

**MINUTES**  
**ST. ALBANS CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET**  
**5:30 PM MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 2023**

*Approved February 20, 2023*

**Commission Members Present:** Denise Smith, Chair; Lauren Dees-Erickson, Vice Chair (Via Zoom); Carl Watkins; Michael Gawne, Alternate; Janis Appel.

**Commission Members Absent:** Courtney Seale, Alternate; Amy Burleson.

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

**Members of the public present:** None.

**1. Begin Recording and Open Meeting. D. Smith begins the meeting at 5:31.**

- Introduction of attendees. No members of the public.
- Public comment on issues not on agenda. None.
- Discuss additions or deletions to agenda. None.
- Assignment of Alternatives
  - M. Gawne is an alternate tonight and allowed to vote on motions.

**2. Nomination and election of Chair and Vice Chair.**

- D. Smith mentions that this needs to happen soon since it's in January. M. Gawne would like to table this measure until L. Dees-Erickson returns.

**3. City Plan update**

- D. Smith moves onto the presentation and summary of the plan. C. Sawyer presents it.
- C. Sawyer mentions that one person needs to volunteer to be a 2024 expiration. C. Watkins mentions that he volunteered for that.

**C. Watkins motions for his term expiration to be in December 2024. J. Appel seconds. All vote aye, the motion passes unanimously.**

**M. Gawne motions to become the alternate whose term expires December 2024. Seconded by C. Watkins. All vote aye, and the motion passes unanimously.**

- D. Smith continues onto the city plan.
  - D. Smith skips to August 2025 in the proposed schedule. C. Sawyer believes that the planning commission should get this done in early 2025 so that there's some time to finish by August.
  - M. Gawne and C. Sawyer make it clear that the plan should be adopted by August 2025 for grant funds and additional reasons. But zoning will continue if it isn't.
- C. Sawyer wants to review two chapters a month through June. Starting in July for two months having a conversation about outlining the new plan and new focus topics that the PC wants to explore. The PC can do a public forum in September to invite public input. Then in November, the PC will develop a workplan.
  - C. Sawyer adds that one of the difficult things with this kind of planning is that hearings need to be posted 30 days in advance.
- J. Appel asks for clarification on what working on the "plan" means. C. Sawyer clarifies that staff will do most of the writing, but Planning Commission members will have direct input. Most of the work would be staff.
- C. Sawyer mentions that this is why the timing of the plan is so important.
- D. Smith mentions that it's not uncommon to bring other staff or input from the public. D. Smith also wants the public input session to be advertised well for September 2023.
  - L. Dees-Erickson and C. Watkins both think it would be a good idea to have an email address or a google form.
  - C. Sawyer thinks that this is definitely doable. Especially with a drop down menu for different committees or boards.
  - J. Appel mentions that there should be a way to get public input from folks who don't use computers. It could be organized like the water bill which has a tear-off section.
  - D. Smith thinks that there could be a good way to have a "World Cafe" event where people are encouraged to come and give their input. C. Sawyer mentions that one way to encourage input is to just not mention the plan at all and just ask for public input. I.e. "What do you want the city to look like?"
  - D. Smith brings up that social media could be a part of it too. Social media can direct people to the right channels like Google Forms or something else.
- All of this input can be done on Town Meeting Day to promote it. D. Smith also brings up the idea of bringing in a focus group of systematically marginalized people to give feedback or input on city plan items.
- C. Watkins asks if planning for public input in July for the public input in September is early enough? D. Smith and C. Sawyer believe that it should be earlier in this case.
- C. Sawyer thinks we should check in on this in a few months as things move along.

- Chapters 1 & 2 should be reviewed in February.

4. D. Smith moves back to the nomination and election of Chair and Vice Chair, now that L. Dees-Erickson is back.

- D. Smith is happy to stay on as Chair. L. Dees-Erickson is moving and announces her imminent step down from the PC. M. Gawne is happy to have C. Watkins become Vice Chair.
- C. Sawyer asks for clarification on the resignation. L. Dees-Erickson says that it's imminent but not immediate.

**C. Watkins motions to appoint D. Smith to Chair and C. Watkins to Vice Chair. Seconded by M. Gawne. All vote aye, and the motion passes unanimously.**

5. Review workplan and other amendment proposals

- C. Sawyer begins. The issue of the Fonda Site should be paused due to traffic concerns. Housing in the area needs to be addressed. The city is talking to potential developers at the moment, so the plan can be updated in the future with more information. It likely should be discussed in March.
- D. Smith asks about what needs to be done for the transportation analysis.
- J. Appel asks about how many units will be developed in the area. C. Sawyer says 33 units of senior housing. There will be a mix of low-moderate income. It will also be 3-4 stories. The rest of the site would be maximized for housing as well, not just Cathedral Square.
- J. Appel is really concerned about the traffic in that area. There's no crosswalk until Lower Newton, and that can be bad for pedestrians.
- D. Smith is glad that the city is looking intensely at the traffic patterns before making any drastic decisions.
- C. Sawyer mentions some updates on the workplan. The City Council appreciated all of the work that the PC did for the Residential Professional District.
- M. Gawne wants to review one page a month as far as definitions go. D. Smith asks about the preference on what the PC should discuss today.

6. D. Smith asks to approve the minutes first.

- **C. Watkins motions to approve both the November 21 and December 19, 2022, minutes, as presented. M. Gawne seconds the motion. J. Appel abstains. All but J. Appel vote aye. The motion passes.**

7. D. Smith moves onto the fences.

- M. Gawne thinks that 4 feet for a front-yard fence is too high, especially if you can't see through it. M. Gawne is also concerned about corner lots with higher fences that

- you can't see around. That can be dangerous for driving if you're turning or looking for the right of way. One example is the corner of Diamond and Lincoln Street.
- C. Sawyer asks how the PC feels about the new rules, specifically the sizes or materials.
    - C. Watkins doesn't mind the language as written.
    - J. Appel doesn't have a dog that she walks, but she's comfortable as long as the fence stops the dog from getting out. The visual sight at the corner is the important part, i.e. being 2 feet back and no higher than 4.5 feet.
    - J. Appel also wants to know about the point of the rules. Is it about the fences "looking nice?" M. Gawne feels that the aesthetics and safety of a fence are both important metrics.
    - D. Smith clarifies that there is a "certain experience that you get" when you walk through a city, so these rules are designed to reinforce the experience and its importance.
  - D. Smith wants to go back to fencing rules and asks everyone to read the childcare changes for next time.
  - M. Gawne doesn't agree with the 10-foot high conditional section of the fencing rules. There is disagreement about this. C. Sawyer thinks it would be helpful to have it be conditional for the future.
  - D. Smith continues to read the fencing rules.

**C. Watkins motions to warn the fence amendments for a public hearing next month. Seconded by J. Appel. No further discussion. All vote aye. The motion passes unanimously.**

**8. Adjourn. D. Smith motions to adjourn at 7:30. Seconded by C. Watkins. All vote aye. The meeting is adjourned.**