

**MINUTES OF THE ALTOONA, WI  
REGULAR PLAN COMMISSION MEETING  
August 18, 2020**

**(I) Call Meeting to Order.**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Brendan Pratt at 5:30 p.m. held on zoom Teleconference/video conference due to Coronavirus COVID-19.

**(II) Roll call.**

Members present:       Brendan Pratt, Tim Sexton, Matthew Biren, Bill Hoepner,  
                                  Andraya Albrecht, Barbara Oas-Holmes and Dean Roth.

Also Present:            City Planner Joshua Clements  
                                  Management Analyst Roy Atkinson  
                                  City Clerk Cindy Bauer  
                                  Mark Beckfield, Eau Claire County Veterans Foundation Rep.  
                                  Alex Padmos, JCap Real Estate, Woodman’s Crossing General and  
                                  Specific Implementation Plan  
                                  Jason Gripentrog, Developer for River Prairie Townhomes on Lake Road  
                                  Mark Erickson, Everyday Surveying & Engineering for River Prairie  
                                  Townhomes  
                                  Paul Holzinger, Developer for 527 Fairfax Street site plan.  
                                  Bill Albright, Final Plat of Hillcrest Greens Condominium.

**(III) Citizen Participation Period.**

Motion by Roth/Biren to close Citizen Participation Period. **Motion carried.**

**(IV) Approval of minutes.**

Motion by Biren/Oas-Holmes to approve the minutes of the July 14, 2020 Regular Plan Commission meeting. **Motion carried.**

**(V) Old Business – none.**

**(VI) New Business**

**(1) Discuss/consider recommendation to Council regarding agreement with Veteran’s Tribute Foundation and design for Veterans Memorial Tribute within River Prairie Park.**

City Planner Joshua Clements explained the agreement between the City and the Veteran’s Tribute Foundation outlining conditions related to the foundation constructing improvements within River Prairie Park. Attached with the agreement was the proposed plans for Phase I of the Veterans Memorial Tribute, encompassing the plaza area, and depicting the proposed utilization of and modifications to River Prairie Park to accommodate the Veterans Tribute feature(s). The tribute feature is proposed to be comprised of the following elements:

1. Tribute Plaza
  - a. Memorial Patio area, with county seal, flags (9), sculptures (3), and downcast lighting.
  - b. Stone memorial pavers.

- c. A connecting walkway along the north side of the existing biofiltration basin, connecting to Prevea Amphitheatre near the loading dock (shown as 5' wide concrete)

Staff recommended that the 5' wide walking path be 6'- the minimum standard in the River Prairie Design Guidelines and Standards. This recommendation applies only in areas where pavement width is shown as less than 6' (the walkway next to the pavers is effectively wider).

Future phases and features anticipated or discussed that are not applicable to this action item include:

1. Tribute Plaza
  - a. A Connecting walkway to those existing walkways near the pond (shown in the enclosed plan as a future phase)
  - b. A Connecting walkway below the Prevea Stage to the primary trail along the river.
2. Trail Sculptures
  - a. Life-size bronze sculptures to be located along the trail along the river, between the stage walkway connection and the Riverside Pavilion.
  - b. Memorial benches along the trail
3. Other Sculptures
  - a. Bronze sculpture located near the west of the parking lot
  - b. Sculpture including as water wall feature near the Riverside Pavilion

City Planner Clements recalled that the flag pole and associated lighting was previously approved by the Plan Commission, Parks Board and Council and has been installed. The cost of installation and maintenance of all features is to be borne by the Veteran's Foundation, memorialized via the attached agreement. Any proposed changes in the features in any adopted plan or agreement shall require review and recommendation to the Council by the Plan Commission and Parks Board with final approval by the City Council. Pursuant to [WI Stats 62.23\(5\)](#), the Plan Commission exercises authority regarding the dedication and use of public property, including parkland, location of statue or other memorial or other memorial.

City Planner Clements said that if approved, the only extent of approval applies to those elements specifically identified in the proposal, any conditions of approval (if any), and the proposed use agreement. Any modifications, substitutions, or expansions whatsoever shall require approval by the Plan Commission. The enclosed materials illustrate a Phase I that applies to the consideration. Other elements outside of this Phase are not approved at this time, but are provided for context of anticipated future additions or phases.

