

**MINUTES OF THE ALTOONA, WI
REGULAR PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
October 13, 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,
Barbara Oas-Holmes, and Andraya Albrecht.

Absent: Plan Commission Members Bill Hoepner and Dean Roth

Also Present: City Planner Joshua Clements
Management Analyst Roy Atkinson
City Clerk Cindy Bauer

(III) Citizen Participation Period.

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

(IV) Approval of minutes.

Motion by Sexton/Biren to approve the minutes of the September 8, 2020 Regular Plan Commission meeting and the September 22, 2020 Special Plan Commission Meeting. **Motion carried.**

(V) Old Business – none.

(VI) New Business

(1) Fence Standards and Requirements (Discussion)

City Planner Joshua Clements referred to Altoona Municipal Code 19.56.070 “Fences and Walls”. Clements explained that the fence ordinance in Altoona was created predominantly in 2005 and most recently amended in 2017 when standard building setbacks were modified.

Generally, on residential properties, fences in front and street side yards may be no greater than three feet in height, and 50% open. Screening fences up to eight feet in height are permitted in interior side and rear yards. The purpose “is to provide for the coordination of design and location of fences and walls to maximize the positive interrelationship of building and public street, maintain visual access and security due to lines of sight” by controlling the character of fences between the building and the street, while allowing screened outdoor space to the side and rear. There are an unknown number of non-conforming fences that were installed prior to 2005 when the current front-yard fence standards were adopted.

Recently, the owner of a property adjoining Lake Altoona has inquired about a screening fence closer to the right-of-way than 30 feet. The owner has a large lot and existing home setback greater than 200 feet, common for lakefront property in Altoona. One rationale by the owner for placing the fence closer to the right-of-way is that the purpose of the code to maintain a positive relationship between building, private property, and the public realm is not materially advanced when the building setback is far greater than typical neighborhood conditions. Placing a fence as proposed would permit, on this particular property, adding a detached structure within

that existing 200+ foot setback where the fence would otherwise be placed, and maintain some existing trees.

City Planner Clements mentioned that if pursuing changes to the existing code, what would be the purpose of doing so, and how would that be operationalized such as to maintain the overall intent and public interest advanced or maintained by the code. For example:

- Is modifying the existing standards desirable, from a city-wide perspective?
- What parameters would result in screening fences closer to the ROW? How would this arrangement be defined?
- Where might this be applied? Other areas?
- What may be the unintended consequences?

City Planner Clements commented that large lots are preliminarily larger, higher valued homes. Depending upon the justification or standards utilized, changing the standards could apply piecemeal across other neighborhoods. Would permitting screening fences in such cases create an increased disparity, visually, with visual “estate” or “compound” quality. Staff is seeking discussion and guidance.

Mark Erickson, 2212 Lake Road, commented that he is the property owner that City Planner Clements was talking about in his summary regarding installing a fence on his property on Lake Road.

Discussion followed regarding possibly modifying the existing standards. Consensus of the committee was to direct staff to draft an ordinance to bring back at the next Plan Commission for review.

(VI)(2) Comprehensive Plan (Discussion).

City Planner Clements explained that City Staff has included a proposed budget for consultant services to assist in completing a new comprehensive plan for the City. In order to begin the project as soon as possible following adoption of the budget, staff is planning to begin engaging the Plan Commission in a “Plan for the Plan” series of discussions, reading, and exercises to prepare for a successful and impactful planning process. This process is intended to elevate readiness and preparation by staff, commissioners, and stakeholders to make the greater value and meaning from the process and from the investment in consultant services.

City Planner Clements said that between this meeting and our November meeting, staff will begin to assemble a draft Request for Proposals for consultant services. In parallel, staff will develop a broad overview for the process, which will be further refined once a consultant is selected, to illustrate the entire process. Given the incredibly broad nature of the information and analysis, content and process that culminates in a plan documents, meaningful public engagement, and the many different styles and manners of framing, creating a carefully crafted RFP can contribute toward attracting highly qualified firms and teams and provide an initial scope and tone for the project. Staff has reached out to several consultants for feedback regarding scope, budget, and content considerations for assembling a “really good” RFP. As with the ultimate plan itself, word choice can be critical to determining the precise and intended meaning of a policy or, in this case, the approach to the plan. Staff desires to engage the Plan Commission to ensure there is general agreement regarding how the intended comprehensive plan process is communicated to recruit the best possible consultant team aligned with the intent.

