

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE OAK PARK PLAN COMMISSION
VILLAGE HALL- COUNCIL CHAMBER
July 31, 2014
7:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Chair David Mann; Commissioners Mark Benson, Jeremy Burton, Mark Gartland, Douglas Gilbert, Gail Moran, Steven Rouse

EXCUSED: Commissioner Greg Marsey

ALSO PRESENT: Craig Failor, Village Planner; Jacob Karaca, Plan Commission Attorney; Tammie Grossman, Director of Development Customer Services; Doug Hammel, Houseal Lavigne Associates; Paul Zimmerman, Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee Member

Roll Call

Chair Mann called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and roll was called.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Gartland moved to approve the minutes from June 5, 2014. Commissioner Rouse seconded. The minutes were approved as submitted.

Commissioner Gilbert moved to approve the minutes from June 19, 2014. Commission Benson seconded. The minutes were approved as submitted.

Public Hearing(s)

PC 14-06: Comprehensive Plan; The Applicant (Village of Oak Park) seeks approval of an amendment to the Village of Oak Park Comprehensive Plan. The Plan Commission will conduct a public hearing as required by the Oak Park Village Code and the Illinois Municipal Code, for the purposes of hearing public input and allowing for Plan Commission discussion on the Comprehensive Plan proposal.

Mr. Failor opened the presentation and thanked the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee for their help in the process. He said the Comprehensive Plan was both a process and a product, an overarching policy guide that aimed to provide context for future decision-making by Village government and its partners. He said the Plan would provide a roadmap for the next 10-15 years, but was not a regulatory or a prescriptive document.

He said four main principles guided the plan's creation: diversity; respect for Oak Park's history and legacy; urban sustainability; and collaboration and cooperation. There were four phases in the planning process- looking at existing conditions, visioning workshops, planning the strategies and long-term implementation.

Mr. Paul Zimmerman, a member of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, spoke about public outreach. He said they made a concerted effort to reach out to as many participants as possible. He reviewed the outreach materials with commissioners- press releases, postcards and e-blasts, etc. that were used to raise citizen awareness. He said there were face-to-face interviews, workshops, community-wide meetings, business workshops, and do-it-yourself workshops. He went over the web-based outreach and

the workshops held with citizen working groups.

Mr. Doug Hammel from Houseal Lavigne Associates reviewed the overall document structure. He said eleven core plan chapters were necessary to address all the unique elements of Oak Park. He reviewed the structure of each chapter. He said they aimed to make it as concise and as user-friendly as possible. He said the Comprehensive Plan will not be implemented by the village alone; it will require cooperation with other governing bodies, non-profit groups, citizen associations, etc. He went over key issues within each of the eleven core chapters referencing the PowerPoint presentation. He reviewed the implementation chapter which incorporated five tools: village administration; village policies and regulations; the capital improvement program; governmental collaboration; and funding and incentives.

Mr. Hammel gave a quick rundown of the future land use plan referencing a graphic showing planning policy. He compared the existing land use inventory graphic and the future land use graphic in the new Comprehensive Plan. He said the idea behind the graphic was to show a general policy guide rather than show parcel by parcel to give a flexible tool to assess development over time. He said the HUD grant required a closer look at housing development opportunities on areas along transit routes, which he identified.

Chair Mann asked the Plan Commission for any clarifying questions before public comments. Chair Mann thanked Houseal Lavigne for their work on the project. Chair Mann opened public comments. Attorney Karaca swore in participants.

Mr. Gary Schwab, 316 N. Oak Park Ave., said the plan was the best summary of the village he has ever seen and it was presented very well. He said the plan, however, covered topics the village has little or no control over and the most important chapter was land use. He said the plan supports housing diversity but then proposes replacing low density buildings along the Lake Street corridor with higher density housing developments without talking about income levels or the type of housing that should be built. He said hidden in the plan was gentrification and he was calling for honesty.

Ms. Camille Wilson White, 624 N. Humphrey Ave., said she supports the arts and culture report in the greater plan. She says arts and culture can help contribute to the success of many of the goals of the plan. She said the village needs an arts and culture plan that could identify both short-term and long-term goals.

