

REGULAR MEETING OF THE OWOSSO PLANNING COMMISSION
Council Chambers, City Hall
August 8, 2011 – 7 pm

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman William Wascher.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all in attendance.

Roll Call was taken by Recording Secretary Marty Stinson.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman William Wascher, Vice-Chairman Francis Livingston, David Bandkau, Burton Fox, Cindy Popovitch, Brent Smith, and Thomas Taylor.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Secretary Melvin Renfrow (excused) and vacancy.

OTHERS PRESENT: Adam Zettel, Assistant City Manager and Director of Community Development.

AGENDA APPROVAL:

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER LIVINGSTON, SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER FOX TO APPROVE THE AGENDA FOR AUGUST 8, 2011 AS PRESENTED.

YEAS ALL. MOTION CARRIED.

MINUTES APPROVAL:

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER FOX, SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER LIVINGSTON TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF JULY 25, 2011.

YEAS ALL. MOTION CARRIED.

COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Staff memorandum
2. PC minutes from July 25, 2011
3. Master plan material updates

COMMISSIONER/PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

PUBLIC HEARING: None

SITE PLAN REVIEW: None

BUSINESS ITEMS:

1. Recommendation of ZBA representative

Commissioner Fox volunteered to be the representative from the Planning Commission for appointment by Mayor Frederick to the Zoning Board of Appeals. No vote was taken.

ITEMS OF DISCUSSION: MASTER PLAN

Adam Zettel, Assistant City Manager and Director of Community Development, completed the redraft of Chapter 2. This should be ready for a public workshop, possibly in September, unless the board members have further suggestions. Chairman Wascher complimented Mr. Zettel on his work on Chapter 2.

Discussion on some points continued. Commissioner Fox asked about vacant buildings in the downtown. Was there any way to encourage property owners to fill buildings? Mr. Zettel answered yes - enforce codes. Vacant properties are to be maintained. He also commented that Owosso Main Street (OMS) Design Committee is working with the owners to set up displays/ posters for enhancing the pedestrian experience. A bullet point was added to the Master Plan to encourage this activity.

Mr. Zettel suggested that Chapter III be the Baseline Services and Assets, and Chapter IV become Socio-Economic Profile. Chapter V will be Existing Land Use.

Mr. Gary Burk, Director of Utilities, provided the expanded documentation on the waste and storm water sections, said Mr. Zettel. He also noted was that the hospital may have some huge changes shortly. Commissioner Taylor asked how this would be reflected in the Master Plan. Mr. Zettel replied it can be reflected at anytime with an amendment. Sometimes it can slide for four years if it's just a name change. If it presents a huge change to the community and has a large change to the plan, then the Master Plan can be re-opened with just a request by a planning commissioner.

Commissioner Popovitch asked if we would have to send it out to all the other jurisdictions. Mr. Zettel replied, yes. It would probably take at least six months.

Mr. Zettel said there are a lot of changes occurring at the schools. He is exploring another contact for further information. Schools are hard to forecast – they mostly work year-to-year. He asked what the planning commission thought about a large site outside of town for a school location or if they favored more localized schools. Commissioner Popovitch expressed that she preferred more localized schools as kids have after school activities and would be within walking distance of home. There was general agreement among the board with this concept.

Chairman Wascher commented that we can't tell the schools to stay in the city limits – they service a broader area. Commissioner Bandkau suggested that one way to keep schools closer to town is to increase public transportation and decrease the school's busing costs. Besides, schools don't have money right now to build a new complex. With the new concept of education, kids don't have to have "seat" time now. There are on-line academies, so there are less students in schools and therefore, less funding going to the schools.

Mr. Zettel commented as long as students can reference information, memorization isn't as important now as "problem solving".

Chapter III – Baseline Services

There was discussion of the Public Safety Department. Discussion of ground water infiltrating wastewater and adding to the problem of sewer overflows in the river.

Mr. Zettel wants to expand the housing section in Chapter IV with maps. He will include maps of current and future brownfield sites, too. He will also check with the city clerk about the Channel 95/Cable for those changes. Chairman Wascher and Mr. Zettel discussed soil maps and determined they are available elsewhere and weren't necessary for the Master Plan.

Chairman Wascher asked about contaminated areas around town. Should they be included? Mr. Zettel replied that we could. The city owns several. There may be a lot that we don't know about too.

Chapter IV – Socio-Economic Profile

Mr. Zettel commented that the students from MSU worked on this. Commissioner Smith commented about the census data from 2009. Mr. Zettel will check and see what has been released from the Census Bureau and try to update where possible. He will try to consolidate some of the information.

Mr. Zettel also suggested setting up a survey plan at the next meeting. Then they could work on plan content; then various focus groups. Maybe they could work out a timeline and some possible committees.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Chairman Wascher said they are looking for one more planning commission member to recommend to the mayor. Mr. Zettel said they are also looking for someone for the Historic District Commission if anyone has any suggestions.

Mr. Zettel invited the commissioners to a weekend conference in October in Grand Rapids. There are funds available for training if anyone is interested. He will send an e-mail with more information.

Mr. Zettel encourages social outreach for the Master Plan at some point. We need to see some commissioners and citizens involved together. He suggested that most of the meetings can be done here at city hall.

Commissioner Bandkau asked if we have a plan to distribute a draft of the Master Plan. Mr. Zettel replied yes, on the city's web page; city partners such as SEDP; Farmers Market; Parks and Recreation Commission, etc.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER FOX, SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER POPOVITCH TO ADJOURN AT 8:53 P.M.

YEAS ALL. MOTION CARRIED.

Commissioner Bandkau will be absent for the next meeting.

m.m.s.

Melvin Renfrow, Secretary