

Meeting Minutes
ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
VIA TELECONFERENCE
5:30 PM MONDAY December 21, 2020

Approved January 18, 2021

Board Members Present: Stan Bradeen, Chair; Denise Smith, Vice-Chair; Michael Gawne; Amy Paradis; Luke Richter; Zac Nuse (joined at 6:15 pm)

Board Members Absent: None.

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

Public Present – None.

1. Open Meeting – Chair Bradeen called the meeting to order at 5:36 pm.

a) Introduction of Attendees – None

b) Public Comment on issues not on the agenda – None

c) Discuss additions or deletions to the agenda – Member Richter suggested a virtual Main Street for the City of St. Albans web page to provide easy access for the public to view vendors. Mr. Sawyer stated that he would bring it to the Downtown Board. Chair Bradeen suggested notamazon.com as a way to people to use local vendors.

2. Approval of Minutes –

a) November 16, 2020 minutes – Member Richter made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Vice-Chair Smith seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

3. Review regulatory Proposals –

a) Corridor Districts and related –

- **Residential – Professional District** - Mr. Sawyer started by reviewing where the Commission left off on the Proposed Residential-Professional District. He reviewed the Transverse Divided Lot Rule. Vice-Chair Smith asked if there was anything in the regulations about transverse divisions. There is a regulation that states that the entire lot falls under the district that the lot frontage is in. This will change that regulation. All the deep backyards, in the City, are extending into the Low Density Residential. Mr. Sawyer stated that he thought this rule would be needed to reassure the homeowners that their backyards wouldn't change.

Chair Bradeen pointed out that it protects the neighborhoods and fosters the business use. Member Richter asked if you could use the back lot to help the front part of the lot comply with the B2 use. You can but it would be subject to different set back rules. Vice-Chair Smith asked if this rule had been implemented in other communities. Mr. Sawyer had not done a lot of research but he didn't think so. Chair Bradeen stated that in the other towns he has

worked at there wasn't a set of regulations and the boundaries just cut through the property lines. Vice-Chair Smith stated that she would like more data in case there is community push back.

The Design Review process in these districts would not be as granular as it is in other districts. Chair Bradeen thought that the original conversation had language that stated that there would be architectural consistency.

Member Richter asked where Air BnB would fall. If it was the entire house, it would be a dwelling unit. Renting of rooms would be considered a lodging house, bed and breakfast or a hotel. Mr. Sawyer informed the Commission that there was the ability to regulate short term rentals versus long term rentals but he didn't think it was necessary yet. If something is rented out it is declared a public building.

- **Definition and Use Table** – Chair Bradeen didn't see the need to review each individual definition. He acknowledged the amount of work that Mr. Sawyer and Member Gawne put into the table. He suggested that the Definition and Use table and the Residential – Professional Proposed Changes be merged so that the definitions are the same in both documents. Mr. Sawyer stated that he would double check and confirm that they are the same.

Mr. Sawyer suggested that the Planning Commission be given a chance to review everything again. He felt that the Residential-Professional District would need outreach to the dwellings on Fairfield and Lake. Community feedback would be important.

Member Richter asked where Back In Time would fall under the definitions. Mr. Sawyer stated that it would be considered a Bed and Breakfast. He reviewed the definition of a Bed and Breakfast. Member Nuse asked about the Cadillac Motel. Mr. Sawyer stated that a property could have different principal uses. The Cadillac has different principal uses in different buildings. Member Gawne thought that the Cadillac had been grandfathered. He stated that Back in Time would be in the new district.

Member Nuse asked for some of the background that led the Commission to creating a Residential-Professional District. Chair Bradeen gave Member Nuse the context. The Commission started this discussion with the question - do our zoning districts match what the City's needs are. The review started with North Main Street and expanded to Lake Street and Fairfield Street. Mr. Sawyer also brought up South Main Street. He showed the Commission the map he had made for South Main. The Commission had not finished discussing the possible changes to South Main Street. Member Gawne wanted the Town's zoning to be shown on the map of South Main Street for context.

Chair Bradeen doesn't want to create a district that has buildings that have a non-conforming use. Mr. Sawyer explained that when something is legally designated as

non-conforming it cannot be expanded and, if it is discontinued for over a year, it loses its grandfather status. Member Richter liked the zoning as it allows the property to define itself.

The Commission discussed designating the area between Stowell to Gilman as Residential Professional. Member Nuse felt that the Commission trying to make sense of what an area currently is through zoning would be adding layers of complexity. The most density should be Downtown. The next tier of the circle radiating out from Downtown would be more commercial. Different rings would have different uses. The City seems to have a lot of random spots. Chair Bradeen agreed entirely with the academic theory and has been concerned with the way things are chopped up but there is an existing city that has been developed in a specific way. It was not done in a consistent way in the past but the Commission is trying to clean things up.

The Downtown is surrounded by neighborhoods. The Residential-Professional district better matches what the Commission likes to what exists there. Mr. Sawyer pointed out that sometimes the zoning is not based on vision but based on politics. The Commission has to consider what will the City Council would be willing to adopt. In the past, there was strip zoning and strip development that occurred. The Commission is doing its best to make sure it doesn't grow or encroach on residential areas. At the moment, the zone is all B2 straight into Downtown. B2 allows what the Commission likes but also allows things that the Commission doesn't want encroaching into the City. Member Richter suggested keeping B2 up to the Interstate Access Road.

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

4. Residential District Update project – Mr. Sawyer informed the Commission that the City got the grants it applied for. The grant will provide a tool that will review the neighborhoods and give more information on densities, setbacks etc. Mr. Sawyer will develop an RFP to be issued last week in Dec / first week in January. He would like to recommend a consultant in the February meeting. He would like the PC involved with the regular updates. He emphasized the need for public outreach to prepare the public for the changes that might be proposed. He asked if any of the Planning Commission members would like to participate in the interview process. Chair Bradeen and Member Nuse expressed an interest.

5. General Business

- a) Update on regulatory amendments in process** – Dwelling Unit bonus program was presented at the City Councils. City Council was concerned about additional dwelling units.
- b) Planning and Development update** – None
- c) Annual Meeting in January** – Annual election of officers
- d) Next meeting time and format date** – **January 18, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.**
- e) Other** - None

6. **Adjourn - Member Gawne made a motion to adjourn at 7:30. Member Paradis seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.**