Included in the packets was a letter from Angela Deutschlander describing the Foundation's intent with respect to flag etiquette. The letter reflects that the group only intends to observe presidential orders.

Mark Beckfield of the Eau Claire County Veterans' Foundation was present to answer questions Plan Commission Member had regarding the Veteran's Memorial Tribute.

Motion by Sexton/Oas-Holmes to recommend to Council approval of the proposed Veterans Tribute elements as proposed. **Motion carried.**

**(VI)(2) Discuss/consider recommendation to Council regarding an amendment to the Woodman’s Crossing General Implementation Plan and Specific Implementation Plan for River Ridge Townhomes.**

City Planner Clements explained that the proposed combined General Implementation Plan and Specific Implementation Plan for River Ridge Townhomes envisions the **4.944-acre** property as a townhouse development with one hundred dwellings between eight buildings, with three phases of implementation. The plan reflects 61 one-bedroom (1,112 ft<sup>2</sup> typ.) and 39 two-bedroom units (1,504 ft<sup>2</sup> typ.). Proposed characteristics of the dwellings include attached garages, one unit for one-bedroom, and two-car for two-bedrooms, bicycle parking and electric vehicle fixtures in the garages, private patios and terraces, and rooftop decks. All units include private patios and second floor decks. Common amenities proposed include a shelter at the existing bus stop, pavilion and grilling areas, 38 visitor parking spaces, walkways throughout the site and connections to area trails. Building materials are stone and composite siding, steel deck equipment with wire cable.

The Woodman’s Crossing General Implementation Plan, approved May 22, 2014, identifies the property as general commercial. Envisioned potential uses thought to include a “Junior Box” retail establishment complementary to Woodman’s Food Market. Other potential commercial uses could include consumer service or other employment with significant customer traffic, such as medical office. This proposal seeks to reposition the site for residential use.

Vehicle access is proposed at four points into the site from adjacent private roads. Storm water for the site has been planned for and provided with the existing regional pond located between Woodman Drive and River Prairie Drive.

Implementation is shown in three phases, with the first being buildings A, B & C totaling 42 units in the southwestern portion of the property. Phase II is shown as 32 units in buildings D, E and F in the northwest area, with Phase III 26 units in the northeastern portion of the site.

Staff recommends approval of the amendment to the Woodman’s Crossing GIP and SIP for River Ridge Townhomes as being generally consistent with the River Prairie Design Guidelines and Standards with the following modifications (conditions of approval):

**A. Access, Circulation & Parking (RPDG IX. 1)**

1. Add not less than two bicycle racks at an appropriate location near the visitor parking areas. Bicycle racks shall be “U Stand” or “Rounded A” design, or substantially similar, as described in *Altoona Municipal Code* Chapter 19.52, installed per manufacturer specifications.
2. **Perimeter sidewalk shall be ~~six~~ five feet in width [RPDG IX 1.C (5)]. Modified per motion: perimeter sidewalk and interior walkways shall be five feet throughout the development.**
3. Connections to existing pedestrian facilities:
  - a. Connect perimeter sidewalk to existing multi-use trail, including new curb ramp on the south side of the road and **thermoplastic** crosswalk markings, located approximately as indicated in staff illustration [RPDG IX 1.C(5)]. **Modified per motion: crosswalk markings may be conventional pavement paint, and maintained.**
  - b. Connect center walkway through the site as a mid-block crossing across Blazing Star Boulevard.
  - c. Install curb ramp on the southwest corner of Blazing Star Boulevard and Woodman Drive, refresh crosswalk.

4. ~~Post all adjacent roads as “No Parking”. The north side of the unnamed Woodman’s Service Drive to the south of the site may be permitted for automobile parking, subject to approval by the owner and to revisiting should unmanageable challenges arise.~~ **Modified per motion: Item 4 was removed at this time. No parking restrictions at this time. If issues arise, can be revisited.**

