

ALTOONA PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING

January 30, 2024

Altoona City Hall

Members Present in Person: Michelle Sloan, Dan Narber, Scott Henry, Jill Pudenz, Steve Moyna, Steve Chase

Members Present Virtually: None

Members Absent: Erin Herbold-Swalwell

Staff: John Shaw, Jenn Naylor, Natalie Jacobson,

Guests: Meeting was held in a virtual Zoom format and in-person; In-person and online guests included Josh Dunwoody, M. Quinn, and others not signing in.

Chairperson Jill Pudenz called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

1. Roll Call. Roll call was taken. Four commissioners were present at roll call. Henry attempted to join the meeting via Zoom but had technical difficulty. He arrived in person at 6:36 after the election of officers.

Before the next meeting agenda item, Pudenz made modifications to the agenda. The nomination and election of officers was inadvertently omitted from the agenda and needed to be added.

Motion by Narber, seconded by Sloan, to amend the agenda to include Nomination and Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson for 2024.

Votes: Yes – Narber, Sloan, Pudenz, Moyna, Chase. No – None. Abstain – None. Motion approved, 5-0-0.

2. Election of Officers for 2024.

a. Nomination and Election of Chairperson for 2024

Motion by Sloan, seconded by Moyna, to nominate Erin Herbold-Swalwell as Chairperson.

Votes: Yes – Sloan, Moyna, Narber, Pudenz, Chase. No – None. Abstain – None. Motion approved, 5-0-0.

b. Nomination and Election of Vice Chairperson for 2024

Motion by Sloan, seconded by Chase, to nominate Scott Henry as Vice Chairperson.

Votes: Yes – Sloan, Chase, Narber, Pudenz, Moyna. No – None. Abstain – None. Motion approved, 5-0-0.

3. Introduction and preliminary discussion of City Center Overlay District along 8th Street and 1st Avenue Corridor.

John Shaw presented this item. An aerial was displayed of the properties on the north side of 8th Street that would be included in the overlay district. He said that the Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1995 referenced a City Center. At that time, 8th Street was a highway south of town. As Altoona grew, 8th Street became a focal point. He discussed the history of the growth of different areas of Altoona. Shaw stated that as Altoona grows, this area becomes more central to everyday lives as the center of town, and the City Center needs to grow with the city. He said redevelopment has occurred, including the nut farm and Family Video. He stated another goal was to create a connection between the old City Center (the Olde Town area) and the new City Center.

Shaw also showed the current zoning in the area, including five different zoning classifications. He said in the growth area pre-determined by the Comprehensive Plan, Altoona could grow up to 60,000 to 70,000 in population. This would still be the City Center. Currently, the area has an aging housing stock and is underdeveloped for what it could be. He then showed the same area highlighting the rental properties. He said he estimates that the area is 25% to 30% rentals, which indicates that it is an area in transition. Investors are buying these properties and renting them out. It is a tax base that is undervalued for what it could be. The City would look at how this area could be redeveloped, allowing properties to be conglomerated with larger parcels, which would be more re-developable. Many of the restrictions could be lifted. He said looking at the current zoning, there's no consistency between the five classifications, as it has been haphazard over the decades. The solution Staff is exploring is an overlay zone, which is something Altoona has not had. Overlay zones are often

incorporated in flood-prone areas to protect creeks and control development in sensitive areas. They are also used in historical preservation areas. For this area, introducing and maintaining commercial uses and mixed uses could be a tool to use. Many of the current parcels are 66' by 132', which are substandard-sized lots. It's another issue to overcome, whereas this overlay zone gives guidance on how to work through and achieve redevelopment.

