

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
5:30 PM MONDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2021

Approved December 20, 2021

Board Members Present: Denise Smith, Chair; Zachary Nuse; Amy Burleson; Stan Bradeen; Lauren Dees-Erickson, Alternate (Zoom); Michael Gawne.

Staff Members Present: Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning and Development; Angela Bernard, Minute Taker.

1. Open Meeting.

D. Smith called the meeting to order at 5:31 PM.

- a. Introduction of attendees. Introductions were made.
- b. Public Comment on issues not on agenda. None.
- c. Discuss additions or deletions to agenda. Z. Nuse requested an update on a Design Review amendment called "Global Change C," discussed during the September meeting. C. Sawyer said it is planned to be discussed later during the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes.

A. Burleson questioned the timing of Luke Richter's resignation. C. Sawyer confirmed he resigned from the commission after the October meeting was underway.

S. Bradeen asked for clarification from the previous meeting's discussion in which it was stated that lot size is a way to determine character of an area. S. Bradeen requested further detail be added to that section of the minutes in the form of another sentence stating his belief that lot size should be considered just one standing point to determine character. Many additional elements and characteristics, such as setbacks, can help determine character.

**Motion by A. Burleson to approve the minutes of October 18, 2021, as edited.
Second by S. Bradeen and Approved with all in favor, except M. Gawne abstaining
at 5:41 PM.**

3. Regulatory proposals.

- a. Planned Unit Development re-write.

C. Sawyer introduced his Proposed Amendment to Re-Write the Planned Unit Development Rule memo.

M. Gawne introduced his memo of commentary on the proposed changes to the city's draft.

C. Sawyer suggested a run through of the memo, which discusses a way to make the planned unit development (PUD) rule more applicable to the city. He ran down the points of eligibility for a PUD, as noted in the memo.

S. Bradeen commented to clarify that 20,000 square feet is roughly a half-acre. C. Sawyer said he could provide the board with a map indicating all lots in the city that are that size.

C. Sawyer then went over the section of the memo discussing waivers and allowances for the PUD.

C. Sawyer then discussed the section on standards and restrictions.

S. Bradeen questioned if the board could go back and discuss reactions to memo. C. Sawyer agreed to accept feedback starting at the top.

M. Gawne referred to his memo and the changes he suggested to the city's current rule.

M. Gawne mentioned that on his memo, he included more of the original rules. S. Bradeen asked C. Sawyer if he prefers eliminating more points or keeping them as suggested by M. Gawne. C. Sawyer said he prefers removing more points and said he doesn't think some of the points need to be included, but that he doesn't think it would break or ruin anything to put it back in, that it could be put back in or left out. S. Bradeen agreed that removing it would be fine. C. Sawyer agreed to put it back in.

S. Bradeen suggested that he liked the section / statement that provides flexibility in side and lot layout and would like that left in the rewritten PUD.

M. Gawne said he sees a need for consideration of redevelopment the city, as opposed to focusing strictly on new development. He commented that the city was largely developed before the age of the auto and before people had an average of 1.5 vehicles per person and that, as a result, many people try to park on the city streets, which are narrow and make parking difficult. A garage is a necessity and there should be enough room in the PUD to allow for two or more lots that have been subdivided to be used to expand parking. He said a redevelopment plan needs to offer a flexible solution to meet the needs of the neighborhood. M. Gawne suggested eliminating the 20,000 sq. feet rule in the case of redevelopment opportunities but keep it for new development or construction.

Z. Nuse described other locations in the country, particularly in urban, higher density areas, with studies that show that up to 80% of parking space isn't used. It's privatized so outside people can't use it. He asked if this redevelopment plan would address this. S. Bradeen said that this is part of the problem with zoning and planning regulations. Some areas have too much space they don't need, and others don't have enough. He said areas don't need a setback and driveway for every single house. C. Sawyer said placing less

limits on this rule rather than more that it would lead to problems. S. Bradeen said the city could limit the requirement for one zone.

A. Burluson asked if there is a better place to address these concerns that is not the PUD.
C. Sawyer said it might be the best place.

C. Sawyer said that under current rules you can't have a shared driveway anymore. Every driveway has to be at least five feet away from the lot line. Every shared driveway in the city right now is grandfathered in. But more could be developed with a waiver or allowance from the DRB. S. Bradeen said that makes sense because then it's not a blanket rule, but the DRB can still allow for an access that can become parking.