Mr. Rick Kuner, 728 S. Euclid Ave., said he believes one of the core values should be the importance of the residential neighborhoods in the village. He suggested changing the language when talking about the Eisenhower-corridor impact area to define the area, show the multiple impacts or take the language out. He said there was a strong relationship between the comprehensive plan and the zoning ordinance and suggested amending the zoning ordinance to account for the new plan after its adoption. He also suggested training and orientation for Plan Commissioners, Zoning Board of Appeals members, and Village Trustees on the new comprehensive plan.

Ms. Linda Bolte, 930 Columbian Ave., said she was a member of the citizen advisory committee and was involved in the consultant selection process and believes they made a good choice. She said she has spent 35 years working in the urban and transportation planning business. She said over time cities and villages have gone from small to large comprehensive plans, because over time more concerns come up. She said many municipalities have gone from thin, simple plans to a more complex plan, which was especially true for Oak Park as it was a very developed community, with defined areas. She said the eleven areas are the heart and soul for the people of Oak Park and they tried to consolidate it down but each was important. She seconded that the village quickly needed to move to incorporate the plan with the zoning ordinance and also needed to revisit it over time. She said all the commissions and boards in the village need to understand what the document embodies and what it means to the village in the future.

Ms. Kristine Giornalista, 1135 Wenonah Ave., said she will be the future Neighborhood Services Manager in the Development Customer Services department. She said she was looking forward to serving the village.

Mr. Joe Graber, 1205 N. Harvey Ave., also with the North Avenue Neighbors Association, recommended that the government look at the gateways in Oak Park, where first impressions are important. He asked for improving and enhancing those commercial districts. Commissioner Benson suggested that was spelled out in the plan repeatedly.

Chair Mann called for a break at 8:45 p.m. The meeting resumed at 8:55 p.m.

Ms. Judith Alexander, 1205 N. Harvey Ave., said she thinks it's a really good plan but believes the analysis of North Avenue was not complete. She said problematic intersections on North Avenue don't give enough time for pedestrians to cross and there are no cross walks between Austin and Ridgeland Avenues. She said they are working with the Active Transportation Alliance on a walkability study for North Avenue. She said the development priorities should be on North Avenue between Ridgeland and Austin as it was the most problematic area. She said incentives need to explore for that stretch.

Chair Mann thanked everyone for coming and said he was encouraged by everyone participating in the process. Chair Mann asked for commissioner deliberation, going through each chapter.

Commissioner Rouse said he was puzzled by the metrics portion as there was no provision for accountability or an explanation of the existing standards. Mr. Hammel said that was an ongoing discussion during crafting the plan- he said the metrics had to be measurable over time and the information had to be easily accessible to the Village. He said they didn't want to establish the benchmarks as the first step would be to establish the baseline and then go forward over time. Commissioner Rouse argued there has to be some kind of review or accountability to see where they were going with it. Mr. Hammel agreed and said in the Governmental Excellence chapter there was a provision that a community scorecard should be published to be accountable to the community. Commissioner Rouse asked if that information will be on the website. Mr. Failor said those particular details will be worked out, but the goal was to be as transparent as possible. Commissioner Gilbert agreed, suggesting the implementation and specifics on baselines would come later. Mr. Hammel said some of the metrics were not measurable every year, like for example, metrics that rely on the US Census. Mr. Hammel said for the community scorecard using something as simple as a thumbs up, level or thumbs down was suggested to be easily engaged by the community. Commissioner Rouse said that sounded great.

Commissioner Rouse suggested if metrics and goals were not met, the plan could be amended. Chair Mann agreed, also asking if staff would be establishing the baseline and yearly updates. Mr. Failor said the consultant would be doing the first year and then staff would continue on from then. Mr. Hammel noted that many partner agencies would need to be on board as well as some of the information would come from them.

Commissioner Moran said as a high-level document, she believed the way public comment was introduced was too specific, for example, using "one person suggested" and also containing negative comments specific to that speaker. She suggested for a high level document the concerns could be framed in a more professional way. Mr. Hammel said it was a common concern in every community over how public participation and input was presented. Commissioner Gartland said he agreed with Commissioner Moran regarding negative comments. Commissioner Gilbert agreed and said he didn't understand the need to include off-hand comments, the focus should be on the broader vision. Commissioner Burton agreed. Mr. Hammel said they were in favor of making changes to keep the document more precise.

