

MEETING MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
6:00 PM MONDAY APRIL 15, 2019
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NO. MAIN STREET

Approved May 20, 2019

Board Members Present: David Barber, Chair; Luke Richter, Vice-Chair; Michael Gawne; Stan Bradeen;

Board Members Absent: Amy Paradis

Staff Members Present: Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning Development; Wendy Coy, Minute Taker

Public Present: None.

1. **Open Meeting – Chair Barber called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.**
 - a. **Discuss additions or deletions to the agenda – None.**
2. **Approval of March 18, 2019 Meeting Minutes – Member Gawne made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Member Bradeen seconded. It was passed unanimously.**
3. **Discuss proposals and ideas for Land Development Regulations –** The Commission discussed North Main Street. The densities and dimensions of the properties are not a concern. It is the potential incompatible B2 Transitional Business District uses that are causing concern. South Main street lends itself to more business properties than North Main street.

Mr. Sawyer asked if there were parts of the B1 and B2 districts that the Commission would like to keep the same but remove some of the uses. He asked if there should be more of a transitional district. There could be commercial residential / professional residential which are businesses in residential houses.

Per Mr. Sawyer, the City has a growth center designation from the State. It enabled the TIF district and helped to encourage growth in the Downtown district. The growth center program comes with many benefits. 50% or more of the growth in the City is supposed to happen in that center. Almost all of St. Albans City is a growth center. The City wants to avoid making it look like there will be restrictions on certain corridors in the growth center and letting other areas have less restrictions.

The Commission needs to be careful about down-zoning properties, e.g. removing uses or decreasing densities. They need to make sure a good case can be made for the proposed change. Member Gawne stated that, on a regional level, having the entire city a growth center makes sense but if it is incompatible with the uses then it doesn't make sense. Chair Barber stated that down-zoning may give a sense of heightened scrutiny as to what is going in the City limits. He doesn't see a need for any more gas stations in the City limits. Member Bradeen stated that if someone was a landowner leaving it as a permitted use and then having multiple

hoops to jump through is frustrating. He stated that the Commission / City should just say no. Member Gawne agreed. He commented that heavily commercialized areas do not need to completely exclude uses.

The Commission agreed to start with the uses list rather than drawing the boundaries on the map. Member Richter stated that he doesn't have a concern with more gas stations being added as it seems like they are difficult to develop and not environmentally friendly. Mr. Sawyer suggested that the Commission not eliminate the use but regulate. Member Bradeen started to discuss what was wanted in specific areas. Main street from Brainerd to Branon's should have the following uses: All houses all offices. No retail, no restaurants, no bars. It is currently just the way the City wants it.

Member Richter pointed out that the current regulations have given the City exactly what it wants. He stated that the zones need to have the agility necessary to evolve and adapt to what is going on. If a bureaucracy that limits adaptability is created then it won't allow for growth. Changing the permitted uses might buy some peace of mind for owners in this corridor. Member Gawne stated that the Commission needs to identify that which is worth keeping and protecting that still allows growth.

Member Bradeen asked if the Commission was trying to create a "B3" district. The Commission reviewed all of the uses for the B2 district and decided what uses would be in B3 district. Some of the uses were flagged to be under more consideration. Mr. Sawyer stated that the City could put a restriction on the number and width of curb cuts. He stated that the City could pull out an amendment that was done for gas stations and the special design standards for gas stations. Chair Barber thought there were restrictions on curb cuts. Mr. Sawyer stated that there is a VTrans standard.

The Board discussed the meaning of family in terms of a single family dwelling. They were trying to hone the definition of family. The City hasn't had an increase of multi family units in the neighborhoods. The nature of households has changed and they seem to have more cars. Each dwelling is more likely to have two or more heads of Household with their own cars. Extended families living together have increased. Member Gawne would like to remove the word family from the regulations. He asked if Mr. Sawyer could pull put the quality of life ordinances.

Member Bradeen asked if the City could have incentives for people with older homes to make upgrades. Member Richter stated that there have been programs that are microlending for small house projects maybe with a bonus based on modern energy codes.

4. Other Business –

- a. **Planning & Development update** – No questions or comments on the email previously sent.
- b. **Other** – An update that the 17 Congress Street amendment goes before the City Council in May.

5. **Public Comment** – Member Richter wanted to note that Notre Dame Cathedral burned down today.

Member Bradeen made a motion to adjourn at 7:55 p.m. Member Richter seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.