

MINUTES FOR THE NORMAL NEIGHBORHOOD WORKING GROUP
Thursday, October 9, 2014
Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way

Chair Pam Marsh called the meeting to order at 2:37 p.m. in the Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way.

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

Marsh discussed the process for the meeting, and the goal of moving to a conclusion soon. She is hoping to have this ready for the City Council meeting of December 2. The group set the next meeting for October 23rd at 4:30 pm. They discussed possibly needing to hold the meeting in an alternate location.

1. Consent Agenda

Kaplan/Dawkins M/S to approve the minutes of September 18, 2014. Voice Vote; all ayes. Motion passes.

Marsh reviewed previous meeting discussion. From that discussion it appears there are four remaining areas needing further information or discussion. These are:

1. Transportation
2. Affordable Housing
3. Building Height Limitation
4. Open Space

2. Discussion

Transportation

Faught discussed the railroad crossing. Per information obtained from ODOT, this is not as simple a process as it used to be. Ultimately, the decision is up to the railroad. He did some cost estimates for an at-grade crossing (above or below grade would increase costs dramatically).

The group discussed why the City may want to proceed with the railroad crossing on their own, most particularly because the process for changing from a private to a public crossing will only get harder. Faught discussed some financing options for doing the crossing.

The group agreed that the railroad crossing is an integral to the plan ever being approved. Group doesn't agree with the original plan that the area could be developed in phases, with the first phase having no crossing. Any portion of the plan will make the crossing necessary.

Group discussed the East Main Street connections. Faught recommends a minimum of three connections. Group discussed whether a "less specific" traffic plan would be valuable. Faught agreed that the plan is generally more specific about road locations than most plans but that this is a good tool for developers to understand the needs of the area. Just because there is no development now, doesn't mean there won't be 30 years from now and having a good connection plan in place is important.

Affordable Housing

Goldman gave an overview of alternate ways to achieve the affordable housing requirements. Options like transferring land to an affordable housing developer (this land doesn't have to be give for free – it can be sold to mitigate costs required in getting infrastructure to the site).

Group asked for Randy Jones to discuss whether the alternate options given by Goldman would make development more likely. Jones believes the requirements are still a non-starter. He believes this project needs to be a public-private cooperation, that his group could never develop it on their own.

Group discussed sound attenuation possibilities in order to meet requirements for Federal assistance with the affordable housing related expenses.

Building Height Limits

The objection to the current height allowable was never fully resolved. Currently allowed 40' or 3 stories, rather than the more common 35' and 2 ½ stories. The taller height was a recommendation of the Planning Commission, but wasn't officially made part of the proposed ordinance. Therefore, if the Council disagrees with the recommendation they can leave the ordinance as-is. Dawkins informed the group that it was recommended to allow for more flexibility in the plan. Kaplan stated it tied in with the commercial area, so developers could have first floor commercial and still have two stories of residential above. It was a way to increase density without having to lose open-space.

Open Space

Goldman gave information on the wetland delineation maps in the packed, but discussion was deferred to the next meeting.

3. Public Input

Sue DiMarinis: Agrees with the Planning Commission on the importance of keeping open space larger. If the open space is to be reduced the density should also be reduced. The east-west connection is likely only a placeholder as it's unlikely we'll ever get the owners to accept anything more. However, she thinks a walking path is a great idea. Would like connections to East Main to be limited to two, as that should be adequate.

Nancy Boyer: Thanked the group for listening and thanked the attendees for continuing to attend. Thanked Mike for discussing the Normal Avenue traffic issues. Wonders why we continue to call it the Normal Plan when it will fall into the lap of the entire community.

Gil Livney: Affordable housing is not just about the cost of that unit – each affordable house requires more profit on two others in order to make up for giving one away.

Randy Jones: His group doesn't support high density. This is the edge of the urban growth boundary and he can't imagine 40' buildings. He's glad the group is meeting and considering all the needs. He would need the City to help fund this project. Believes that no developer could handle all the costs.

Group discussed what costs Jones believes the City should pick up – including RR, Walker and Clay Street connections, sewer improvements.

Howdy Miller: Do we have goals and aims for this committee? [Marsh explained that there were very specific goals] The question of should it be built needs to be answered. He's looking for fairness and balance on both sides of this plan. Is upset that more time has been about how to make it developable rather than if it should be developed.

4. Next Meeting

October 23, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. Marsh told the group that their homework is to decide what they believe a wonderful neighborhood would look like and be prepared to discuss.

Meeting adjourned at 4:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Diana Shiplet
Executive Secretary