



Planning Commission Minutes

Note: Anyone wishing to speak at any Planning Commission meeting is encouraged to do so. If you wish to speak, please rise and, after you have been recognized by the Chair, give your name and complete address for the record. You will then be allowed to speak. Please note the public testimony may be limited by the Chair.

January 23, 2024

SPECIAL MEETING

Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Verner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Civic Center Council Chambers, 1175 E. Main Street. She noted that Commissioner Perkinson was attending the meeting via Zoom.

Commissioners Present:

Lisa Verner
Doug Knauer
Kerry KenCairn
Russell Phillips
Susan MacCracken Jain
Gregory Perkinson

Staff Present:

Brandon Goldman, Community Development Director
Derek Severson, Planning Manager
Michael Sullivan, Executive Assistant

Absent Members:

Eric Herron

Council Liaison:

Paula Hyatt

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Community Development Director Brandon Goldman made the following announcements:

- The City is holding its annual town hall meeting on January 24, 2024, 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the Stevenson Union Building at SOU.
- The City Council will be receiving its quarterly update from Townmakers, LLC on February 5, 2024, regarding their potential development of the Croman Mill Site. Mr. Goldman noted that there had not been any substantial changes to their proposal since their last update.

III. PUBLIC FORUM – None

IV. TYPE III PUBLIC HEARING

A. Recommendation of draft ordinance for Parks, Trails, and Open Space Map Update

Chair Verner stated that the Commission would be making a recommendation to the Council for a final decision. She directed attention to public comments received after the meeting packet had been distributed, and thanked all those who had submitted their testimony (see attachment #1).





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Staff Presentation

Mr. Severson began by reiterating that the Commission would be making a formal recommendation on the Parks, Trails and Open Space (PTOS) ordinance update to the Council for a final decision. He stated that a first reading of the draft ordinance would be held at the Council's February 20, 2024 Business Meeting.

Mr. Severson directed the Commission's attention to the public comments that staff received prior to the meeting. The first was received from Amy Gunter on behalf of the owner of 755 North Mountain Avenue, and spoke to the identification on the proposed map of NM-G of the North Mountain Neighborhood Plan as an area for acquisition for parks purposes. In regards to Ms. Gunter's letter, Mr. Severson clarified that this area was already identified for acquisition in the North Mountain Neighborhood Plan, and that there are ways the land could be acquired without triggering a modification to that plan.

Mr. Severson summarized the remaining public comments which spoke to the expansion of the Central Bike Path (CBP). Mr. Severson detailed how the TPOS map update is to be used in conjunction with the Trails Master Plan, which designated the expansion of the CBP as a critical improvement. He also pointed out that the Transportation System Plan designated the CBP as a high priority.

Mr. Severson stated that staff is generally supportive of adopting the map update with any recommendations that the Commission has for Council (see attachment #2).

Questions of Staff

Commissioner Knauer noted that Ms. Gunter's letter had expressed concern that additional encumbrances could be placed on the property at 755 North Mountain Avenue if this map update was approved. Mr. Severson responded that it is staff's opinion that this update would not pose any additional encumbrances on the property. He explained that the TPOS is a supporting document to the City's Comprehensive Plan, and that chapter 8 speaks to the need for the City to negotiate with property owners when purchasing land and that such properties shall be purchased without resulting in direct condemnation. Mr. Goldman noted that the North Mountain Neighborhood Master Plan established zoning and allowances for that property. Therefore, provided that Ms. Gunter's client submitted plans consistent with this application, it would be processed with the underlying zoning. Mr. Goldman added that even if the Council approved the TPOS plan as presented, staff would note the location of the floodplain, the Greenway dedication, and the proposed street system to ensure that any proposed development did not preclude those connections. Commissioner KenCairn clarified that the owner of 755 North Mountain Avenue could build a single-family on one lot and retain the remaining lots.

The Commission discussed how the City could acquire land in order to expand the CBP. Mr. Goldman



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explained that the Public Works Department would be the acquiring party as part of the Transportation System Plan, either through easements or by purchasing the properties, which would then be approved by the Council. The Commission lamented the fact that the expansion of the CBP had been a top priority for the City for over ten years, but that no progress had been made in that time. Interim Parks Director Leslie Eldridge stated that the CBP represents vital connectivity corridors, but that their expansion is not actionable by the Ashland Parks & Recreation Department. She cautioned City residents from beseeching the Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission (APRC) to undertake the expansion of the CBP, stating that they are simply an interested party. Ms. Eldridge added that the Parks & Recreation Commission is drafting a resolution showing its goals and aspirations for the City.