**B. Landscaping [RPDG IX 6]**

1. Boulevard trees shall be provided by the Developer around the entire perimeter of the site and adjacent storm water pond, 30-foot spacing. Additional trees added approximately as illustrated in the staff report. Trees shall be canopy species, native or hybrid native as defined by the WI DNR.
2. Minimum species diversity - Tree selection shall be native species with minimum diversity and planting size as illustrated in the RPDG [IX 6 (D)]. To prevent uniform insect or disease susceptibility and eventual uniform senescence on a development site or in the adjacent area, the maximum percentage of any one tree species on the site shall be **15%**. All species shall be native or native hybrid as recommended by the WI Department of Natural Resources. Boulevard trees shall be selected from the WI DNR “Suggested Trees for Streetside Planting in Western Wisconsin USDA Hardiness Zone 4” or City recommended boulevard tree list, confirmed by city staff.
3. Areas where street boulevard width is constrained (less than four feet), boulevard tree species selection shall be those that are specifically recommended for such environments that yield canopy height and spread, as approved by city staff.
4. Utilizing ash trees is specifically discouraged due to prevalence of emerald ash borer in this region.
5. Enhanced screening shall be provided and maintained along the north and east frontages to reduce light and sound trespass into the site from commercial traffic and adjacent commercial uses [RPDG IX 6.E].
6. Ground areas immediately surrounding all outdoor grills shall be hardscaped (so as to prevent grease or cooking debris causing fire). Any natural gas or LP cooking areas shall include emergency shut off.

**C. Building and Architectural Standards [RPDG IX 7]**

1. Any/all mechanical equipment, including roof-mounted units, shall be appropriately screened by building-compatible materials or landscaping [RPDG, IX 7 H].
2. Sign permits will be required for all building and ground signs and meet design requirements outlined in the River Prairie Design Guidelines, IX 5.
3. All exterior lighting on the site shall be of full cut-off design and be shielded to prevent spillover of direct light onto adjacent properties [*Altoona Municipal Code* 19.59.030 (H)].

**D. Utilities**

1. Submittal and successful review of final *storm water plan* and *civil site plan* by City Engineer as described in the *Altoona Municipal Code* Chapter 14.
2. Easements shall be dedicated for the water main to service the dwellings, and the main shall be looped to the west through the driveway corridor, or other means as approved by the City Engineer.

3. If the buildings feature sprinkler systems, the Fire Department Connection (FDC) shall be 4" STORTZ and final placement shall be reviewed and approved by Altoona Fire Department.
4. Private utilities, including electric transformers, shall be located such as to minimize impact on landscaping. Private electric service shall be located on private property under softscape, avoiding impacts on trees and major landscape elements. City of Altoona reserves the right to review and approve locations of electrical transformers and other visible fixtures.

Alex Padmos, JCap Real Estate was present to answer any questions Plan Commission Members had regarding the General Implementation Plan for Woodman's Crossing. Padmos would like to have five-foot sidewalks on the exterior and four-foot sidewalks on the interior between buildings. As a compromise, it was suggested to keep five-foot on the interior as well as the exterior sidewalks instead of the suggested six-foot sidewalks.

Motion by Biren/Sexton to recommend Council approval of the amendment to the Woodman's Crossing GIP and adoption of the SIP for River Ridge Townhomes with staff recommended modifications as reflected in A 2, A 3, and A 4. Above. Albrecht abstained.  
**Motion carried.**

**(VI)(3) Discuss/consider recommendation to Council regarding a combined General Implementation Plan and Specific Implementation Plan for River Prairie Townhomes.**

City Planner Clements explained that the proposed combined General Implementation Plan and Specific Implementation Plan (phase I) for River Prairie Townhomes reflects 36 townhome condominium dwellings completed in two phases each of three buildings. The 3.993-acre property is owned by the City of Altoona and subject to purchase agreement, is located on the south side of Lake Road, immediately east of Lake Court.

The plan reflects six buildings with identical floor plans:

- (A) Two two-bedroom, two-bath (2,144 ft<sup>2</sup>, incl. basement) with master bedroom on main level with second bedroom, bath and family room in finished basement; two-car attached garage;
- (B) Two two-bedroom, two-bath (1,418 ft<sup>2</sup> / 1,508 ft<sup>2</sup>) with bedrooms upstairs, and partially finished basement with bonus room; two-car attached garage;
- (C) Two three-bedroom, two baths (1,430 ft<sup>2</sup> / 1,550 ft<sup>2</sup>) with bedrooms upstairs, home office on main level, partially finished basement with bonus room; two-car attached garage.