Shaw outlined the goals, including commercial and mixed use along 8th Street, like Center Place with commercial on the bottom and apartments above it. It is a needed housing stock that Altoona doesn't readily have. Allowing for higher density residential development would be one of the goals. Relaxing the setbacks of a traditional R-3 Zone and bringing them forward would help development. He said there are many single-family, multi-family, and smaller commercial lots that could be redeveloped. Commercial would continue turning north on 1st Avenue and transition into high density multi-family. On the east side of 1st Avenue, there are large single-family residential lots. This would be a prime location for higher density residential. Shaw said the current properties are being underutilized. On streets other than 8th Street and 1st Avenue, introducing on-street, angled parking would be another goal. Also encouraging parking in the rear and working off of the alleys would help. The buildings would have to work on their architectural detailing. He said the City could encourage and allow blade signs. The entire process still has to be fleshed out. Instead of trying to do a mass rezoning, like a PUD, utilizing the overlay zone to protect everything as status quo would be the goal. He compared it to an umbrella. How everyone is using and enjoying the properties right now stays the same, but the City will look at how to guide redevelopment. The goals and objectives would be outlined, and the zoning and bulk regulations and performance standards would be provided. He explained that a four-story apartment would not fit on one 66' by 132' lot. A developer would have to conglomerate multiple lots and show how they would make it happen.

Shaw explained that there is a developer interested in developing a mixed use project on four lots on 8th Street between Family Video and Dollar General. It would have commercial and high density residential. Moyna said he assumes that Des Moines has done this for years. Shaw agreed that this is not a new concept. He said the challenge is that Altoona has an older, developed area that's really changing, and the City has to consider how to allow it to redevelop to something that is advantageous for where the community is going to be in the future.

Pudenz asked with the overlay zone, if single-family would still stay single-family. Shaw said built into the overlay zone would be recognizing the underlying zoning and use. If enough properties are assembled with enough street frontage, possibly a four- or eight-plex could be built. Eventually it could go to a PUD, but there are too many hurdles right now.

4. Introduction and preliminary discussion of NW Growth Area Comprehensive Plan Update.

John Shaw presented this item. He said it was a slow month, so they pulled this out. The Muchikinock line is now complete and operable. The Comp Plan will be updated to expand the northwest area. He displayed the area serviced by the Muchikinock line. Additional light industrial has been added due to the volume and demand for warehousing and data centers. He stated that growth in that area has been faster than anticipated in the Comp Plan. Different residential areas have been identified, as well as a long-term growth area. The next Comp Plan Update will go into greater detail and will expand this area even larger. Bondurant is no longer fighting with Altoona for land in this area. Moyna asked if there would be a need for high density residential there, explaining that as people get older, it is easier not to have to maintain outside spaces. Shaw stated that he wanted to take some time and really look at that. Due to the geographical location, it needs to be studied. There have been ideas of Polk County creating a lake. He warned that once something is put to paper, some people buy into it, and then that becomes the expectation, and that area deserves a deep dive.

5. Consideration and recommendation of a letter of support for the City of Altoona to submit a joint application with the City of Bondurant for funding from the Federal Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) to the Des Moines Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the partial funding of the construction of Eastern Polk County I-80 Interchange Planning Study.

Shaw explained that they have started working on this with Bondurant, and it is starting to put some meat on the bones of a new interchange. Pudenz asked if they had somebody on board already to do the study. Shaw

said this is requesting funding to start that process. Jacobson stated that the City of Bondurant's Planning and Zoning Commission will also be submitting a letter of support. Henry asked about Mitchellville. Jacobson said she didn't know about Mitchellville and that Altoona is submitting in tandem with Bondurant. Shaw said he wasn't sure about Mitchellville's MPO membership status. He said the Commission has to make a recommendation to make this application.

Motion by Henry, seconded by Sloan, for recommendation of a letter of support for the City of Altoona to submit a joint application with the City of Bondurant for funding from the Federal Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) to the Des Moines Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the partial funding of the construction of Eastern Polk County I-80 Interchange Planning Study.

Votes: Yes – Henry, Sloan, Narber, Pudenz, Moyna, Chase. No – None. Abstain – None. Motion approved, 6-0-0.

6. Minutes of the December 19, 2023 meeting.

Motion by Pudenz, seconded by Narber, to approve the minutes.

Votes: Yes – Pudenz, Narber, Henry, Moyna, Chase. No – None. Abstain – Sloan. Motion approved, 5-0-1.

Old/New Business

None.

Motion by Sloan, seconded by Narber, to adjourn.

Votes: Yes – Sloan, Narber, Henry, Pudenz, Moyna, Chase. No – None. Abstain – Henry. Motion approved, 6-0-0.

Meeting adjourned 7:12 p.m. Next regular meeting is February 27, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Naylor
Office Assistant