Atwell asked if additional names were added to the prior request. Lindman answered yes and said the map was created to show that an island was not being created.

Bohlken motioned to approve the petition for annexation from the Town of Maine: Johnson (petitioner) – 4306 and 4702 County Road K and adjacent property to the west. Oberbeck seconded, and the motion carried unanimously 6-0. This item will go to Common Council on February 23, 2016.

### **Discussion and possible action on petition for annexation from the Town of Maine: Waldvogel (petitioner) – Merrill Avenue.**

Lindman said that this property is the large blue piece on the map. This had come to the commission previously. Some of the lines were incorrect, but the legal notice was correct. The lines have been corrected.

Oberbeck motioned to approve the petition for annexation from the Town of Maine: Waldvogel (petitioner) – Merrill Avenue. Bohlken seconded, and the motion carried unanimously 6-0. This item will go to Common Council on February 23, 2016.

### **Discussion and possible action regarding a Warranty Deed from 720 Grant Street for street purposes.**

Lindman said that the small piece on the map has been maintained by city. This will be deeded to the city and is more of a housekeeping procedure.

Oberbeck motioned to approve the Warranty Deed from 720 Grant Street for street purposes. Atwell seconded, and the motion carried unanimously 6-0. This item will go to Common Council on February 23, 2016.

### **Discuss update to Wausau's Comprehensive Plan – Housing and Natural Resources chapters.**

Lenz said staff has been working with Regional Planning to update the Comprehensive Plan. Drafts of two chapters are located in the packet. The item is to review the drafts, answer questions, and to offer feedback.

Dennis Lawrence said they are in the midst of updating the Comprehensive Plan, as it is a requirement every 10 years. The public participation plan, demographic component, and downtown and economic development components have been completed. Goals, objectives, and policies are included in every chapter. Any comments can be forwarded to Brad.

Lawrence went over the Natural Resources chapter. A look into the county's natural resources is at the start of the chapter and Lawrence went over page specifics of the plan with the commission. The inventoried lakes are included in the plan. This is one place to inventory the different natural resources. The biological resources are slightly touched on in this chapter. There are 6 identified issues in the chapter, which include: developmental constraints, wetlands, conservancy areas, Brownfields, water quality, and phosphorus. The chapter is ended with goals and action steps.

Mayor Tipple asked how long into the future the anticipated completion date is. Lawrence answered that it was started last summer. An initial draft is expected late summer or early fall is expected. It is hope to be adopted by the end of the year. Mayor Tipple said page 2 shows the Sewer Service Area Plan and it seems to be always getting updated since it was from 1992. Lawrence said it was last officially adopted in 1992, but there have been amendments. There is discussion of doing an update. Lenz said it has been discussed at the MPO to do a new plan.

Oberbeck said that there have been some issues with storm water management. There have been three and five inch rains that are supposed to be one hundred years apart, but are happening twice a year. Oberbeck asked if there is any accommodation or discussion on how this will be addressed in the future. Lawrence said this is one of the issues that has come up. It will probably warrant being an additional issue. The Comprehensive Plan is the big picture with a lot of recommendations. Lindman said that a grant was obtained from the Wisconsin DOT and is currently out for RFP to update the citywide Storm Management Plan.

Gisselman said if the Rivers Edge Master Plan update will be part of the Comprehensive Plan. Lawrence said that it would be a separate endeavor, but a recommendation could be included in the Comprehensive Plan. Gisselman said that it would be in the best interest to keep the Wisconsin River clean.

Mayor Tipple said there are many opportunities for feedback. Lawrence said it is much easier for comments now than at the end.

Priebe introduced the Housing chapter of the plan. The structure is similar to the Natural Resources chapter. The chapter looks at housing trends. The inventory in the chapter indicates the various types of housing in the city. Tables will be inserting into the plan, but are now at the end. Priebe went over the percentage of housing stock age and types of units. Housing costs looks at the value and rents and how housing costs are in the city and county. Household projections are included in the chapter and this data was provided by the state. Public housing, homelessness, and livability concepts are also included in the chapter. A list of housing programs is included in the chapter. The final section of the chapter is the goals and action steps.

