
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

November 17, 2008

Minutes

Members Present: Bruce Bixby
Lydia M. Long
Tim McClarty
David Todd
Clint Rosenbaum

Members Absent: Ovelia Campos
Fred Famble

Staff Present: T. Daniel Santee, City Attorney
Jon James, Director of Planning and Development Services
Edward S. McRoy, Assistant Director of Planning and Development Services
Robert Allen, Abilene MPO
Ben Bryner, Planning Services Manager
Molinda Parker, Senior Planner
Zack Rainbow, Planner I

Others Present: Dave Boyll
Jennifer Ward
Faith Gage
Charlotte Nichols
Roger Huber
David McMeekan

Item One: Call to Order

Mr. Tim Rice McClarty called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and declared a quorum present.

Item Two: Invocation

Mr. McClarty gave the Invocation.

Mr. McClarty read the opening statement for the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Item Three: Plats

Mr. Zack Rainbow presented information regarding the plats listed on the agenda. Plat MRP-2008 is complete and is being submitted for consideration by the Commission. Mr. Rainbow stated that staff is recommending approval of this plat as it meets Subdivision Regulation requirements.

Mr. McClarty opened the public hearing and asked if anyone wished to speak regarding the plat being presented for approval. No one come forward and the public hearing was closed.

Mr. Todd moved to approve MRP-2008, as submitted. Dr. Long seconded the motion and the motion carried by a vote of four (4) in favor (Bixby, Long, McClarty and Todd) to none (0) opposed.

Item Four: Discussion Item/Public Hearing

Public hearing and possible vote to recommend an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan adopting a Neighborhood Plan for the Lake Fort Phantom Hill area prepared by Jacobs Consultancy.

Mr. McClarty stated that this item has been pulled from the agenda; however the Commission recognizes that there are individuals in attendance to address this item and therefore an open discussion will be held. This item will be rescheduled for consideration by the Commission at a later date.

Mr. McClarty opened the public hearing.

Mr. Rober Huber, President of the Lake Fort Phantom Association, stated that he is a member of the roundtable working with staff on this plan and work is progressing well. Mr. Huber expressed his appreciation to City staff working with the members of this roundtable.

Mr. McClarty closed the public hearing.

Item Five: Discussion Items

a. Discussion and direction to staff on an Ordinance amending the City of Abilene Zoning Ordinance, Section 23-346 regarding Pine Street Corridor Overlay.

Mr. James stated that this item has been placed on the agenda for discussion and direction to staff. This item is not on the agenda for approval – this item should be considered for approval at the December meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Ms. Molinda Parker, Senior Planner, provided the presentation for this item. Ms. Parker stated that she has spent the last six (6) months studying the Pine Street area. To date, the following work has been completed:

Explanation of Corridor Plan

Components of a Corridor Plan

Mission Criteria

Definition of Corridor Study

Corridor Boundaries

Photographic Survey of Corridor

Land Use Analysis

Identify Specific Businesses

Define Potential Development Sections

Streetscapes - Landscaping

Signage

Architectural Review

Pine Street Corridor Text

Boundary of Corridor

SWOT Analysis - Research & Develop Criteria

Gather Community Input

Present SWOT & Survey Results

Present Development Standards – Urban and Suburban Designs

Establish Task Force

Group Discussion

Following Ms. Parker's presentation, Commissioners asked the following questions:

⇒ Bruce Bixby – The examples of the 100 foot rights-of-way – are these only examples or is this area actually available with which to work?

Ms. Parker stated that the 100 foot rights-of-way are available.

⇒ Bruce Bixby asked if this plan would require the relocation of utilities.

Ms. Parker responded that utilities would not have to be relocated.

⇒ Bruce Bixby asked about the “urban” versus “suburban” design.

Jon James stated that as the ordinance is drafted currently, it is not the decision of this Commission as to which design will be utilized – this is an option for developers and property owners. These designs provide options to developers with a consistent streetscape.

⇒ Bruce Bixby asked if Pine Street was an appropriate street for billboards.

Jon James responded that staff and the Commission originally recommended not allowing billboards along Pine Street. The Sign Review Committee recommended adding Pine Street as an allowable street for billboards.

⇒ Bruce Bixby asked who initiated the Pine Street Corridor Overlay.

Jon James stated that he is unsure of who or what group originally requested looking at a corridor for Pine Street. Planning staff was requested by the City Manager to initiate a Pine Street Corridor Study. Also, since there are CIP funds for the Pine Street reconstruction, staff felt this was a good time to look at this area.

Jon James stated that although the study includes the area to Interstate 20, at some point a formal zoning case will be presented that designates the zoning district boundaries for this corridor. This has not yet been determined. The primary focus of this study is from North 6th Street to Ambler Avenue.

