

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
5:30 PM MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2023

Approved April 17, 2023

Commission Members Present: Denise Smith, Chair; Carl Watkins, Vice Chair; Janis Appel, Amy Burleson (Via Zoom); Courtney Seale (Via Zoom), Alternate; Michael Gawne, Alternate

Commission Members Absent: None

City Staff present: Paul Clapps, Minute Taker; Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning & Development.

Members of the public present: None

1. D. Smith began the meeting at 5:36 PM.

- Introduction of attendees. There were no public attendees.
- Public Comment on issues not on agenda. There were no public comments.
- Discuss additions or deletions to agenda. There were no additions or changes.
- Assignment of Alternates. M. Gawne was acting as a full member.
- There was a brief discussion about how there are no new applications to the PC.

2. Proposed amendment to extend Design Review District to 12 No. Elm.

- A. Burleson recused herself from this vote due to a conflict of interest. C. Seale was a voting member.
- C. Sawyer began the presentation. The property owner asked for 12 N. Elm to be added to the Design Review District (DR2).
 - D. Smith asked if this is setting any kind of precedence, or if there's any reason not to approve of this amendment.
 - This is just a unique situation. C. Sawyer didn't know how often it will come up again.

Motion by M. Gawne to approve the amendment to include 12 No. Elm St. in the DR2 Downtown Expansion Design Review District and refer it to the City Council. Seconded by J. Appel. Motion approved by a vote of D. Smith, C. Watkins, J. Appel, C. Seale, and M. Gawne in favor, and A. Burleson recused.

3. Proposed amendments to create a Multi-Dwelling Overlay District at 15 Lo. Newton.

- D. Smith began this topic. C. Sawyer started the presentation. This would create an overlay district to allow for multi-family residential in the service industrial district where the Fonda Site is.

- This proposal would specify parking, the height of the building, recreational space, and more.
- J. Appel wondered who she can talk to to advocate for more trees, greenery, and environmental concerns about property plans.
- There was a discussion about what the role of the Planning Commission is in all of this.
 - If there were any changes to the rules that the Planning Commission wants (like adding more trees), they can be added before sending it to the City Council.
 - The Planning Commission would use these rules and assign them to new projects that come up in the future.
 - The Commission agreed that the site should have trees, and that there should be some wording to encourage it.
 - M. Gawne agreed and thought there should be a site visit to help figure out what side of the property they'd be on.
 - C. Sawyer proposed a change to include shade trees.
- D. Smith asked for some clarification on the road, traffic light, and sidewalks.
- C. Seale had a question about amendment item 4D, specifically on whether there should be language reinforcing the idea of “permeable land” for built patios instead of lawns. C. Seale is concerned that the developers might use this language to maximize building space.
- M. Gawne thought that this might be the purview of the DRB, to approve the plans and regulate land for stormwater.
- D. Smith and J. Appel requested to add “outdoor dining” and “every generation” to the wording of the recreation rules.
- There was further discussion on whether 10% of land is too little for recreation.
- **A. Burleson left the meeting at 6:25 PM.**
- The Planning Commission generally approved of the rules as they were, and if they are not good enough for the future then they can be amended
- There was then a discussion on who will be living in these apartments, and what should be done if people locally can't afford to live in them. J. Appel believed that if the wording of these rules is incorrect, the city might end up accidentally segregating the living spaces and community as a whole (by income, disability, etc).

Motion by C. Watkins to approve Amendment 1 as written, to approve Amendment 2 with the addition of outdoor dining, walking, and shade trees, as suggested by C. Sawyer, and to approve Amendment 3 as written and refer to City Council. Seconded by J. Appel. There was a brief discussion confirming that this was a public hearing. Motion approved by a vote of D. Smith, C. Watkins, J. Appel, and C. Seale in favor, and M. Gawne abstaining.

- D. Smith appreciated everyone's input, suggestions, and questions.

4. City Plan update.

- D. Smith moved onto the City Plan to discuss chapters 2 and 3 from the 2017 version of the City Plan. There are also notes from C. Sawyer for the 2025 plan to discuss. A discussion opens up about additions, suggestions, and general feedback on the chapters.
- J. Appel asked about how the city can make storefronts, buildings, sidewalks, and other areas

- more accessible, even if they reach ADA requirements.
- C. Watkins brought up whether the city is as inclusive as it can be, and C. Sawyer mentions that the BEI could be included for this.
 - C. Sawyer recommended that the PC leave Chapters 2 and 3 for next week and move on to discuss definitions and the fence amendment the rest of the night. C. Watkins agreed and would like to meet with the BEI for input for these chapters. The Commission agreed to move on.
 - C. Watkins mentioned that, as a member of a minority, there are many differences that should be considered when looking at the new city plan. He stated that little things can really matter when other perspectives and experiences aren't considered. There was more discussion as to what can be put in the City Plan to help create a safer and more inclusive community.
 - There was more discussion about the plan, but C. Sawyer mentioned that there could be a way to discuss the old plan and the new 2025 plan at the same time.
 - D. Smith wanted the process for the new city plan to be very clear. For the future, she wants to read the current plan and develop a process for rewriting it that's inclusive with focus groups, so that people really think about the next 8 years of the city. This could include the BEI and other committees, as well as the public, for major input.
 - M. Gawne asked to move on to the other parts of the agenda before they ran out of time.

Motion by C. Watkins to approve the minutes of February 20, 2023, as written. Seconded by J. Appel. Motion approved by a vote of all in favor. There is a brief discussion to ensure that the minutes are kept in the past tense for record-keeping purposes.

5. Update on the Fence Amendment

- C. Sawyer gave an update on the feedback from the City Council with regard to the fence amendment.

6. Update on land use-related legislation in Montpelier.

- C. Sawyer gave an update on the land use-related legislation in Montpelier.

7. Adjourn

Motion by C. Watkins to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 PM. Seconded by M. Gawne. Motion approved with all in favor. Meeting is adjourned.