

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
5:30 PM MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2022

Approved April 18, 2022

Commission Members Present: Denise Smith, Chair (via Zoom); Michael Gawne; Lauren Dees-Erickson (via Zoom); Zachary Nuse; Amy Burleson (via Zoom).

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

Members of the Public Present: Brandy Saxton (via Zoom); Jeremiah La Cross (via Zoom, arrived late).

1. Open Meeting. **D. Smith called the meeting to order at 5:32 PM.**

1. Introduction of attendees. - introductions were made.
2. Public Comment on issues not on agenda. - None.
3. Discuss additions or deletions to agenda. - Z. Nuse expressed interest in making sure the agenda includes a vote on the PUD amendment. D. Smith asked if he wanted to move it up in the agenda. Z. Nuse said that would be his preference. D. Smith decided to keep the agenda as scheduled because there was a guest waiting to make a presentation first but expressed an interest in making sure the Commission gets through the PUD at this meeting.

2. Presentation of update on Residential Data Tool Project.

B. Saxton presented an update on the Residential Tool Project with a thorough walkthrough of the report and a description of how it was compiled. The report starts with an introduction and is then broken down into five chapters with appendices. B. Saxton explained that the report is not about the entire city, but mostly the residential areas. Just slightly more than 1900 individual lots were examined for the study. Approximately half were single-family occupancy.

B. Saxton explained that she considers there to be "three doors" through which someone would have to open in order to add more housing in the city. She explained that the "first door" is lot-size requirements. Her "second door" is setback requirements. The "third door" would be parking requirements.

B. Saxton broke her analysis down by blocks rather than districts. 124 blocks in the city were examined. She shared a map with the Commission that illustrates the block

breakdown. She suggested recoloring existing maps to test out different levels and numbers for lots that are nonconforming.

B. Saxton said the City's zoning regulations and rules are similar to the mid-20th century regulations in South Burlington, Vermont. She said they seem on par with mid-century suburban rules rather than an urban area. She showed her proposed redistricting map to the Commission, which shows some changes from the previous boundaries and districts. Her suggestions make a number of proposed changes throughout the City, including making any lot eligible to become a duplex and allowing for multiple principal buildings on a lot. She suggested reducing parking requirements and allowing for taller buildings.

C. Sawyer asked the Commission members if they understood how B. Saxton came up with her suggestions and how the tool was used. Z. Nuse said he liked it and likes the information but isn't clear on how it will help. C. Sawyer said the way they could use it is if the state says the city has to increase their housing, now they have a starting point. This is the first step. Z. Nuse said this could be used both ways, it could increase conformity, or it could allow loosening up of the rules to allow for more housing, where it might go too far in the other direction.

B. Saxton showed the board a list of nine guidelines from the state to serve as a zoning guide for communities like St. Albans. She said her report's final conclusion allows the city to go from 41 percent of lots in the city that could be built out, to 86 percent, but that there are still plenty of regulations and codes that will prevent the number from reaching its possible maximum.

D. Smith asked for clarification of pie charts on a slide from the presentation about build-out potential. B. Saxton said the numbers translate to number of units per acre for the density.

C. Sawyer said there are couple of different ways to use this tool. If the city council or the state come with issues about density or increasing housing, now the PC can go back to the ground and see what the actual numbers are. He explained that the City has tried to do it on their own in the past, but this tool allows them to look at the entire city or look at smaller sections individually. He said there is a lot of good information in this report but it's not the end but rather a tool to help the City determine the end.

C. Sawyer suggested if there are no further questions the meeting could move on to the rest of the agenda. M. Gawne asked if the Planning Commission members would have access to the tool. C. Sawyer said there is an Excel program that could be shared or a GIS version. M. Gawne said it makes it difficult if he can't have the tool on hand to experiment with. He feels he wouldn't be really using it or analyzing it. D. Smith said that would be city staff's job. M. Gawne disagreed.

D. Smith and Z. Nuse thanked B. Saxton for all of the work and time she put into the tool and the report. C. Sawyer said this isn't the last time B. Saxton will be presenting on the tool.

3. Continuation of Public Hearing on proposed amendments to Land Development Regulations concerning Planned Unit Developments.

a. Presentation of proposed amendments.

D. Smith introduced the item on the agenda.

b. Public Hearing.