Each partially finished basement includes a code-compliant window for natural light and potential use of the space as a bedroom. Exterior materials are cultured stone veneer, LP Smartside composite lap siding, fiberglass double hung windows, asphalt shingles with standing seam steel roofing for accent window canopies.

There is a total of 60 garage parking spaces proposed for 36 dwellings. Three visitor parking spaces proposed in Phase I and 12 shown to be added in Phase II for a total of 15. Parking is also available in front of each garage without obstructing passage through the private drive.

The property is arranged as a condominium development with each dwelling footprint individually owned with common property comprising the remainder of the land, including private drive and storm water features. The Developer has provided drafts of the condominium instrument and covenants for review.

The proposal is the result of a competitive RFP process conducted by the City of Altoona in March and April for the development of City-owned property. Per the sale agreement with the City, Phase I is to be completed by May 1, 2021 and Phase II one year later. All dwelling units shall be constructed and offered for-sale. The advertised price of 66% of the total units shall be “affordable” to households earning 150% of Area Median Income.

Jason Gripentrog and Mark Erickson were present to answer questions Plan Commission Members had regarding the River Prairie Townhome.

Staff recommended approval of the River Prairie Townhome GIP and Phase I SIP as being generally consistent with the River Prairie Design Guidelines and Standards with the following modifications (conditions of approval):

**A. Access & Circulation [RPDG IX. 1]**

1. Add and maintain crosswalk striping in areas where the driveways cross the trail.
2. Add not less than two bicycle racks at an appropriate location near the visitor parking areas. Bicycle racks shall be “U Stand” or “Rounded A” design, or substantially similar, as described in *Altoona Municipal Code* Chapter 19.52, installed per manufacturer specifications.

**B. Landscaping [RPDG IX. 6]**

1. Minimum species diversity - Tree selection shall be native species with minimum diversity and planting size as illustrated in the RPDG [IX 6 (D)]. To prevent uniform insect or disease susceptibility and eventual uniform senescence on a development site or in the adjacent area, the maximum percentage of any one tree species on the site shall be **15%**. All species shall be native or native hybrid as recommended by the WI Department of Natural Resources. Trees along the street frontage shall be selected from the WI DNR “Suggested Trees for Streetside Planting in Western Wisconsin USDA Hardiness Zone 4” or City recommended boulevard tree list, confirmed by city staff.
2. Additional canopy trees shall be added throughout the site, approximately as indicated in the enclosed illustration. The canopy specimens (indicated in the proposal and staff illustration) shall be native or hybrid native as defined by the WI DNR, and be defined as “large canopy” or “tall” typology.
3. Add medium native trees shall be planted near the west property line in an arrangement to create property demarcation, screening, and contribute to forestry standards described in the River Prairie Guidelines, approximately as illustrated in the Staff Report. Trees shall be planted not greater than 25-foot average spacing, in a manner such as to avoid future conflicts with buried utilities or overhead wires [RPDG IX 6(D)(2)(a)] approximately as indicated in the enclosed illustration.
4. Add additional native canopy trees approximately is illustrated in the Staff Report throughout Phase I.
5. Utilizing ash trees is prohibited due to prevalence of emerald ash borer in this region.
6. Enhanced screening shall be provided and maintained along the north and east frontages to reduce light and sound trespass into the site from Lake Road [RPDG IX 6.E].

7. Bio-infiltration facilities and water quality swales shall be attractively landscaped with horticulturally appropriate rain garden plantings.

**C. Building and Architectural Standards [RPDG IX 7]**

1. Any/all mechanical equipment shall be appropriately screened by building-compatible materials or landscaping [RPDG, IX 7 H].
2. All exterior lighting on the site shall be of full cut-off design and be shielded to prevent spillover of direct light onto adjacent properties [*Altoona Municipal Code* 19.59.030 (H)].

**D. Utilities**

1. Submittal and successful review of final *storm water plan* and *civil site plan* by City Engineer as described in the *Altoona Municipal Code* Chapter 14.
2. If the buildings feature sprinkler systems, the Fire Department Connection (FDC) shall be 4" STORTZ and final placement shall be reviewed and approved by Altoona Fire Department.
3. Private utilities, including electric transformers, shall be located such as to minimize impact on landscaping. Private electric service shall be located on private property under softscape, avoiding impacts on trees and major landscape elements. City of Altoona reserves the right to review and approve locations of electrical transformers and other visible fixtures.