Mayor Tipple said that there are concerns of affordable housing and that there is too much assisted. Mayor Tipple asked how far to drill down to provide guidance after the plan is adopted. Priebe said the plan provides a high-level view. It is best if the ideas are identified clearly. Further studies can be suggested in the plan. Lenz said that recommendations, especially zoning-related, should be based on the Comprehensive Plan and the policies in the plan should be clear to make decisions easier. This could be a real tool for decision-making.

Oberbeck said that a challenge is that there are different types of housing. The housing types have very little design. Some of the affordable housing has better design than what is available to the general public. The Common Council may need to be educated on the types of housing that is available and the design elements. Oberbeck said that he would hope for more choices. Priebe thanked Oberbeck for the feedback. Mayor Tipple said that 50% of the housing stock is old. It creates a different set of problems. Oberbeck said the design standards needs to be set. Priebe said that age can also be a benefit. Wausau has many city neighborhoods with denser housing.

Hebert said that vacancy rate is 10% and asked what is typical. Priebe said she would look into it and include it. Lawrence said that it is probably double from what is found in a rural community.

**Presentation and discussion on preliminary development plans for East Riverfront District.**

Lenz said that a team from Frantz Community Investors was present, and their proposal was selected from a RFP process. Their proposal contains a major residential component with some commercial development also. The plans are being fine-tuned and a development agreement is being drafted. The commission will eventually review the Precise Implementation Plan when it is ready.

Tom Mudrovich said that they were retained by Frantz to assist with this project. The area to the north of the stream is primarily intended to be commercial. The focus has been to the area south of the creek and will be an apartment and townhouse area. There will be 260 apartments. There will be 3-story buildings with parking partially below grade. Each apartment will have a designated parking space and the other ½ parking space will be located in a surface parking area. Fulton Street is designed as a boulevard with a median planting area. The prime areas are the views to the creek and Wisconsin River. It is a phased project. Mudrovich said they are trying to get input from everyone, but feel that that it is a good plan, with things to tweak. This will afford a different lifestyle in Wausau. People who work in the downtown area could walk to work. It will be a good product and there isn't anything known that is comparable. Mudrovich introduced Bruce Morrow, from Ayres Associates, and Mitch Hallgren, Frantz Community Investors.

Oberbeck said that he has a concern that this area has always been a mixed use area and he would like to maximize the waterfront. Oberbeck asked if there was any component that will energize the first level of the river to allow it to have an urban-type look. Oberbeck also asked if the amount of surface parking could be limited. Mudrovich asked if he would like a parking ramp. Oberbeck said that it could be built into structures and said he would like to see more energy for the Wausau area for recreation. Mudrovich said the north side of the creek has the commercial area. Oberbeck said he would like to see this on both sides and would like to give input. Residential should be located further down the river. Oberbeck said he has been making these statements all along and would not be in favor.

Lenz said that the RFP stated a desire for mixed-use, and this typically means ground floor commercial with residential above. He said this plan has horizontal mixed-uses where the residential is next to the commercial. Their original proposal has been altered to minimize large surface parking areas and to provide a more urban feel. The area shown is residential, but it is still public, like a downtown neighborhood street – people still enjoy walking there even though there are no cafes or other commercial. There is a balance of making it a desirable place for people to live, while making it accessible for those who don't live there.

Mudrovich said they met today with a leasing agent and talked about the components north of the creek. A boutique environment would be best. A critical mass can be created on the north side. An office building component was also discussed. On two building pads, there would be 31,000 square feet of commercial space, which is a lot of space. Mudrovich said the city will have to tell us how to proceed. This is a high density area, without setbacks, for a semi-urban feel.