Dr. Long asked staff what exactly staff is requiring from the Commission today.

Mr. James responded that staff is asking the Commission for direction as to how to proceed with this plan.

Mr. Bixby stated that he agrees that a corridor overlay is needed on Pine Street; however, care should be taken to not get too specific with design and architecture requirements.

Mr. McClarty stated that it is his opinion that Pine Street has the potential to be a great gateway into the City of Abilene. Mr. McClarty stated that a consultant could be retained so that this gateway could be designed with trees and a median that would enhance the corridor from I-20 to the center of the City.

Mr. McClarty and Mr. Bixby were in agreement that design guidelines should not be included in the plan for individual properties. The focus should be on the streetscape – not on the buildings. Mr. McClarty stated that he would like to have a formal design for the street and sidewalks in this area that followed the Master Plan.

Mr. Bixby stated that signage is addressed in the corridor overlay plan; however, the Sign Ordinance has not yet been revised. This issue needs to be addressed by this Commission and by the Community.

Mr. Todd stated that he has concerns regarding having the urban and suburban designs next to each other because this could cause a problem with driveways. Mr. Todd stated that he believes this area to be a redevelopment area.

Mr. James stated that City personnel through the Planning Department and Public Works Department have the expertise to design this corridor without retaining a professional consultant for this work.

Commissioners requested a street design schematic for their review as the first step in the creation of a Pine Street Corridor Overlay.

b. Discussion and direction to staff on the area for the Infill Development Program.

Mr. Jon James presented the staff report for this item. Mr. James provided a map indicating infill areas within the City – vacant parcels, water lines (old, new and inadequate), traffic count map.

Mr. McClarty stated that the PowerPoint presentation provides all the information he requested; however, since it is on the computer, one can zoom in and out of the area as required. Mr. McClarty stated that it would be much easier for him to be able to see the entire drawing – this information could be easily plotted (at a larger scale) and printed onto a transparent medium so that the maps could be overlaid to allow the Commissioners to study the three areas (vacant land, water lines and traffic counts). Mr. McClarty stated that if this information was provided to each of the Commissioners, these maps could be studied in order to develop suggestions/recommendations for infill development.

Mr. Bixby asked Mr. James to briefly explain the infill development program.

Mr. James stated that there are two aspects to this program:

1. Fee Schedule – A new fee schedule has been adopted for the City for all planning and building fees. This schedule allows those areas within a designated infill area a 50% reduction on building and planning fees. The first order of business would be defining the area(s) for this fee schedule.
2. Incentive Programs – As staff moves forward on other incentive programs, staff felt that for the sake of simplicity one infill area would be defined. The City Council modified this to one large infill area (defined as Vogel, Willis, South 20th and Cedar Creek) and potentially looking at a “super infill area” (a smaller, focused area) that could have additional incentives. Mr. James stated that staff would not want multiple areas with a variety of incentives. Staff has discussed eight to ten programs that could be implemented over the next two to three years. Many of these programs would offer incentives or provide assistance, but only within a defined area.

Mr. Bixby asked if staff has studied a “criteria” based program versus a “location” based program.

Mr. James stated that staff has look at this and came to the conclusion that administratively it would be much simpler to have a defined area. Mr. James stated that part of the reason it would be difficult to have a “criteria” based system is that the program would have to be fairly “coarse” as “good data” is not always available.

Mr. McClarty and Mr. Bixby agreed that a fee reduction is not necessarily a good incentive.

Mr. James stated that the City Council was comfortable with a “map based” infill area and asked staff to submit this item to the Planning and Zoning Commission for input on how the Commission would suggest determining the boundaries.

Mr. Todd asked if the objective is to have infill on individual parcels or a redevelopment of a specific area.

Mr. James stated that the objective covers both these areas – individual parcels and redevelopment of areas.

Mr. Bixby stated that it would be his preference to have smaller “Super Targeted” areas and build on this as needed.

Mr. James stated that from the comments expressed at the Commission’s last meeting, there seems to be a general agreement with this concept. Mr. James asked the Commissioners where they thought these focus areas should be.

Mr. Bixby stated that he can only speak in general terms since he owns many parcels in some of the potential areas so he will not be involved in that part of the discussion (definition of an exact area).

Mr. McClarty stated that he did not believe he could make a recommendation until he has the detailed maps at a scale where the criteria can be compared. Mr. McClarty asked Mr. James if the area located in the central portion of the map has adequate infrastructure, what should be the next criteria to be considered.

Mr. James stated that his answer to this question is “where are the areas in which development should be encouraged.” For example, development along the Pine Street Corridor should be encouraged.