**E. Administration**

1. A Specific Implementation Plan shall be reviewed and approved for Phase II. Phase II plan may be reviewed and approved by staff if consistent with the materials provided for Phase I approval. Detailed landscape plan shall be provided.

Motion by Roth/Hoepner to recommend Council approval of the combined General and Specific Implementation Plan for River Prairie Townhomes with staff recommended modifications. **Motion carried.**

**(VI)(4) Discuss/consider recommendation to Council regarding a Certified Survey Map to combine parcels 201211502010 and 201101003010 located east of Lake Court, initiated by the City of Altoona (public hearing at August 27th Council meeting).**

City Planner Clements explained that the two parcels are owned by the City of Altoona, located immediately east of Lake Court, and total 3.993 acres. Completion of the CSM prepares the property for sale and development consistent with a purchase agreement for the property: River Prairie Townhomes (Item 3). A subsequent condominium instrument will create the conditions for independent ownership of each dwelling associated with the development. Clements noted there was a slight revision to the proposed CSM in relation to easements. Mark Erickson further explained the easements.

Motion by Biren/Hoepner to recommend approval of the CSM. **Motion carried.**

**(VI)(5) Discuss/consider Site Plan for 527 Fairfax Street.**

City Planner Clements explained that the proposed Site Plan for 527 Fairfax Street reflects a 1,360 SF addition to an existing 1,440 SF commercial building. The addition utilizes

the existing vehicle access to the site and adds four vehicle parking spaces. Stormwater generated by the parking area will drain to an infiltration area to the east.

Paul Holzinger, Developer for 527 Fairfax Street was available to answer questions Plan Commission Members had regarding the site plan.

Motion by Hoepner/Sexton to approve the Site Plan for 527 Fairfax Street as proposed. **Motion carried.**

**(VI)(6) Discuss/consider recommendation to Council regarding Final Plat for Hillcrest Greens Condominium.**

City Planner Clements explained that the proposed Condominium Plat is consistent with the approved Specific Implementation Plan for Whisper Ridge Townhomes approved by the Plan Commission on February 11, 2020 and City Council on February 13th. The public hearing for the preliminary plat - condominium instrument was held before the Plan Commission on July 14th and approved at that time. The preliminary plat was approved by the Council on July 23rd. Final consideration of the Condominium Instrument will be considered by the Council on August 27th.

Bill Albright, Developer was available to answer questions Plan Commission Members had regarding the Final Plat

Motion by Biren/Hoepner to recommend approval of the Final Plat for Hillcrest Greens Condominium. **Motion carried.**

**(VII) MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

**(1) Commissioner Training Opportunities**

City Planner Clements referred to the following:

- University of Wisconsin Extension Fall Zoning Webinars

Upper Midwest APA Conference (Virtual)

Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa will be hosting a joint virtual annual conference on **October 12 - 14.**

The City has budgeted for supporting Commissioners to attend. Please alert staff if you are interested. Attendance, even for a portion of the Conference, is highly encouraged.

UW - Madison, Division of Extension

The University of Wisconsin Division of Extension provides continuing education opportunities concerning a variety of planning and development related topics. There are two upcoming webinars recommended by staff, and the City has budgeted for Commissioners to attend:

New Rules for Conditional Uses - Tuesday, September 29, 2020, 10-11 am

Refreshing Your Zoning Ordinance - Monday, November 30, 2020, 10-11 am

Details are attached and are available on our Eventbrite page:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/zoning-webinars-registration-112871838708>



## **(VII)(2) Preliminary Community Change Information**

The Preliminary Estimate of the January 1, 2020 Population for local governments was released by WI Department of Administration on August 10th. Final estimates will be released on October 10th. The City of Altoona preliminary population estimate is 8,099, an increase of 1,393 residents or 20.77% since 2010. Altoona remains #2 fastest growing City in Wisconsin in percentage terms, with the remaining four of five fastest growing located in Dane County.

Another interesting frame is that Altoona represents 0.14% of Wisconsin's population, but accounted for 0.83% of total state population growth.

