



PLANNING COMMISSION SYNOPSIS

January 15, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Nordstrom called the Planning Commission study meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. in the McLeod Conference Room of the Bloomington Civic Plaza.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Nordstrom, Willette, Spiess, Batterson, Fischer, Bennett

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Goodrum

STAFF PRESENT: Markegard, Centinario, Farnham, Marohn, Hiller

ITEM 1
6:02 p.m.

CASE:	N/A
APPLICANT:	City of Bloomington
LOCATION:	N/A
REQUEST:	2015 Planning Commission Work Plan

SPEAKING FOR THE APPLICANT:

Glen Markegard, Planning Manager

Julie Farnham, Senior Planner

STAFF PRESENTATION:

Farnham summarized the Planning Division staff structure and the 2007-2014 Planning Division staffing levels. She stated in 2015, after the mid-January addition of a newly hired Planner, Liz Heyman, the Planning Division is estimating approximately 2,060 long-range staff hours available for long-range planning efforts.

Markegard discussed development activity and summarized a handout labeled “Current Planning Projects” which included development projects that are at the DRC level, in the application stage, projects with zoning approval in place and projects in the permit/construction stage. He discussed Planning Division duties the Planning Commission may not be aware of, discussed recent trends in work load, and summarized a Development Applications By Type handout for the years 2007-2014. He noted the data clearly shows development activity has increased in recent years and that, due to recent City Code amendments on approvals processes, increasingly the “routine/minor” applications are being handled by staff administratively therefore reducing agenda items before the Planning Commission and City Council.

Farnham explained the Planning Commission Work Plan (PCWP) focuses on long-range projects as future development applications are difficult to predict. The 2015 PCWP includes a few long-range projects from 2014 that are still in progress: Mixed Use & Nonconformity Amendments, Penn American Rezoning’s, Residential District Amendments (Phase 1), Minnesota Valley Master Plan, and the Alternative Transportation Plan Update. New 2015 PCWP projects fall into the following categories: Ordinance Amendments, Rezoning’s, Comp & District Plan Updates, and Special Plans & Studies. Farnham summarized the various projects in each of the categories listed above.

Farnham described projects anticipated to occur beyond 2015 including: Industrial District Amendments, South Loop AUAR Update, Lyndale-American Small Area Plan, Environmental Review Standards, Noise Insulation Standards, Restaurant Use Standards, Temporary Structure Standards, Rezone Remaining I-494 Corridor, and Restructure Zoning Code (move from Chapter 19 to Chapter 21).

Farnham displayed the Planning Commission 2015 Work Plan Project Timing and Prioritization chart graphic that was included in the electronic staff report packet and asked the Commission for comments. Comments of the Commission are summarized below.

DISCUSSION AND COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION:

Nordstrom asked staff to comment on what were to happen if the high priority projects labeled in green in the graphic chart were to drag on and not be concluded in the expected timeframe as listed on the graphic. Farnham stated three out of the four high priority projects are scheduled for City Council action in January so are expected to wrap up early in 2015. The PCWP is not a static document and will need to be adjusted throughout the year as new projects arise and priorities may change.

Nordstrom commented the transportation decisions being made by the Met Council affect many of the projects that come before the Planning Commission and the constant changes of placement and implementation of projects and improvements make it challenging as a Commissioner. The physical layout of the City of Bloomington (east/west transportation challenges and east/west division by I-35W) also limits options for improvements. Farnham explained there are issues the City has no jurisdiction over. Coordinating efforts between the agencies and the City is time well spent. Dealing with changing priorities and multiple jurisdictional authorities is part of the nature of planning.

Batterson commented that since Council is considering a one-year moratorium on medical marijuana, that project seems less pressing and could be put off into the latter part of the 2015 while the stormwater related Code amendments and the Normandale Lake District Plan Update project could be moved up in priority. Farnham explained that because there is a potential city-imposed moratorium on the medical marijuana issue, the priority is higher since there is a deadline to have Code amendments in place. Markegard stated many other cities also have moratoria as well and Bloomington will be working together with some of these cities to share information and ideas, which may require extra time.

