

**CITY COUNCIL/PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
February 16, 2006, 8:30 a.m.**

**ABILENE STATE SCHOOL CAMPUS, 2501 MAPLE ST.
OAKWOOD TRAILS LODGE**

The Abilene City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission of Abilene, Texas met in a Special Joint Meeting to review and discuss elements and implementation of the City of Abilene's Comprehensive Plan and concerning the respective roles of the Abilene City Council and the Planning & Zoning Commission. Mayor Archibald was present and presiding with Councilmen Sam Chase, Anthony Williams (arrived at 9:20 a.m.), Kris Southward, Stormy Higgins, and Councilwoman Laura Moore. Also present were City Manager Larry Gilley, City Attorney Sharon Hicks, City Secretary Jo Moore, and various members of the City staff. Councilman John Hill was absent.

Jack Harkins, Chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission was present and presiding with Planning and Zoning Commission Board members Floyd Miller, Tim Rice McClarty, Neomia Banks, Eddie Boykin, Ovelia Campos, and Jeff Luther.

Mayor Archibald and P&Z Chair Harkins called their respective boards to order.

Floyd Miller, Planning and Zoning Commission Board member gave the invocation and Councilwoman Moore led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Archibald welcomed those in attendance, reviewed the day's expected activities and requested that Jon James, Director of Planning and Development Services, give a template for today's discussion. The Mayor noted today's meeting is for discussion and no action would be taken.

Mr. James distributed and reviewed the following information:

City Council/Planning and Zoning Commission
Joint Workshop
February 16, 2006

In January of 2004, the City Council adopted the City of Abilene Comprehensive Plan. This plan identified strategies necessary to achieve the goals of the plan. One of the primary tasks in implementing that plan is the project underway to update our development codes (zoning, subdivision, community appearance, etc.) into a single "unified development ordinance." As part of this process over the next year and a half, the City will be faced with many decisions regarding the future of the community. We hope today's meeting will help ensure that the City staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the City Council are all on the same page as we move forward on this important project.

The following are a couple of questions to help guide your discussion:

1. The Comprehensive Plan is:
 - a. A hoped-for future that may or may not be realized

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- b. A general guide for growth and development of the community that establishes general policy parameters for ordinances and future decisions
 - c. Rigid standards that all ordinances and future development decisions should be consistent with
2. Recognizing that community appearance is an important factor in maintaining a high quality of life for citizens and in attracting new residents, business, and tourists to our City, the City of Abilene is a community that:
 - a. Aggressively seeks a high-quality appearance through strict regulation
 - b. Sets the bar high for the quality of development and is willing to ask new businesses to meet our standards
 - c. Cares about community appearance, but wants to ensure that regulations are minimal and do not substantially raise the cost of development
 - d. Wants to avoid requirements that place any burden on the private sector, even at the expense of community appearance

Mr. James stated staff is hopeful that today's meeting will result in staff having an understanding of the general direction the Council and P&Z Commission want to proceed as ordinances are being reviewed and updated.

Jack Harkins, Chairman of the Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed various community appearance issues in the Comprehensive Plan which included the following:

- Landscaping
- Signage
- Incorporate natural resources
- Enhancement of public streets
- Location of sidewalks
- Historic Preservation
- Building design standards
- Revision of setback requirements
- Parking lots
- Promote internal access drives
- Lighting standards

Mr. Harkins stated when the Comprehensive Plan was brought to the Council many compromises had already been made, public input received and that the Plan was made more palatable to the development community. Mr. Harkins referenced the Council's decision to allow Cracker Barrel and Wal-Mart to install signs that weren't in line with the Comprehensive Plan and Mr. Harkins stated those decisions set the stage for today's meeting. Mr. Harkins further stated he believes the Council and P&Z are at a crossroad and that a decision on the direction in which to proceed needs to be made.

Mayor Archibald thanked Chair Harkins for the concepts that he outlined and stated the importance, to the future of our community, of reviewing the ordinances to assure that the Comprehensive Plan will work. The Mayor stated appreciation to the P&Z Commission for their

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work and noted the expertise they each bring to the Commission. The Mayor also noted that 90+% of the time the Council and P&Z Commission do agree on decisions made. The Mayor then opened the floor for input from the Council and P&Z members on issues they feel need to be addressed.