The Commission discussed how public comments received, and how those comments made by the Commission, could be included in a motion to encourage the completion of the CBP. Chair Verner suggested that a "Whereas" clause be included in a motion that highlighted the need for progress to be made on this project, particularly given length of time that it has been designated a high priority. Commissioner Knauer agreed, emphasizing that it should be clear which City departments are responsible for this project and that action needs to be taken.

Public Comments

Rick Landt/Mr. Landt introduced himself as a member of the APRC. In relation to the resolution referred to by Ms. Eldridge, Mr. Landt stated that approving that resolution would show the APRC's commitment to the Traffic Safety Plan and the Trails Master Plan. He emphasized the importance of expanding the CBP, but added that there are other important trails in the City and not everything could be included in the TPOS plan.

Mr. Landt lauded the changes to the TPOS map update, citing the removal of 277 acres compared to the 2002 plan currently in place, and the trail corridors being shown on the proposed map. He also pointed out that the map update lists the Trails Master Plan corridors and stated that this map is intended to be used in conjunction with the APRC Trails Master Plan, which identifies critical connectivity corridors for acquisition or easements.

Mr. Landt also clarified that the APRC is only interested in acquiring the riparian areas of the property referenced in Ms. Gunter's letter.

Gary Shaff/Mr. Shaff stated that every City department, Commission, and Committee is obligated to follow the Comprehensive Plan, and that the City's inaction regarding the expansion of the CBP reflected its lack of a unified vision. He insisted that the expansion of the CBP be listed as a top priority in the TPOS map update, and by extension the Comprehensive Plan, to ensure that the City funds and completes this project. Mr. Shaff pointed out that the state's new Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities guidelines direct cities to reduce carbon emissions by encouraging





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alternative forms of transportation, and that it should be a priority for all City departments, Commissions, and Committees ensure the expansion of the CBP to help reach this goal (see attachment #3).

Chair Verner closed the Public Hearing and Public Record at 7:48 p.m.

Deliberation and Decision

The Commission discussed how a resolution could be included in a recommendation of approval that encouraged the completion of the CBP. Ms. Eldridge reiterated that the APRC can label the CBP as a critical connectivity project, but does not have the authority to complete the CBP itself. Commissioner Knauer expressed concern over the public's perception of the City's priorities as listed on the proposed TPOS map update. He pointed to areas listed on the map that are outside of the City limits, while projects like the CBP remain incomplete.

Commissioner KenCairn remarked that any direction for the completion of the CBP needs to come from the Council, and suggested that a motion include a request for the completion of the CBP to be considered a high priority. Chair Verner responded that a "Whereas" clause could be included in the motion to this effect. Commissioner Phillips asked if the Commission should recommend that the completion of the CBP be included in the Comprehensive Plan. Chair Verner responded that it already exists in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Goldman elaborated that Transportation System Plan was adopted as a technical support document to the Comprehensive Plan, so the CBP is already included in it.

Chair Verner suggested that the Commission recommend that the expansion of the CBP be considered a priority by Council. Commissioner Knauer further suggested that Council direct specific City departments to complete this undertaking. Commissioner KenCairn commented that it is not up to the Commission to direct responsibility for such a project.

Commissioners MacCracken Jain/KenCairn m/s to recommend approval of the draft ordinance and adoption of the Parks, Trails and Open Space map as an official map supporting the Ashland Comprehensive Plan's Chapter VIII "Parks, Open Spaces and Aesthetics" with the following amendment:

Add a new "Whereas" clause as follows:

"Whereas, the Central Bike Path has been a priority listed on both the new "Parks, Open Space and Trails Map" and the City's Transportation Systems Plan and, after more than 10 years of such listing, should be funded and completed."

Roll Call Vote: All AYES. Motion passed 6-0.

V. OPEN DISCUSSION





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Commissioner Knauer requested that the Commission discuss the Comprehensive Plan and the vision for the City at a future Study Session. He stated that this would assist the Commission in making decisions that are guided by the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Goldman responded that this topic could be reviewed at the February 27, 2024 Study Session.

Commissioner MacCracken Jain expressed appreciation for all citizens who submitted public comments and were involved in this process.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

*Submitted by,
Michael Sullivan, Executive Assistant*