A short discussion ensued regarding how commissioners should submit their editing suggestions.

Attorney Karaca said all comments should be submitted to Mr. Failor and himself.

Commissioner Moran said there were sections in chapter four that were an attempt to script development in the village or for example, enhancing local el stops, something the Village doesn't have purview over. Mr. Hammel said the idea was to highlight potential partnerships and collaborative efforts going forward. Chair Mann said he didn't read the plan as if the Village was responsible for better el stops, for example, but that it was important to villagers that we have better el stops and the plan should say so. Commissioner Gilbert agreed, saying the village has been weighing in on the I-290 expansion efforts to ensure residents have a voice and this was similar to that effort. Commissioner Moran said clarification was needed in the document to show that it would need to be a collaborative effort. Mr. Hammel said it was also important for collaborative grant pursuits to show that multiple groups have made it a priority; that would help funding efforts.

Some discussion ensued regarding prescriptive language in the document regarding proposed development sites versus development opportunities. Commissioner Rouse asked if there was a provision for integrating the comprehensive plan into the zoning ordinance. Chair Mann agreed. Mr. Failor said staff hoped to do so next year when they update the zoning ordinance, should the budget come together. Commissioners agreed that prescriptive words such as 'should or shall' be changed to 'could or may' throughout the document to soften the language.

Commissioner Gilbert said he was pleased with how well historic preservation was integrated into the plan and also it was interesting to see what the village was doing already.

Commissioners agreed chapter ten needed some revision when it came to the Eisenhower impact, per Mr. Kuner's testimony. Mr. Hammel agreed, saying they would change the narrative and graphics to better reflect impact statements.

Commissioner Moran questioned the metric in chapter twelve regarding timeliness of the board and commission review process. She said commissions don't have control over how long a public hearing could take, but she does believe staff could control timeliness on the permitting process side. Mr. Failor said it was meant to be reflective of the whole process. Commissioner Gilbert suggested boards can control how often they meet. Mr. Hammel said the point was every step was important to try to streamline as much as possible.

Commissioner Rouse said there should be a point person, someone responsible for the plan and it has to matter whether it gets implemented. Mr. Hammel said an effective way to start the process was to consider each department in the village and partner agencies to work at their level to implement the plan. Commissioner Moran suggested trustees should discuss the implementation portion further. Commissioner Rouse agreed, but said he wanted that discussion to happen. Attorney Karaca clarified that the plan was a policy guideline, not an ordinance. Commissioner Rouse said the plan needed to be translated to something that implemented it. Commissioner Burton suggested one of the checks on the plan was public accountability from residents.

Commissioner Gartland said it was important for the Board to set up meetings with other taxing bodies to go over the document once it was adopted. He said there should be meetings to go through the pertinent section to make sure everyone was on the same page. He said the Park District will be finishing its comprehensive plan in December so January would be a great time for both bodies to meet. He also suggested the Board should encourage delegating to commissions some of the work as staff and trustees won't be able to do it all. Commissioner Moran agreed and said training was an essential component for all commissions and staff involved and needs to be undertaken aggressively once the plan was finalized.

Chair Mann asked how the document will be formatted going forward, would the electronic form be

searchable. Mr. Hammel said that has been discussed but the capability hasn't been built into the file and would require significant effort. Mr. Failor said it was a good idea, but not a part of the contract.

Commissioner Moran moved to recommend the comprehensive plan move forward with the Board of Trustees reviewing the discussion during the public hearing to identify issues raised. Commissioner Burton seconded. A roll call vote was taken:

Moran- yes
Burton –yes
Benson- yes
Gilbert- yes
Gartland- yes
Rouse- yes
Mann- yes

The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

Mr. Failor said there would be no August Plan Commission meeting. The September meeting would include training for village commissioners on holding public hearings and also a public hearing for a zoning ordinance text amendment on permeable pavers.

Adjournment

Commissioner Gartland moved to adjourn. Commissioner Moran seconded. The meeting adjourned at 10:18 p.m.

Angela Schell,
Recording Secretary