City Planner Clements noted that undertaking the Comprehensive Plan is a big lift. It is up to the Plan Commission how much time, and how, you want to be engaged throughout the process. However, expect for policy-level workload to increase, likely to include regular work

sessions with city and consulting staff. Clements said it is critical to understand that the planning process is as valuable as the plan. A well-designed process with meaningful public engagement:

- Captures the public's vision and values
- Engages the community in meaningful ways
- Elevates the understanding of complex dynamics of the community
- Improves capacity of the community to engage in difficult conversations and to plan
- Improves recognition of connecting governance actions to achieving the vision & values
- ... among others

In preparation, staff recommends reviewing materials at the following sites, describing the comprehensive or master plan, and insights into effective and impactful process:

- UW Extension, Center for Land Use Education: <https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/clue/Pages/publications-resources/ComprehensivePlanning.aspx>
- “What is a Comprehensive Plan”, short video (1:29), Plan Laredo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkbDYp_ezQ8
- HALFF Associates, “The Importance of Implementable Comprehensive Plans” www.halff.com/newsroom/the-importance-of-implementable-comprehensive-plans/
- American Planning Association, Comprehensive Plan Standards for Sustaining Places <https://www.planning.org/sustainingplaces/compplanstandards/>

(VII) MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS AND COMMUNICATIONS

(1) Upper Midwest APA Conference Discussion

City Planner Clements noted that APA Chapters of Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota are hosting a joint annual conference virtually on October 12, 13 and 14. While the conference is ongoing, this agenda item is intended as an initial opportunity to share lessons learned and discuss.

(VII)(2) APA Policy & Advocacy Conference Recap

City Planner Clements noted that each year in the Fall, APA hosts the Policy & Advocacy Conference in Washington DC, which combines two days of professional development on a variety of topics, similar to a mini annual conference, with a focus on effective communication and advocacy on issues related to community planning. The conference also incorporates training for and meeting with Federal elected officials and their congressional office staff to discuss pertinent policy issues and connect these national legislative efforts to local impact. Due to Covid-19, the 2020 conference was held virtually on September 23 and 24. City Planner Clements led the Wisconsin delegation in meetings with staff from the congressional offices of Sen. Baldwin, Sen. Johnson and Rep. Kind.

(VII)(3) Chippewa Valley Housing Task Force

City Planner Clements mentioned that the next meeting of the Task Force is scheduled for Friday, October 16th at 9:00am. The focus will be on providing an update on activities of the various contributors, and re-engaging how to continue our collective work.

(VII)(4) Transit Development Plan

City Planner Clements noted that the fifth meeting of the Transit Development Plan Steering Committee, upon which City Planner Clements serves, is to be held virtually on October 13th at 1:00 p.m. Summary of public engagement and refined recommendations are among the agenda items.

The project website is: www.eauclairewi.gov/government/our-divisions/transit/transit-administration/transit-development-plan

Once the draft recommendations are provided to the Transit Commission, those materials shall be provided to the Plan Commission and Council.

(VII)(5) Community Planning Month

City Planner Clements noted that October is recognized as Community Planning Month. Covid-19 restrictions create constraints on in-person education and engagement events, but virtual gatherings have been held and continue to be planned. City Planner Clements presented: “Ripple Effects: Urban Planning post- Riis” on October 6th at the Chippewa Valley Museum. The Housing Task Force is meeting on October 16th, which although this is an ongoing effort, also highlights the role of proactive planning.

(VIII) Adjournment.

Motion by Sexton/Oas-Holmes to adjourn at 6:37 p.m. **Motion carried.**

Minutes transcribed by Cindy Bauer, Altoona City Clerk