

REGULAR MEETING OF THE OWOSSO PLANNING COMMISSION
Council Chambers, City Hall
July 25, 2011 – 7 pm

Meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chairman Burton Fox.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all in attendance.

Roll Call was taken by Recording Secretary Marty Stinson.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Burton Fox, Commissioners Francis Livingston, Cindy Popovitch, Melvin Renfrow, Brent Smith, Thomas Taylor, and William Wascher.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Commissioner David Bandkau (excused) and vacancy.

OTHERS PRESENT: Adam Zettel, Assistant City Manager and Director of Community Development; Sally Bishop, 1028 Pearce Street; Justin Horvath, President and CEO of the Shiawassee Economic Partnership Development (SEDP); Brent Jones, Project Specialist for SEDP; Renita Mikolajczyk, President and CEO of the Shiawassee Regional Chamber of Commerce; and Kim Springsdorf, Director of the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB).

AGENDA APPROVAL:

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER LIVINGSTON, SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER POPOVITCH TO APPROVE THE AGENDA FOR JULY 25, 2011 AS PRESENTED.
YEAS ALL. MOTION CARRIED.**

MINUTES APPROVAL:

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER LIVINGSTON, SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER TAYLOR TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF JULY 11, 2011.
YEAS ALL. MOTION CARRIED.**

COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Staff memorandum
2. PC minutes from July 11, 2011
3. Alley memo, petition, & maps

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Chairman Burton Fox turned the meeting over to Recording Secretary Marty Stinson.

**MOTION BY CHAIRMAN FOX, SUPPORTED BY BOARD MEMBER POPOVITCH TO SELECT BOARD MEMBER WASCHER TO SERVE AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION FOR THE NEXT YEAR, A TERM SET TO END ON JUNE 30, 2012.
YEAS ALL. MOTION CARRIED.**

Chairman Wascher assumed the chair and then continued with the elections.

**MOTION BY BOARD MEMBER TAYLOR, SUPPORTED BY BOARD MEMBER FOX TO SELECT BOARD MEMBER LIVINGSTON TO SERVE AS THE VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE NEXT YEAR, A TERM SET TO END ON JUNE 30, 2012.
YEAS ALL. MOTION CARRIED.**

**MOTION BY VICE-CHAIRMAN LIVINGSTON, SUPPORTED BY BOARD MEMBER TAYLOR TO SELECT BOARD MEMBER RENFROW TO SERVE AS THE SECRETARY FOR THE NEXT YEAR, A TERM SET TO END ON JUNE 30, 2012.
YEAS ALL. MOTION CARRIED.**

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Fox asked about Premier Waste. Mr. Adam Zettel, Assistant City Manager and Director of Community Development, stated they have moved some dirt and will come into city hall in about 30 days for their building permit.

PUBLIC HEARING: Alley Abandonment Petition – S. Cedar and Pearce with Grace Street Access.

Mr. Zettel stated the alley is about a half block long between S. Cedar and Pearce with access off of Grace Street. The use is unimproved and minimal. There are no problems with closing the alley foreseen by city staff.

Ms. Sally Bishop, 1028 Pearce Street, started the petition for the alley closing. The only neighbor with property adjoining the alley who did not sign the petition owns a vacant lot. The homeowners have maintained the alley – it is all grass and seldom used.

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER FOX, SUPPORTED BY VICE-CHAIRMAN LIVINGSTON THAT THE OWOSSO PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDS APPROVAL OF THE ALLEY ABANDONMENT FOR THE ALLEY BETWEEN S. CEDAR STREET AND PEARCE STREET WITH ACCESS OFF OF GRACE STREET, AS PETITIONED, TO THE CITY COUNCIL, SAID ABANDONMENT TO OCCUR ONLY AFTER ANOTHER PUBLIC HEARING BY THE CITY COUNCIL IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CITY ORDINANCE SEC. 29-154.
YEAS ALL. MOTION CARRIED.**

SITE PLAN REVIEW: None

BUSINESS ITEMS: None

ITEMS OF DISCUSSION: MASTER PLAN

Mr. Zettel stated the discussion tonight would be on the Socio-Economic Profile. He introduced Renita Mikolajczyk, President and CEO of the Shiawassee Regional Chamber of Commerce and Certified Small Business Consultant; Kim Springsdorf, Director of the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB); Justin Horvath, President and CEO of the Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership (SEDP); and Brent Jones, Project Specialist for SEDP.