Planning & Zoning Commission members input included: 1) a review of the history of the formulating of the Comprehensive Plan; 2) resentments felt over Council's decision and comments made concerning the Cracker Barrel sign; 3) precedent having been set and clear direction to P&Z needed from Council; 4) Council having been faced with strong community input on Cracker Barrel issue; 5) balance between city growth and appearance needed; 6) the Comp Plan being viewed as a program with each point needing to be discussed/debated; 7) the importance of infill development being stressed in the Comp Plan (incentive issues); 8) the city's right and need to take control of state highways inside the city limits; 9) the need for comments "words" to be used carefully (i.e. reference to P&Z not being viewed as "pro-business"); 10) no P&Z or Council member having the right to vote against the strategy of the Comp Plan unless they go through the same efforts that were gone through when the Plan was created; 11) the Plan should not have to be defended on every issue; 12) the obligation to the citizens of Abilene to implement the Plan as it is laid out, and; 13) the P&Z Commission's Cracker Barrel sign decision being based on following the Comp Plan and not one that was made in opposition to Cracker Barrel.

Councilmember's input included: 1) the need for Council and the P&Z Commission to be headed in the same direction while recognizing that their decisions will sometimes differ; 2) the benefits that would result from the views of all three (staff, P&Z and Council) being known; 3) the fact that the Comp Plan is a plan (guide) and does not answer every question; 4) the Comp Plan having been revised to reflect encouraging versus restrictive language and was originally very staff driven (staff should not set the standards); 5) practicality and cost issues; 6) the tremendous amount of community input received by Council requesting Council approve Cracker Barrel's request; 7) the P&Z Commission being viewed as pro-business; 8) decisions to be made may depend on specific situations/issues and that compromises are still needed; 9) the possibility of the city taking control of state highways within city limits; 10) cost versus appearance issues; 11) current Comp Plan strategies are vague and need to be discussed and more specifics determined, and; 12) possibly holding future joint P&Z/Council workshops.

Council and Planning & Zoning Commission recessed for a break at 10:00 a.m. and reconvened at 10:15 a.m.

Planning & Zoning Commission, Council and staff discussion included: 1) the need to uphold the Comp Plan concept commitment; 2) elevating community appearance will attract high quality development; 3) the balance needed between community appearance and cost; 4) the need to promote a clean community and enforce current regulations; 5) pro's and con's concerning sign issues; 6) Council clarifying "pro-business" comment; 7) staff reviewed process involved in developing of ordinances, noting an approximate completion time of 1 ½ years; 8) Council noting basis for increasing Cracker Barrel sign size; 9) Council's use of flexibility and common sense when input was received from citizens that the P&Z Commission had not received; 10) setting the standard, raising the bar, requiring that standards be met but recognizing the need for flexibility; 11) the possibility of staff using the resources of the American Planning Assoc. (i.e. determines how many Cracker Barrel's/Wal-Marts went into restrictive cities); 12) discussing during the city's budget

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process the earmarking of funds for infill projects; 13) the possibility of various groups (i.e. Council, P&Z, Board of Adjustment and Board of Building Standards) meeting to discuss Comp Plan issues, and; 14) the various questions as outlined on the handout distributed by planning staff and the opinions of P&Z and Council concerning those questions (what the Comprehensive Plan is and the kind of community Abilene is).

City Manager Larry Gilley stated that although today's meeting may not have provided a clear sense of direction to staff it is a start in moving forward. Mr. Gilley further stated these are complex issues with more involved than balancing the cost of development with the community's appearance. Mr. Gilley noted the professionalism and expertise of the city's planning staff and the efforts of the Council and P&Z Commission members. Mr. Gilley stated he would encourage continued open-mindedness, shared respect and careful communication as the responsibilities to Abilene citizens are met through the developing of ordinances that will allow Abilene to be the kind community all can be proud of.

Councilman Southward left the meeting.

Noted opinion of the Planning & Zoning Commission was that the Comprehensive Plan is a general guide for growth and development of the community that establishes general policy parameters for ordinances and future decisions, and that the City of Abilene sets the bar high for the quality of development and is willing to ask new businesses to meet our standards.

Noted opinion of the City Council was that the Comprehensive Plan is a general guide for growth and development of the community that establishes general policy parameters for ordinances and future decisions, and a fairly strong opinion that the City of Abilene sets the bar high for the quality of development and is willing to ask new businesses to meet our standards and some noted opinions that the City of Abilene cares about community appearance, but wants to ensure that regulations are minimal and do not substantially raise the cost of development.

Councilman Williams left the meeting.

There being no further business Mayor Archibald and Chair Harkins adjourned their respective boards at 11:45 a.m.

Jo Moore
City Secretary

Norm Archibald
Mayor