Preliminary estimates for the City of Eau Claire is 68,429, an increase of 2,498 or 3.79% since 2010. The Town of Washington estimate is 7,441, an increase of 307 or 4.30%.

Estimates for Eau Claire County growth of 5,223 persons, or 5.29%, is the sixth highest rate among Wisconsin's 72 counties. This figure is very similar to La Crosse County (5.07%). The estimated change in total state population is 2.95%. The City of Altoona, approximately 7.8% of Eau Claire County estimated population, represented 26.7% of estimated County growth.

City Planner Clements mentioned that staff will provide a more thorough summary near the end of the year once estimates are finalized and local 2020 development information is compiled.

## **(VII)(3) Supplemental Materials**

See Enclosed:

- APA Planning Advisory Service *QuickNotes* #54: The Value of Planning (2015)
- APA Planning Advisory Service *QuickNotes* #87: Biophilia (2020)

The audience for the enclosed APA *QuickNotes* #54 is both public officials and engaged citizens, and this edition summarizes some of the many benefits of community planning. "Communities that do not plan are often forced to deal with problems reactively. Perhaps more importantly, though, they are less likely to seize opportunities for transformative and positive change."

*QuickNotes* #87 summarizes Biophilia (*bio* = life, living things; *philia* = love for), a concept that describes the innate human desire to connect with other living things and the natural environment. Multiple studies have shown that the connection to nature has numerous positive impacts on physical and mental health. Yet decades of urbanization and sedentary lifestyles have disconnected people from nature; we spend most of the day sitting indoors without easy access to green space.

While planners have long been aware of the benefits from nature exposure, most U.S. cities still lack an equitable and effective integration of nature, and nearly all places can do better. This dynamic resurfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when most people were forced to shelter in place in their nature-deprived neighborhoods. Many communities experienced tremendous increase in the use of outdoor public spaces, including parks and trails of all types, often resulting in crowded conditions and calls for renewed attention and investment.

This edition of *PAS QuickNotes* emphasizes the importance of biophilia in planning and explains how planners can create biophilic cities and communities that provide equitable access to nature and green space design that offers an effective nature experience for all.

**(VII)(4) 2021 Capital Budget**

City Planner Clements mentioned that City Staff is preparing the 2021 annual budget. The first budget meeting was held on August 13th prior to the City Council meeting. The initial proposed capital budget (CIP) as assembled by staff was presented. Staff is working on getting some preliminary estimates of projects budgets from comparable projects, and the budget request may be updated based upon these findings.

Items most relevant to planning functions included in the proposed CIP include:

**Comprehensive Plan**

This budget is intended to provide financial resources to engage consultants and potentially acquire additional materials to complete a new comprehensive plan. Staff time in managing current development projects and city-initiated projects has prevented time to focus on this very large and critical project. Consultants would collaborate with WCWRPC in mapping and scenario planning activities they have already completed and have under contract to support. Depending upon timing, we may be able to begin this project yet this calendar year.

**Volkman Property Concept Plan**

This budget is indeed to provide resources to engage design professionals to create preliminary development concepts for the 83 acres purchased by the City near County Highway SS and Highway 12, and adjacent properties. This plan is intended to provide land use options for Council to arrive at development scenarios. This plan is intended to be utilized in the subsequent year (2022) to create precise plans for all or part of the property.

**Windsor Forest Cluster Neighborhood Plan**

Creating a concept plan for property owned by the City located generally between Nottingham Way and Saxonwood Drive. Staff is currently pursuing an opportunity for a UW-Madison Landscape Architecture Capstone Project to complete in initial vision. This budget is intended to either take that student vision into a format appropriate for seeking development of the property, or begin from staff input.

**Potential Additional Projects:**

Climate Action Plan

Urban Forestry Assessment / Strategic Plan / Management Plan

**Additional Items:**

The 2021 budget includes funding to implement an electronic municipal code platform for improved access, searching, and updating.

The City is in discussion with WCWRPC to complete; (1) Update the City-wide Official Map; (2) Complete a Bicycle & Pedestrian Implementation Plan (building on the current staff-led effort), including a Safe Routes to Parks component.

**(VIII) Adjournment.**

Motion by Hoepner/Roth to adjourn at 6:55 p.m. **Motion carried.**

Minutes transcribed by Cindy Bauer, Altoona City Clerk