Markegard asked the other Commissioners if they wish to modify the priority on the medical marijuana project. Nordstrom asked if Bloomington Public Health has any say regarding this issue. Markegard explained the provider/dispensary license is issued by the State, and in terms of the health impacts, it can only be in the form of pill, oil, or liquid and for medical purposes only.

Fischer stated he would urge the City to get it right on the medical marijuana issue and would recommend taking our time to ensure we are addressing all concerns.

Spiess stating she is comfortable leaving the medical marijuana prioritization where is and trusts where it has been placed by staff.

Fischer commented he would like to see more information on potential bike loops and said he believes some of Bloomington's buildings along Lyndale and Penn Avenues are beginning to show their age and many are vacant for extended periods of time. Markegard noted that Bloomington HRA is undertaking a Strategic Plan for Redevelopment to identify redevelopment priorities going forward. He stated the HRA item will be coming before the Planning Commission in the April 2015 timeframe to gather the Planning Commission's input and direction.

Bennett asked for clarification on whether the issues and amendments within the Miscellaneous Issues Ordinance will be discussed with the Commission in a study session before the project comes before them in a hearing and asked for staff to comment. Markegard stated typically the items within the Miscellaneous Issues Ordinance are typically less controversial items that are often considered "minor" in nature. Nordstrom suggested that if any of the topics may be "hot" that they be brought before the Commission as a study item or removed from the Miscellaneous Issues Ordinance.

Fischer noted that having a study item on the pertinent Code and legal issues would have been helpful for the Overlook Drive item heard in 2014. Markegard stated that having study sessions on a specific development item may be awkward as surrounding owners would need to be notified and would then have an expectation to testify, which is the purpose of the public hearing rather than a study meeting. Farnham stated legal issues and how they relate to the Code are typically addressed within the body of the staff report, but are sometimes handled in a separate Legal memo that may or may not be confidential.

Batterson stated he would like to see a project added to the PCWP regarding the sign code standards to address limitations on the number of building elevations on which permanent signage are allowed

in some zoning districts and the requirements to use only one type of sign (cabinet or channel letter) per facade. Markegard commented that such changes, if expanding the range of allowed signs, could potentially be considered as part of the Miscellaneous Issues Ordinance.

Markegard stated the next step with regard to the PCWP is to bring it to a City Council meeting, likely on February 9, 2015. Markegard invited Commissioner Nordstrom to attend if he is interested.

ITEM 2 6:57 p.m.	CASE:	N/A
	APPLICANT:	City of Bloomington
	LOCATION:	N/A
	REQUEST:	Discuss Alternative Transportation Plan

SPEAKING FOR THE APPLICANT:

Amy Marohn, Civil Engineer

Mike Centinario, Planner

STAFF PRESENTATION:

Centinario stated Item 2 is an update on the Alternative Transportation Plan (ATP) which was adopted by City Council in 2008. He stated it is necessary to update the ATP because improvements have been made and priorities change. He noted the Commission discussed this project back in May of 2014 and was asked for input on where certain types of facilities should be located and general comments. He stated staff has taken input from a variety of sources including stakeholders, focus group, advocates, Planning Commission, and City Council. Centinario introduced Amy Marohn, Civil Engineer for the presentation of the revised APT.

Marohn presented a number of slides summarizing the draft ATP Update. She identified the consulting team, staff advisory committee divisions, and other stakeholders. Marohn overviewed the ATP sections including: Planning Content & Framework, Vision & Values Statement, Alternative Transportation System Plan, and Implementation and Operations. She summarized the public input process including: display boards at civic events, website and on-line survey, focus group discussion with stakeholders, and two open house events. Marohn identified the major updates added to the draft ATP Update including: Intercity Trail, Old Cedar Avenue Bridge, Hyland Trail, Minnesota Valley State Trail, 35W Bridge, On-road improvements, intersection improvements, community connections, maintenance and operations, signage, way finding, and branding. She identified the priority projects and the projected costs associated with the projects. Marohn concluded the presentation by stating the next step is to take the draft plan before the City Council for a public hearing in February. She asked the Commission for input and comments.