Mr. Horvath started his discussion with an explanation that the city donated dollars for expansion and retention of businesses. That money is used for marketing software, green technologies and to promote Shiawassee County among other endeavors. We're all committed to economic development.

Mr. Zettel stated that some of the things to review tonight would be Vision, Initiatives, Objectives, and Implementation Steps. He would like to go through the items and see if there are things to be added.

Vice-Chairman Livingston asked Mr. Horvath, in trying to expand Owosso, have you run into anything that holds us back? Mr. Horvath stated real estate boundaries. The city is already quite developed. There is not much green field available. Companies are looking for vacant buildings. There are not many industrial vacancies. We need to repurpose buildings and engage redevelopers.

Ms. Mikolajczyk stated we have a lack of Class A office and Class A handicap office spaces.

Commissioner Popovitch asked if there were any suggestions to rehab. What about our retail spaces downtown? What can we do?

Ms. Mikolajczyk has shown a local restaurant five times. Because of the condition of the building, people are afraid of the investment needed. Some buildings are for lease only – not for sale.

Mr. Horvath suggested that for local business, properties like the armory may want to engage an outside developer for a mixed use. For downtown, some businesses have a small footprint. We need to focus on targeted areas, possibly Corunna Avenue, West M-21 or M-52, and have them properly zoned. Give developers knowledge and make it seamless for buyers. The more ground work now with this plan, the easier for the future.

Commissioner Popovitch suggested that we need to think outside the "Big Box"; strategic parking; Mom and Pop businesses.

Ms. Mikolajczyk stated that the city's loan fund is great. Mom and Pops need that capital access. A building with retail incubator would be a great solution. Another challenge is how late the downtown is open.

Mr. Horvath said you really need a consultant to connect with the retails.

Mr. Zettel commented that there has been some discussion about Tourist Destination. Maybe this or exporting services could be discussed with our guests.

Ms. Springsdorf stated we are disadvantaged by not being on the great lakes, but our downtown is very strong and we have the railroad, the arts council and the castle. Anything we can increase... People love the five and dime store and our little stores in downtown with chocolate, etc.

Mr. Zettel said the city can offer incentives. Ms. Mikolajczyk said we need to encourage thinking about the whole county. An example is the Durand Quilt show which expanded to Vernon. Now how can Owosso piggy back with that event.

Mr. Horvath noted that businesses like the I-69 connection. As Perry succeeds, Owosso could bring residents here. Ms. Mikolajczyk said that grants are available and we need to look into how to benefit the whole of Shiawassee County.

Commissioner Fox stated that we have a lot of shortcomings in the Parks and Recreation with the Holman Pool. He e-mailed the newspapers an article to get people talking about regional recreation opportunities.

Ms., Springsdorf said that kids really drive a lot of sports and entertainment activities if you can go in that direction.

Mr. Horvath shared his thoughts about the Middle School making a great senior housing structure.

Mr. Zettel said the enforcement of property codes would have impact of forcing improvement of a property or maybe having someone move on... He spoke with one representative of a building owner. Some owners don't want to invest or enter an agreement with a lessee. Some tenants/lessees aren't going to invest in a building they don't own.

Ms. Mikolajczyk said there are a lot of non-profits looking into buildings downtown. She's not sure that is something that the downtown wants. Maybe you want to save the downtown for "retail" instead of "institutional" use.

Commissioner Smith asked about financing other than banks. Mr. Horvath said brownfields are not just contaminated properties. The city now has a loan program. Some programs are underused. They hold seminars at the chamber about them. Lenders need to be knowledgeable about other opportunities from other sources. Place Making is a vibrant place to attract people—doing things to impact business such as friendly people and business environment.

Ms. Popovitch suggested downtown restrooms. Mr. Fox suggested the downtown block where the old hotel was as a good location to add restrooms.

Ms. Springsdorf mentioned there are some people talking about an ice festival in Owosso. Ms. Mikolajczyk stated there is an events calendar at the chamber which is not being used enough to prevent conflicting events being scheduled at the same time.

Mr. Zettel noted that under Public Services he was going to combine public areas Section 2.4 and 2.6 as there were repetitions. There was discussion on bullet points.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Chairman Wascher thanked the guests for their input this evening. Commissioner Smith concurred with Mr. Horvath – we need to make things as efficient as possible for investors and developers.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER FOX, SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER TAYLOR TO ADJOURN AT 8:50 P.M.

YEAS ALL. MOTION CARRIED.

m.m.s.

Melvin Renfrow, Secretary