

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
Planning Commission Members
FROM: Paul Kenaga, Building Official/Zoning Administrator
DATE: April 23 2014
RE: Planning Commission Minutes

The Planning Commission met at 5:30 p.m., on Tuesday, April 8, 2014, in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. The following members were present: Don Smith, Jerry Steffes, Richard Wieser, Dave Hanifl and Ex-officio members John Graf, and Bill Waller. Planning Members Linda Larson, Patty Dockendorff and Ex-officio member Shawn Wetterlin were not present. Paul Kenaga was also in attendance

1. Meeting was called to order by Chairman Smith and roll call taken.
2. Two developers were represented and about 50 citizens were present. A third developer was present through a statement. The presentations referenced specific sites and concepts. Each of the developers indicated an eagerness to move forward. One developer was attempting to acquire land while two proposed City land. Two developers made 20 minutes presentations after each presentation questions were entertained from the Planning Commission and members of the public. The indication of interest from the third developer was read. There were a considerable number of questions, comments and discussion.

Mr. Waller distributed various site plans showing how approximate building outlines for an event center and senior housing might fit on various sites.

The public meeting was closed and the Planning Commission was joined with members of the Blandin Leadership group that joined with the Planning Commission two years ago to identify and work with interested developers.

There has been considerable discussion about senior housing and the Planning Commission's goal was to define what specifically the City needs in a Senior Housing Project. After each member spoke twice on the topic it was clear that there was considerable consensus. That consensus is documented in "Summary Findings related to Senior Housing".

**Summary Findings related to Senior Housing. April 8, 2014
Planning Commission and Senior Housing Task Group**

The need for Senior Housing is expressed in many ways including: a county study; a state wide study that identified La Crescent as the number one underserved city; a study commissioned by Land Sake/Neighbors in Action and funded by Blandin Foundation; and our daily interactions with members of our community.

The commissioned study can be summarized as showing a senior housing project could be successful at 80 total units with a mix of Independent Living (36 units) ; Assisted Living (28 units) and Memory Care (16 units).

On April 8 the Planning Commission invited 3 developers who have expressed an interest in providing senior housing to make public presentations. Two made presentations and the third provided a written outline proposal. The ideas varied, none of the developers have control of sufficient land and all would be willing to develop on land near the American Legion, the site of the Elementary School or other sites they are investigating. There was public commentary after each of the presentations.

After the public meeting the Planning Commission and a few members of the Senior Housing Task group had discussion with each of the members sharing their thoughts. A clear consensus was developed on most items discussed and is presented as the findings of the Planning Commission. The goal was not to discuss the developers or specific proposal but rather to define the needs for our Community.

1. There is a clear and evident need for Senior Housing in La Crescent.
2. That a developer with land and financing that does not require approvals exceeding a building permit could proceed on their own timetable.
3. That if a developer requires other approvals such as zoning, parkland, or TIF then a consensus of the type of desired project is essential.
4. A city supported project should include a range of housing types to serve our community with the approximate numbers of units: 36 independent living, 28 assisted living and 16 memory care. In addition it should be designed to serve non-resident needs like senior dining.

The reasons included:

- + Some forms of senior housing are more profitable than others so that they are best constructed together to avoid a developer from simply serving the most profitable need.
- + A full range of housing allows seniors to 'age-in-place' without the need to relocate. The concept is embodied in the concept of 'communities for lifetime' and suggests attentiveness to programming as well as housing needs.
- + Community is formed with more able finding purpose by assisting less able residents.
- + There is a need for each of the types of housing.
- + Such a design provides dining and socialization opportunities for non-resident seniors and congregate dining for independent seniors living in the facility.
- + There are advantages to 'scale'. Larger facilities are able to provide a greater number of amenities such as transportation, programming and supportive services to frail and medically needy residents.
- + A single project is desirable as multiple smaller projects would take more total available land in our City that already has insufficient land for residential housing

5. There is immediacy to the need for senior housing but the immediacy should not blind the city to long-term advantage of developing a project that might take longer to achieve but meet a great percentage of community need.
 - + The discussion was of a balance between meeting the need and supporting a less desirable development. This could involve a choice of a less desirable location or waiting for a more desirable location. Or it could involve a choice between a development option that did not have the number of units, mix of units or desired amenities as are needed.
 - + The City has a role in helping to advance Senior Housing. This role is no different than any other high priority community development or economic development opportunities.
 - + This topic of how to get 'what the community needs' and 'how to get it fast' may lead to the greatest opportunity for tension as we move forward.
6. That the builder/designer, developer and facility operator are all important to a quality project. Each should be represented in presentations and evaluation of options.
7. A for-profit senior housing project is anticipated.
8. A central location for senior housing is desirable.
 - + There was considerable discussion about site and what 'seniors desire'. There was general, but certainly not unanimous, agreement that a central location would be beneficial for no-resident seniors and could energize the Central Business District if located near or in the urban core. There was certain agreement that less-expensive rural land at the edge of town, though it was once the trend, is not desirable for La Crescent nor desired by our residents.
 - + The topic of the Timm land and Veterans Park was discussed. First a concept drawing should be refined to determine if the site is even feasible. It was acknowledged that the City Council would have to determine if parkland could be made available and if parkland used for Senior Housing should or must be replaced. This determination has many facets including uses that are in the approved Park and Recreation Plan and need that might come from displacing baseball diamonds if the Elementary School were to be relocated. Again, the City has a significant role in land discussions and evaluations.

These findings were unanimously adopted by the Planning Commission April 8, 2014.
Sincerely, for the Planning Commission, Donald Smith, Chair.

3. The Planning Commission reviewed a Request for Proposal for initiating the Comprehensive Planning Process. The Comprehensive Planning Process has been previously approved by the Council and will focus on 8 strategic areas, over the course of 2 years that will be stitched into the Comprehensive Plan at the end of the process. Each of the Focuses will broadly engage stakeholders and general public and require participants' involvement for a period of about 4 months.

The City Administrator, Planning Commission Chair and an additional planning commission member (Dick Wieser) would meet with the two pre-approved firms preparatory to their submitting proposals responsive to the Request for Proposal. The proposals will be received and interviews scheduled. A final proposal for the specific firm and the proposed plan of work will be prepared and submitted to the Council for its approval.

Upon a roll call vote, all members present voted in favor of the plan as proposed.

4. There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:40 p.m.

Saved as minutes of April 8, 2014 Planning Commission.