M. Gawne questioned the definition of residential area of low density vs. high density. C. Sawyer said the distinction is clarified in the actual city regulations. See section 301 A.

C. Sawyer said he's afraid if there aren't enough limits and rules in the PUD it will become a free for all and give the DRB less authority to lay down rules. S. Bradeen said he doesn't agree and believes the DRB would still be able to apply rules.

C. Sawyer said this rule is really about three specific situations. Mobile home, historic property, and transitional lot, as in more than one zoning district in the lot or on the border between the two.

S. Bradeen said he understands what it is for but wonders where the line is drawn.
S. Bradeen said he is ready to let it go but his concern is that if someone is trying to build something in a low-density area, there isn't a mechanism in the city that would allow for the consistency in design. M. Gawne said they need to come up with a plan that could help.

C. Sawyer said the PUD could help other developers and planners.

S. Bradeen said if the PUD rule was wider open it would allow for other types of development, including those that create quality affordable units that people can actually afford to buy. C. Sawyer said this is what the residential data tool does. He suggested for this PUD leaving it the way it is and addressing the larger restrictions on new development plans using the data tool. S. Bradeen suggested that the city needs a plan to address bigger fears on certain types of development rather than ignoring the bigger fears and procrastinating on them.

C. Sawyer asked the commission if the PUD should be as focused as the rewrite, or should it be more open as suggested by M. Gawne.

M. Gawne said should they go to city council and ask if they like the broader version or narrower. S. Bradeen said he is fine with letting this particular case and this particular document address this situation as long as they address the bigger issues down the road.

D. Smith said she thinks some of the fears of people around properties are founded.

S. Bradeen said if they are trying to craft good zoning regulation they should think about the result and what could be created, not density. The way of visualizing impedes action.

D. Smith said she doesn't see a way to change it at this particular meeting and that this is not the end all be all, but a good beginning. S. Bradeen said he is comfortable with passing this PUD rewrite for this situation.

C. Sawyer made an edit to allowances and waiver.

M. Gawne reviewed some of his other changes and questions he had from the PUD memo. He suggested a clarification for historical buildings in the rule - that the structure was constructed more than 50 years ago and used for commercial use, as in most recently used for institutional, commercial, or mixed use. C. Sawyer made an edit to this effect.

D. Smith asked if there's a difference between a mobile home park and a tiny home park. M. Gawne said a mobile home is anything that's built offsite and brought in and assembled onsite. Tiny home would qualify.

Debate was made for Section D, number 3 and whether the 25% more dwelling units rule was necessary. S. Bradeen said the rule confused him but he doesn't care if they do it.

S. Bradeen question Section D, part 4. He explained that he's not a fan of the rule because it is inconsistent with other rules. He said this allows for the existing rule to be changed. He said it is potentially disruptive to the character of the district and would like to see it taken out. He said there is no real gain in it. M. Gawne, C. Sawyer, L. Dees-Erickson, and D. Smith all said they are fine with taking out.

M. Gawne questioned on Section D, part 5. He suggested coming up with a blended formula that's not overly complicated and rewrite the section on lot line and removing the line "the entire length" and replace it with "at least 25 %." Z. Nuse asked why 25% matters, C. Sawyer said it's an easy number.

Z. Nuse suggests just striking "the entire length of" from the document.

M. Gawne commented he thinks 1.3 parking spots per dwelling is low. He prefers marking the parking spots by number of bedrooms.

Z. Nuse suggested a range for parking spots. As low as 1.3, as high of 2.5. M. Gawne said he is concerned that limiting it to 1.3 is too narrow and will lead to more parking on streets where the streets are narrow and can't handle it.

C. Sawyer asked the board wants him to refine to document and move on this for the next time.

Z. Nuse suggested an amendment on historical structures should be drafted for a vote at the following meeting.

- b. Residential-Professional proposal.
 - i. Virtual tour of Lake Street. - Postponed until a later date.
 - c. Design Review for properties on historic registers. – No discussion.
 - d. Other. - None
4. General Business. - None
- a. Update on Residential Data Tool project. – No discussion.
 - b. Review next meeting date and format. - Next meeting in December
 - c. Other. - None
5. Adjourn.

Motion to adjourn by M. Gawne. Second by S. Bradeen and approved with all in favor at 7:33 PM.