

MINUTES FOR THE NORMAL NEIGHBORHOOD WORKING GROUP
Thursday, May 7, 2015
Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way

Chair Pam Marsh called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m. in the Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way.

Mayor Stromberg, Rich Kaplan, Michael Dawkins, Mike Morris, Brandon Goldman, Bill Molnar, and Mike Faught were present.

1. Consent Agenda

Kaplan/Dawkins M/S to approve the minutes of April 15, 2014. Voice Vote; all ayes. Motion passes.

2. Discussion

Marsh reviewed the reason for this meeting, and informed the group she hopes the meeting will be focused, and end with clear recommendations for staff to use in the next steps.

Transportation Commission Review

Faught stated that the Transportation Commission met and reviewed the latest version of the revised plan. They gave a few specific recommendations, but approved the overall plan as presented. The two most important recommendations from the Commission were that at a minimum a sidewalk or multiuse path be completed along the south side of East Main Street from Walker Avenue to Clay Street in the event development occurs on East Main Street, and that if development occurs adjacent to the railroad tracks, the railroad crossing must be installed.

Group discussed with Faught details of the minimum requirements recommended by the Commission, in particular how the project could be phased and how the improvements would be paid for.

Marsh suggested adding the following statements to the plan:

1. We believe exterior transportation improvements can be staged, dependent upon development within the plan area.
2. The City of Ashland may be called upon to be an active partner for the exterior transportation improvements (through means such as advanced financing, etc.)

Faught stated that it may be important to include a statement within the second recommendation regarding requiring a development agreement.

Mayor Stromberg suggested that the second statement be altered to something more like:

2. The City of Ashland has to be prepared for the fact that it may be necessary to be a partner in developing the exterior transportation improvements for a positive outcome for the whole of the city.

Group discussed concerns regarding a lack of sidewalks without the full improvement and how

that may be dangerous. They also agreed that Goldman and Faught should work together to create a second statement combining both Marsh's, Faught's, and Stromberg's suggestions.

Wetland Delineation

The City recently received a new delineation from Mahar homes, which was approved by the State of Oregon. It is consistent with the Ashland Comp. plan, but not the current Normal Avenue plan.

Group discussed the new delineation and how they could be altered in the plan with either a minor or a major amendment, depending upon the size of the alteration. They asked Randy Jones about the new delineation. He stated that he would like the group to consider marking open space to reflect the true delineation, thereby reducing the overall open space in the plan. He believes that it is too onerous to development to set aside so much land which is not actually a true wetland, particularly considering the already challenging requirements relating to transportation improvements.

Group asked for information from Goldman related to the difference between County and City building requirements.

Dawkins reminded the group that the Planning Commission didn't set aside the open space for the wetlands, but for the conservation of open space, regardless of any wetland delineation. They understood that the wetlands delineation would likely change over time but felt maintaining the open space was valuable.

Group discussed whether having 25% of the plan be preserved for open space was too difficult for developers. They also discussed concerns regarding who maintains the open space – if it's the responsibility of an HOA, fees related to that maintenance would mean the homes are no longer affordable, thereby stopping the family friendly goal they are working toward.

The group proposed moving forward with the open space plan as-is but changing the code to maintain flexibility by allowing all open space changes proposed to reflect changes in delineated wetlands to be minor amendments. There was concern that this would mean that all open space could disappear entirely from future development. Molnar informed them that most of the Cemetery Creek open space shown on the plan would remain protected as it is in the Water Resources Map as requiring riparian and floodplain protection.

There was general agreement to leave open-space as-is in the plan, with alterations allowed by minor amendment.

Affordable Housing

Group decided to make no changes to the proposed requirements.

Urban Design Qualities (Family-Friendly Housing)

Stromberg would like to see these goals of pedestrian oriented cluster housing, neighborhood amenities, and open space connectivity be used when the annexation process begins. He has concern that if we aren't specific in requirements, we will continue to be challenging to

developers for our lack of up-front clarity.

Group discussed the “neighborhood module” idea, and wondered if it would be necessary to alter current code language to reflect the intention of wanting that style used in the development of this area. Molnar stated that the current code is pretty strong regarding this style of housing, but that if the group wants it stronger, they can look into what would be needed for that. Group decided that instead of changing the code they would include examples of preferred “neighborhood module” plans for developers to use when planning.

Diversity of Housing

Group felt this was adequately reflected in the current plan.

Connectivity

Group felt this was adequately reflected in the current plan.

Shared Open Space

Group discussed whether it was more desirable to have common open space verses space specific to each lot. The focus in the plan currently is more on maintaining natural open space but Stromberg would prefer more focus on gardens. Group did not feel a change was necessary in the plan, though options reflecting community gardens could be helpful.

Life-Cycle Housing (aka Sr. Friendly Housing)

Group did not support adding this to the plan.

Conservation

Group was worried that this is already a large part of the marketing of any home, which unfortunately frequently adds too many costs into the home to also be family friendly. There are already substantially high standards in our code. Also group felt that if we were to impost stronger standards they need to be city-wide, not just focused on one area. They agreed to add no new language regarding this in the plan.

Fire Adapted Community

Group determined that as there is already a move to add an overlay of fire adapted throughout the city, there was no need to add to this plan.

Overall, the group felt that it was most important to create a plan which would build a great neighborhood.

3. Public Forum

John Clayson: (1615 Peachy Road) He is a builder and developer. Affordability is the number one requirement of making any neighborhood family friendly. Unfortunately, pricing is almost always better in Medford. This is particularly true when so many families want homes with semi-private or private yards. He supports the ideas in this plan, but doesn't want the group to discount the importance or desirability of a traditional block style neighborhood.

Jan Vidmar: Families in her neighborhood come and go. They don't always leave because of

affordability, but more often leave because there is not enough space in her neighborhood for a yard. Those spaces are more easily found in Talent or Medford and Ashland can't compete with their availability.

Bryce Anderson: He is concerned about the concept of phasing the transportation improvements. The main concern of the group he represents is how the increase in traffic on East Main Street will effect area safety. Limited improvements such as a walking path with no sidewalk, bikelane, and turn lanes are not enough to avoid conflicts between pedestrians, bicyclists, and autos.

Zechariah Heck: Introduced himself as the newest planner in Community Development. He's not here speaking in that capacity, however. As a young professional hoping to someday own a home in Ashland and start a family here he wanted the group to know that homes with private yards are less appealing to people his age than a community area. Additionally, conservation or sustainable measures may cost more now but they are important in the long-run. He hopes that they keep conservation requirements in the plan so that homes in the future can be built with those features.

4. Next Steps

The next meeting will be May 21, at 4:00 p.m. in the Siskiyou Room. Goldman will have a final draft plan for the group to consider in order to move it on to the Planning Commission and then the Council.

Meeting adjourned at 5: 42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Diana Shiplet
Executive Secretary