Mr. McClarty stated that, for him, there is some confusion regarding redevelopment and infill development (basically a vacant lot or lots).

Mr. Bixby stated that this Commission possesses the expertise and should be defining the program to the City Council and staff. Mr. Bixby stated that the Commission should be offering information that is effective and makes a difference. Mr. Bixby stated that the way to make a real difference is to super target an area and make that area desirable in order to make an impact.

Dr. Long stated that it is her understanding that this program not only addresses vacant lots (infill) but also redevelopment – creation of a visual impact for the citizens of Abilene.

Mr. Rosenbaum asked what the City Council’s charge was to this Commission regarding this issue.

Mr. James responded that the Council asked the Commission to:

1. Identify an area in which to provide the 50% fee waiver for new development
2. Also, the boundaries of this area would serve to identify the area for redevelopment and infill incentive programs.

Mr. James stated that staff has identified approximately eight to ten programs to implement over the next three years.

Mr. Rosenbaum stated that the “brainstorming” format does not work for him and asked if there is another format that could be utilized for identifying areas and determining a course of action.

Mr. James stated that a workshop could be held for the Commissioners where they could view various maps and work on this project in this manner.

Mr. McClarty stated that he can visualize three possible means for completing this task (by definition):

1. Broad scheme involving incentives for all infill development (and define “infill development”) and target one particular areas that offered many incentives.
2. A small incentive package for infill development (define quarters and groups of areas with a contiguous line that defines where these incentives would be available.
3. One large circle on the map with every area having the same incentives.

Mr. McClarty stated that the Commissioners seem to want different outcomes; therefore, the Commission must reach an agreement on exactly what is desired for the city.

Mr. James stated that what he is hearing from the Commissioners is that generally all seem to be in favor of some targeted, focused incentives in a fairly tight area (the area has not yet been determined). Some Commissioners are also in favor of having incentives in a larger area.

Mr. Rosenbaum stated that it is his understanding that the charge is “define the areas for fee incentives” and then what are the target areas and what incentives should be afforded to smaller targeted areas.

Mr. Bixby stated that as explained by Mr. James, there are only selective circumstances where the fees might really make a difference. If we are talking about only a selective few instances, then, is this event or criteria driven rather than boundary driven?

Mr. James stated that in terms of the fees, City Council has already adopted a new fee schedule that states that if an area falls within a designated infill area, fees will be reduced by 50%. The decision has been made regarding fees and this will be geographically based. The first question to be answered is, “In what geographically-bounded area should fees be reduced for development?”

Following discussion among the Commissioners, Mr. McClarty proposed the following boundaries:

- ⇒ Interstate 20 down Pine Street to the City center (one (1) block on each side of Pine Street)
- ⇒ North Treadaway (where it intersects with Pine Street) to Industrial on the south side
- ⇒ The entire length of Butternut Street
- ⇒ The North 1st and South 1st Street Corridors (the entire length)
- ⇒ Some block area in the downtown area (downtown can be defined as being from North 10th to South 10th and east and west as determined by the Commission). Mr. James stated that the boundaries for the original TIF area are: North 10th Street; Grape Street; Treadaway; and South 11th
- ⇒ East Highway 80 (Business 20) from Interstate 20 East to Interstate 20 West
- ⇒ The area would encompass one (1) block on either side of each of these corridors and the central area of the downtown district

Mr. Bixby stated that he is in agreement with the corridor areas outlined by Mr. McClarty; however, the area is too large to be designated as the “super targeted area.” These corridors will fall under what is described as “the second tier.” Mr. Bixby stated that he believed the super-targeted area will be a much more confined area.

Mr. James stated that the areas outlined by Mr. McClarty would serve as corridors and then one or two of these areas could be designated as “super targeted areas.”

Mr. Rosenbaum stated that at this point the Commission has not defined a super targeted area – currently only what has been discussed is the 50% reduction in fees. Mr. Rosenbaum stated that it seems to him that redevelopment or infill development should be focused along the major corridors into the City.

Mr. James stated that the information provided by the Commissioners today could be taken directly to the City Council or it could be mapped and resubmitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission for consideration.

Mr. McClarty stated that he would like to have input from the Commissioners absent at this meeting and see the information presented on a map.

Dr. Long stated that super-targeted areas will be considered by the Commission as individual programs – the information being discussed is only for the fee reduction.

Mr. James stated that staff has sufficient information or direction from the Commissioners to proceed with this item.

Item Six: Director’s Report

Recent City Council decisions regarding items recommended by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

This information was presented at the Commissioner’s meeting held on December 1, 2008.

Item Seven: Adjourn

There being no further business, the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15 p.m.

Approved: _____, Chairman