

Normal Avenue meeting

From : Debbie Miller <hmiller@jeffnet.org> Wed, Sep 03, 2014 04:58 PM
Subject : Normal Avenue meeting
To : Brandon Goldman <brandon.goldman@ashland.or.us>

Dear Brandon:

We will not be back in town until Friday afternoon; I apologize for the late reply once again to the discussion of the last meeting; somehow, travel does not lend itself to 'homework'. I also realize this is lengthy, perhaps longer than it should be, but two minutes is not a long time to point out concerns. I hope it is a fast and coherent read.

We do appreciate the thorough nature of the Normal Neighborhood study group as it weighs the competing values and pressures on this lovely area. We would hope that it does not allow haste to make waste of this parcel, when the outcome will impact the whole city.

I have several comments, which I will try to summarize for the group. The first come from the Summary Memo of August 21, which I hurriedly read during my allotted 2 minutes, but which I would like to have answered, as I think they are pertinent to finding the facts to aid decision-making.

page 1/5 How would traffic demand be lessened on East Main and Ashland streets by the modified grid network? Eventually, anyone wanting to leave the 'neighborhood' would have to use one of these roads. I am concerned that Clay Street, still somewhat rural in look but carrying an increasing amount of traffic, has not been studied or even mentioned. Yet, new subdivisions are planned for the east side of that street as well as the prospects of many VTD from the west.

page 2/5 Am I reading the indented sentence correctly that a road is proposed into Wingspread? At this time, several signs along the lanes in the park are pretty emphatic that traffic is not welcome.

We are still looking at maps showing streets through the play fields behind (south) of the Morman Church and through our pasture and back yard. Has anyone contacted the church to learn if the congregation is willing to give up its ball fields? I hope we have adequately stressed that we have no intention of paving over our yard.

maps

green streets 3/11/14 is this a street in the middle of W-12 wetland?

street network again, these street are shown through places that may not want them (see above).

discussion concept

box 1--opening Normal Ave. to through traffic was fine when only a few houses accessed the intersection w/ East Main. We have noted several times that this is a bit of a blind curve.

box 2, 4--the school bus turnaround is school district property, bought for the safety of students. Why would this safe place be jeopardized by placing a connecting street through it? I would assume that the owners of 1700 East Main, who bought Lane's property knowing the limited amount of traffic this small street carried, would not be pleased to have a large increase in cars by their kitchen window.

box 5--if this shared street is on our property, by all means, we would like it eliminated.

Comments from the August 21 meeting:

The concept of the Advance Financing tool that Mike Fought introduced and explained does seem like a bit of a gamble, with the city possibly holding the losing cards. If Ashland fronts the money, then great pressure to annex and subdivide, in order to recoup the loan, will be put upon the Council. If units are not built or not sold, then the City will lose that money. This adversely affects the populace in two ways: a) the loss of the funds loaned through the Advance Financing and b) since residentially zoned land costs the city twice as much in services as revenue brought in, current residents will be subsidizing this project both ways. Does that seem wise?

The figures for an improved railroad crossing have been, since the start of these discussions, about \$3 million, and East Main at \$8 million. Suddenly these numbers dropped considerably, even though most projects turn out to cost more than estimated and expenses will go up every year until they might be built. Those of us who live on the quiet avenue are happy with its 'unimproved' character, and do not want to contribute to its demise, nor lose our yards in the process. We concur w/ Mayor Stromberg that "the lifestyle of the existing neighborhood is in conflict w/ the street connection". These residents are not, except for a very few, in the area for material gain or greed, but because they value the land and its benefits. That should count for something. And, again, the safety issue at the north end is important to consider.

If any annexation, no matter the size, would trigger the need for these improvements, who would pay for this upgrade to the whole section?

I hope that the committee rereads the Physical and Environmental Constraints chapter of the Land Use Code, especially Chapter 18.20.040 (this may be the old numbering) and 18.63.070 about limited activities and uses in the WRPZ. I would remind the group that the individuals and companies that bought this land for speculative purposes were well aware of its fragile nature due to wetlands and creeks. The state maps delineate these areas; these studies were neutral in character, not to serve anyone's purpose. Please give them more weight than a small private observation done during a drought and after some water had been diverted.

As density is discussed on Thursday, may I remind the group that inside the present city limits is enough buildable land to accommodate projected growth for well over the five year requirement; some estimates are close to 20 years. To zone this parcel at high density to please the RPS concerns means trying to guess 50 years into the future. What will be the housing needs at that time? Did the city leaders of 1964 do everything right? We can only hope and plan well, not pave everything over for our descendants to shake their heads at our folly. Please use caution and not spoil a lovely place.

Thank you for your consideration to our concerns,
Debbie Miller