

MEETING MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
VIA REMOTE CONNECTION
5:30 PM MONDAY JANUARY 18, 2021

Approved on February 15, 2021.

Board Members Present: Denise Smith, Vice-Chair; Michael Gawne; Luke Richter; Amy Paradis; Stan Bradeen, Chair (arrived 6:40 PM).

Board Members Absent: Zac Nuse.

Staff Members Present: Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning Development.

Public Present – None.

1. **Open Meeting – Vice Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 5:38 pm.**
 - a) **Introduction of Attendees** – None
 - b) **Public Comment on issues not on the agenda** – None
 - c) **Discuss additions or deletions to the agenda** – None

2. **Nomination and Election of Officers** – Commission discussed different options. They are looking at switching which members are alternates. Members Gawne and Richter discussed volunteering to become alternates and letting newer members like Smith and Nuse take leadership positions.

Member Gawne made a motion to table the nomination of Chair and Vice-Chair until the next meeting. Member Richter seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

3. **Approval of Minutes** –
 - a) **December 21, 2020 minutes** – Member Paradis made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Member Richter seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

4. **Review regulatory Proposals** –
 - a) **Residential – Professional District** - Mr. Sawyer plotted out how a Residential Corridor would look if it went from Stowell to Gilman. He showed the proposed changes from current B2 to High density residential and the Residential-Professional District. There was also a discussion of changing the names of the districts.

Vice-Chair Smith called a straw vote to rename the districts by using the minimum lot size allowed in that district – “Residential 9500” and “Residential 7500,” for example. The straw vote was approved unanimously.

Member Gawne would like to see what the existing St. Albans Town zoning around the City’s “southern tail” is before any decisions are made to change the districts.

Mr. Sawyer reviewed what he started for the Design Review rules for the corridors. This would require changes to article 7, mostly specific to the gateway districts.

Mr. Sawyer made a couple of changes to the definitions of Permitted & Conditional Uses in Existing Districts and Proposed Residential-Professional District. The Commission agreed to fold all of the work done on the definitions into this proposal; also to move specific uses like “Art Center” to be their own category in the use table, not combined with “Art Center, etc.”

The Commission agreed that this is ready to be organized into a true proposal. The public outreach would be to property owners whose zones are changing. Member Paradis asked if Mr. Sawyer expected this to be controversial. He responded that there would be some who like it and some who would be worried. Many on Lake Street might be worried about having more business allowed. He believes that they will also hear from some who would like to do more with their properties. It will take a couple of planning commission meetings before the final meeting to move it on. Member Paradis asked if COVID is a barrier for some who would be left out of the meetings. It could be though that is why there are usually a couple extra meetings so anybody who is having technical difficulties can be heard.

b) Technical Corrections and updates – Not discussed at this meeting.

5. Residential District Update project – Not discussed at this meeting.

6. General Business

a) Update on regulatory amendments in process – The Dwelling Unit density program was presented to the City Council. They are concerned about allowing higher densities. They are worried about what was proposed would not give the tools needed to ensure that the properties don’t create problems for the neighborhood. It will be brought back to the City Council in March or April. Member Richter asked if S.237 would be requiring higher densities in the City. Sawyer answered that the approved version of the bill did not require any density increases. Vice-Chair Smith asked if City Council had tasked the Planning Commission to create the program. Mr. Sawyer stated that they had but were concerned about unintended consequences. Member Richter stated that if the City isn’t careful about taking real steps to improve properties and increase housing then the State will step in and then if there had been no encouragement to increase housing while maintaining our historical legacy, the City would have no argument as to why the City should be exempt. Member Paradis stated that she has never seen such a demand for rental properties. She doesn’t even post her rentals anymore and gets calls weekly from the non-profit agencies looking for rentals.

b) Planning and Development update – None

c) Next meeting time and format date – February 15, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

- d) Other** – Member Paradis asked if the Commission’s priorities were going to be set for 2021. It was agreed to put it on the agenda for the next meeting.
- 7. Adjourn** – Vice-Chair Smith made a motion to adjourn at 6:40 PM. Member Gawne seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.