

TO: Planning Commission Members  
Honorable Mayor and City Council Members  
FROM: Donald Smith, Chair  
DATE: January 23, 2016  
RE: Meeting Minutes,  
Tuesday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016

The Planning Commission met at 5:20 p.m., on Tuesday, January 12, 2016 in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. The following members were Present: Donald Smith, Richard Wieser, Linda Larson, Patti Dockendorff, Jerry Steffes and Ex-officio member Brian Krenz. Dave Hanifl, Mani Edpuganti and Shawn Wetterlin were not present.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Smith at 5:20 p.m.

1. The meeting minutes of October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015 were approved as distributed by motion of Linda Larson and second by Patti Dockendorff with 4 members recording a “yes” vote with Steffes recording an abstention.
2. The Chair provided background on the Comprehensive Planning Process and timeline. 7 Committees were formed to consider the 7 standard elements of a Comprehensive Plan. The purpose is to engage more members of the community in the process than would be typical with the hope that more citizens will mean, better ideas, greater accountability and new people to serve on committees and Council in the future. The Planning Commission receives the draft report and identifies areas of oversight or clarification for the next draft so that there will be fewer required edits after the ‘final draft’ is prepared, reviewed and recommended to the council. Public comment was received with each citizen (approximately 30/35 citizens were present) and member of the planning commission given an opportunity to comment. The response was one of appreciation for the work of the chairs and members of the task groups and support for the findings and action steps. Pertinent comments for consideration in final draft follow after each of the Task Groups.
  - A. The Economic Development and Downtown Enhancement Task Groups presented their draft reports. Chairs Arick and Anne Hendrickson reporting. Some comments are from their oral report and others from the public and commission members. Similar comments are grouped.
    - a. The community has dedicated high speed optical fiber for Internet.
    - b. Play to strengths with Recreation and Tourism
    - c. Need for Marketing and Promotional plan and dedicated funding dedicated to support a professional campaign. Needed to overcome ‘reluctance’ to move to other state. La Crosse paper often covers the region, ex la crescent, so that La Crescent is not ‘top of mind’. Is there a theme that could be used for a year or a

campaign? Apple Capital is descriptive and may have some tourism value but is not attractive when considering business and residents.

- d. Industrial and Commercial Development was less considered in the report.
- e. Bus service and connectivity are competitive advantage for workforce travel not using Automobiles.
- f. Green and Eco were often mentioned as opportunities. Clean Water, Air, easy access to out of doors. Green business and a community focus could offer business opportunity and community differentiation.
- g. The available community workforce is an element not discussed.
- h. Attracting young professionals seems to be an opportunity if the downtown is developed and it includes 'trendy' upper story housing.
- i. A Targeted workshop on development with developers and community leaders might provide strategic relationships and ideas.
- j. There should be an identifiable center to the City Center. A sense of 'place' for some gathering and a place to pause. Providing the small-town feel. Theme? City living with small town feel.
- k. Millennials should be considered. Smaller homes, closer to schools and services, use public transportation, walk and bike to work and as transportation.
- l. The causeway/pike should be targeted for development with 20,000 daily vehicle count.
- m. The report details challenges for taxes but another comparison was provided that offers a more positive assessment and comparison between Wisconsin and Minnesota. (1/12/16 Tribune provided consultants). Student test scores are also a positive advantage for families considering education. Community test scores should be included.
- n. Root River connection is a long term opportunity..."the trail starts in downtown la crescent".
- o. Should the vision include the advantage of closeness to the services of the larger city? Something where La Crescent has a strategic advantage. Minutes by car, bus, or bike from Hospitals and major employers and entertainment options. Safety is a clear advantage and with standards inviting architecture could also differentiate.
- p. In some ways the presentations 'felt' more robust than the written draft document. Chairs were asked to look at the words and ensure that all is captured in the report.
- q. Connectivity from neighborhoods to the City Center to Parks to La Crosse to Recreation was mentioned often. Wayfinding concepts were discussed.
- r. There is some lack of knowledge about local opportunities including walking/hiking trails.
- s. Concern about rail safety and township and county regulation (or lack of) regulation are issues for consideration.
- t. Parking is left that lots should be purchased as they become available for parking. We should be more intentional and a plan should be prepared by engagement of consultants. Or included in land use planning task group.
- u. Arts and Culture is mentioned in the vision and little is reflected in the report or strategies.

- B. The Housing Task Group chaired by Sandy Graves presented their draft report. Some comments are from their oral report and others from the public and commission members. Similar comments are grouped.
- a. HUD small city grant can be used again to improve housing stock. #4 under strategies.
  - b. The connection between housing and schools and schools and housing was emphasized.
  - c. The plan offers apparent equal emphasis on all types of housing (senior, assisted, family and affordable). Yet land is limited and building 55+housing could attract an older base to the community and work against school age families. There is a tension between scarce resources of land, subsidy, financing and time that is neither resolved nor acknowledged.
  - d. The priority of workforce housing, which is often family housing with school age children was not addressed.
  - e. Aging mobile home parks were not seemingly give specific consideration.
  - f. It was noted that, reflecting on the many of zoning considerations offered that the decisions and design standards of today shape the future of tomorrow. Many of the offered suggestions would change the feel of the town and are a smattering without any sense that there is a goal or purpose in mind.
  - g. County and City directions (ie roads) needs alignment. It starts with knowing the Counties' Comp Plans and visions.
  - h. Millennials and their differing needs/desires should be considered.
  - i. Specifically. Strategy 20, remove 'where there is safe' and replace with 'favoring'. Typos were noted; Strategy 7 change initials to reflect MN; Strategy 8 change 'codes' to 'standards';
  - j. Rental registry, and/or inspection of rental properties, might be strategies to maintain housing stock and neighborhoods.
- C. 3-4. Downtown Mixed Use and 3-5. Commercial will be reviewed next meeting after input is received from MSA.
- D. Implementation and Monitoring will be discussed at the next meeting. This must be part of the final draft.

The motion for adjournment was preceded by recognition of work contributed by the many in this process, especially the chairs, committee members and citizens in attendance. Consensus was that it was a positive meeting and discussion. Adjourned 7:25.

The next meeting will be February 2, 2016 at 5:15.

Respectfully Recorded, Donald Smith.