C. Sawyer presented three items for this subject. One was a word file of revisions suggested by M. Gawne. The second a revised version from C. Sawyer, mostly based on the suggestions from M. Gawne, with comments, and finally, the third, a cleaned-up version with no comments that would be the version submitted to city council.

c. Consider revisions to amendments.

C. Sawyer shared his screen with the PUD amendments and suggestions. Changes included adding in purposes for the rule and changes for eligibility by removing a minimum lot size requirement. He also suggested leaving in the catch-all term "residential district" in the document because the city might rename the districts in the future. M. Gawne said he would prefer not having to refer to other parts of the regulations to find the definitions of residential district.

C. Sawyer reviewed the criteria for how the age of building makes it eligible for the PUD rule. Rather than setting a moving date such as 50 years or 100 years old, the date could be set to 1968, when the city first instituted zoning and planning rules. Z. Nuse asked for clarification of why this is necessary instead of the previous 50-year rule. C. Sawyer explained that, with a moving date of at least 50-years old or 100-years old, then, every year, newer buildings that don't otherwise fit the criteria become of age.

Z. Nuse suggested a revision moving a section E, part 4 to section D.

C. Sawyer went over the section on restrictions for parking and said that the applicant could explain to the DRB what they need for parking and then the DRB could decide how many spots would be required per unit and whether or not to allow them to go as low as 1.3 spaces per unit. It allows for flexibility from the DRB. D. Smith asked where the rule came from. A. Burleson said she always tries to have more parking than necessary for her rental buildings. M. Gawne asked how many she would need typically. She said 2.5 seems high but at least 2. C. Sawyer suggested changing the wording in the PUD to 1.5 spots. Z. Nuse said he prefers the 1.3 rule. L. Dees-Erickson said she prefers 2 spots. D. Smith said she prefers 1.5 and suggested plugging a number in so the Commission could move on. D. Smith asked for a thumbs up for 1.5 and the other members agreed.

Z. Nuse made a motion to keep the amendment to 1.3 spots. Second by M. Gawne. Motion failed.

M. Gawne made a motion to make the rule 1.5 parking spots per unit. Second by L. Dees-Erickson. A. Burleson abstained. Motion passed at 7:08 PM.

C. Sawyer continued the review of the amendments, comments, and changes in the document.

C. Sawyer suggested that special status be granted to past PUD developments since the rules are changing so drastically, so that they're not left behind if they want to change anything in the future. The Commission agreed.

C. Sawyer opened the floor for questions and comments. Z. Nuse expressed comment regarding the 1.3 vs. 1.5 parking spot rule. He wanted his concern noted but wanted to move on.

d. Consider motion to refer proposed amendments to City Council.

M. Gawne made a motion to refer the PUD amendment proposal, as revised tonight, to the City Council. Second by L. Dees-Erickson. Approved with all in favor, except A. Burleson recusing, at 7:19 PM.

4. Election of Officers.

a. Chair.

i. Nominations. Z. Nuse asked if anyone would like express interest in serving as chair. C. Sawyer explained that the role is about keeping the meetings on task and running the meetings.

L. Dees-Erickson nominated D. Smith to continue. Second by M. Gawne.

ii. Election. **D. Smith was elected to continue as Chair with all in favor at 7:24 PM.**

b. Vice Chair.

i. Nominations. M. Gawne expressed interest in having either L. Dees-Erickson or Z. Nuse act as Vice Chair. Z. Nuse declined the nomination.

M. Gawne nominated L. Dees-Erickson as Vice Chair. Second by D. Smith.

ii. Election. **L. Dees-Erickson was elected to Vice Chair with all in favor at 7:26 PM.**

5. Approval of Minutes.

Motion by M. Gawne to approve the minutes of December 20, 2021, as presented. Second by Z. Nuse. Minutes approved with all in favor at 7:22 PM.

6. General Business.
 - a. Expiring PC member terms. - Z. Nuse, M. Gawne, and D. Smith are up for new terms at the end of 2022 (12/31/22).
 - b. Review next meeting date and format. - Next meeting is scheduled for February 21, 2022 (President's Day).
 - c. Other. - None

7. Adjourn.

Motion by M. Gawne to Adjourn. Second by L. Dees-Erickson. Meeting adjourned with all in favor at 7:29 PM.