

MINUTES FOR THE NORMAL NEIGHBORHOOD WORKING GROUP
Thursday, July 24, 2014
Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way

Pam Marsh called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. in the Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way.

Mayor Stromberg, Michael Morris, Michael Dawkins, Rich Kaplan, and Bill Molnar were present.

Chair Marsh gave overview of why the agenda for this meeting was different than was discussed at the end of the last meeting, due to scheduling challenges.

1. Consent Agenda

Morris/Stromberg M/S to approve the minutes as presented. Voice Vote; all ayes. Motion passes.

2. Discussion items

Molnar gave presentation on how the current greenway/open space plan came about. The natural areas are pivotal to this location and so need to be integrated into the plan. Paths were chosen as part of the plan in order to allow for interaction with the natural environment. He explained how the term, “conservation area” is from the current Comprehensive Plan, but staff do realize that we might need to reconsider using this term as the areas in question may be used for alternative uses (gardens, open space, parks, etc.)

Molnar explained that the wetlands as shown on the plan were determined by state statutes. They are not necessarily 100% accurate as property owners needed to give the state permission to access their land, and not all did. He noted that Ashland a very high percentage of property owners who did give permission for access. They looked at both the floodplain corridor and the riparian setbacks and picked the wider of the two, when establishing the current plan.

Molnar explained the process for how the wetlands boundary can be altered, using either minor amendments or major amendments. The group discussed the importance of the wetlands, as more than just a wetland – they are conservation and wildlife corridors.

The group discussed density and how changes to the current density may occur based on the wetland areas on each property. Group discussed density bonuses and their use for protecting or enhancing conservation areas. How a smaller amount of wetland than currently determined can be restored to a higher level in order for a builder to transfer some of that space into space for building. Group discussed changing the language of the plan from “conservation area” to “open space” or “community space”. They would like to match it to already in-use definitions.

Mayor Stromberg discussed the possibility of using “performance standards” option in creating this plan.

Marsh reminded the group that the delineation of wetlands/conservation space is 25% of the area of this plan, when a typical project only has 5% - and this higher amount does not include any of the un-developed parts of each home lot.

Group discussed transportation elements which cross and/or involve the conservation corridors. Molnar reminded the group that transportation goals and natural area goals tend to be in conflict with one another. Local communities have the ability to mitigate other areas of the natural corridor

for streets which cross the wetlands. The challenge in this plan is that nearly any east-west street is going to encounter a conservation area.

The group discussed how this is the first plan since the riparian ordinance was put into place and what challenges that brings about as well as how it makes this plan different than plans of similar neighborhoods.

3. Public Input

Randy Jones: has property in the plan and has done a wetlands delineation with the State. He gave a copy to the community development department and wants it taken into consideration. He doesn't agree with the current delineation. States that there is no naturally occurring stream in the area, it is all storm water, run-off from the city, and "lose" TID water. If those were diverted or controlled the wetlands would shrink.

Jan Vidmar: her current house would never have been built under current riparian ordinance as she's in the floodplain. She's concerned that there has been no discussion of flooding. Also is concerned that any changes in the area could cause water backing up which would increase the chances of flooding in her area.

Julie Mathews: the group needs to look at the difference between concepts and the actuality of the area. They need to determine better definitions of buffer zones. The whole area is on the down-slope, catching all the runoff from the upper areas of town. Trading densities does not effect what the land and water are going to do – floods happen. She would like the group to keep as much buffer/wildlife areas as possible. She would like the plan to work out 100% of what is going to go on with the wildlife areas as a whole, rather than have determinations made parcel by parcel, that way rights can be divided equally.

Gil Livney: also had the State do a delineation of the wetlands on his property and after closing a storm drain they determined there were none, which means the plan is incorrect. The character of the land doesn't change from year to year based on water. Wondered why the group was talking about taking land only from this area for wetland restoration, he believes we should be taking it from the whole of the city. Said there are not two creeks in the area and that creating this map without understanding the reality of the land is not okay.

Debbie Miller: every property in the area has been purchased with the knowledge of where the wetlands are, and it's disingenuous to say otherwise.

Sue DeMarinis: delineation of wetland areas during a drought is ridiculous. She showed an aerial photo from 2012 showing how green the area typically is. Stated density bonuses need to be reconsidered – higher densities should not be allowed near the conservation areas. Roads are necessary for connectivity but should be worked around what is going to be used and what natural resources we already have.

Nancy Meyer: thanked the group. She is invested in the area. A few years of wet weather, even though we're currently in a drought, will bring back many of the wetlands which should be protected.

4. Future Meeting Dates

The next meeting will occur on August 21, at 4:30 in the Siskiyou Room.

Mayor asked if it was okay with the group for him to invite David Chapman to speak to how the transportation plan was created and how it affects this plan. Group agreed to the initiation.

Meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Diana Shiplet
Executive Secretary