Gisselman said that there's not much public experience from the Eye Clinic of Wisconsin to this area and it will not have much of an urban experience. Gisselman said they are looking at the public coming into the area and hoped for a water experience on this side of the creek also. Mudrovich said it is a balancing act. Some people say it is too close to the trail, but others say not to go further away. There is ability for interaction with the trail. There will be a boardwalk to the river. Morrow asked Gisselman if he would like commercial on the bottom. Gisselman said either commercial or residential with more green space. People don't want to walk in front of someone's kitchen. More open spaces for separation would be needed.

Oberbeck said there needs to be a reason for people living in other areas of Wausau to be down on the river. The riverfront should not be someone's front yard. It was presented as a very vibrant area going from one area to another. We need a place for the Wausau experience. This seems to be a separate development and is not inviting. It creates an awkward feeling and feels like a residential development. The commercial properties could be coffee shops or something residents use.

Atwell asked if the multiple phases are to absorb units. There is no shortage of space, just a shortage of

how it is presented. Mudrovich said there is a formula. Covered underground parking is a component that will set this apart from other places. The footprint will accommodate 60-below grade parking spaces. If you go to higher or smaller buildings, you have a whole different computation for the cost of the building. Atwell said the building is being designed for parking. There is additional space in the entire lot. There are opportunities for a ramp. The same exposure would be created by going upward. There is a lot of space to play with. Mudrovich said that the type of construction changes with a higher building and becomes more expensive. These will be wood framed buildings with stone on the exterior. If you go much higher, the codes change. The cost of the unit will need to be higher for an equivalent designed unit. Each phase is currently a multi-million dollar project. The area north of the creek is intensely designed with wharf seating.

Gisselman left the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

Atwell said the riverfront would only be an attraction for the units on the riverfront, not the other units. It has been done in other cities and there are successful ways to develop the area.

Hebert said the property is zoned UDD and 1 ½ stalls is a guideline, but it could be a trade-off. Mudrovich said that would help sell the units. There are 260 units with 260 covered spaces and 130 off-street spaces. Hebert said there is an argument to be made since 2/3 of the units are 1-bedroom apartments. Lenz said that the City has been flexible with parking ratios for other developments. Mudrovich said it would be nice to have a cushion and a little reduction could help.

Tom Neal said that would be a fly-over area. Small adjustments could be made. A small retail space, brew pub, or laundromat could make it a mixed-use experience. The plan could make it feel that people don't belong in the area. Lenz reminded the commission of the public amenities that will be built in this area such as the park at the north end, the adirondack area, the wharf, the bridge over the stream, the trails along the stream, Fulton Street extension, and a seating area at the bridge to the island. He said that's quite a bit in a small stretch. He said this area was always conceptualized with linear green spaces, and it will connect on both ends to existing river edge trail. He agrees that mixed-use vertically throughout the site is ideal, but he's not sure if it is feasible. He said it was not part of the proposal that was received and approved by the City. Morrow said this plan will encourage public use with a family of buildings, but is not a traditional complex.

Oberbeck asked why someone on the west side would want to come here. There are concerns about the trolley quarter vehicle appearance and he would like four-season type of design. Oberbeck said that he is looking for something more urban, especially in this area. Morrow asked Oberbeck if he is worried about the competition from the downtown. Oberbeck answered no. Lindman said the bridge connection is the link to the north area and there is a link to the downtown area. This will be a residential area that will have links to both areas. It may be good to reduce the surface parking and open some things up. Lindman said that some things can be changed with the street aspect. Morrow said that is the thought and housing need has led to this project. Restaurants and coffee shops would go well on the river. There are other developments with this project and that is a benefit of phasing.

Mayor Tipple said the feedback is appreciated. This is a balancing act and has been planned for two years. This was identified as a residential area. The intent of the item was to bring it to the commission and make sure it is a good plan before moving forward.

#### **Next meeting date and future agenda items for consideration.**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 15, 2016.

#### **Adjournment**

Oberbeck motioned to adjourn, seconded by Bohlken. Motion carried unanimously 5-0 and the motion adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

**The Plan Commission is next scheduled to meet at 5:00 p.m. on March 15, 2016.**