

MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE OWOSSO PLANNING COMMISSION
Conference Room, City Hall
November 14, 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, Secretary Melvin Renfrow, Commissioners David Bandkau, Burton Fox, Melvin Renfrow, Brent Smith.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Vice-Chairman Francis Livingston, Commissioners Terry Brown, Francis Livingston, Cindy Popovitch and Thomas Taylor.

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

AGENDA APPROVAL:

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER RENFROW, SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER BANDKAU TO APPROVE THE AGENDA FOR NOVEMBER 14, 2011 AS PRESENTED.
YEAS ALL. MOTION CARRIED.**

MINUTES APPROVAL:

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER FOX, SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER SMITH TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF OCTOBER 24, 2011.
YEAS ALL. MOTION CARRIED.**

COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Staff memorandum
2. PC minutes from October 24, 2011
3. Focus group list notes
4. Small turbine wind energy ordinance draft

COMMISSIONER/PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

PUBLIC HEARING: None requested

SITE PLAN REVIEW: None requested

BUSINESS ITEMS: None requested

ITEMS OF DISCUSSION:

1. **Master Plan Survey Report**

Mr. Zettel, Assistant City Manager and Director of Community Development, commented that an intern and other staff got the 569 surveys entered onto the computer. He will review, filter, and cross tabulate the responses in the next two weeks. He will explore additional reporting. Some quick initial results are:

- ✓ Ninety percent of the respondents were from city residents
- ✓ Most responses were from homeowners
- ✓ Almost 50% were employed in the City of Owosso
- ✓ Many more people were tied to Lansing rather than Flint. He thought Flint was the default for that question.
- ✓ Health care industry was strongly represented

- ✓ Housing conditions and blight enforcement ranked high which was good to see concerning where the city is spending its money.

Historic District Commission

Mr. Zettel noted that anything for the downtown has to come through this commission. Michigan's tax credits are gone. Now SHPO is offering three communities to receive up to 20% credit. Owosso has been offered that opportunity. Previously mixing state and federal credits was very complicated. Now federal credits are the only game. The Downtown Historic District is meeting on Wednesday. Mr. Zettel met with eight or nine people from SHPO a few days ago. We now need a motion of support.

Motion by Commissioner Fox, supported by Commissioner Bandkau that the Owosso Downtown Historic District Commission, finding that the pursuit of a designation for the district on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is in the best interest of the city, hereby recommends the city council endorse an application to the NRHP for the current and/or amended downtown historic district and further recommends the city council pursue a grant by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to conduct such a study.

Furthermore, the commission recommends the city council resolve to support the nomination by showing a willingness to educate the community on the NRHP, and to provide local assistance to the consultant via access to historic information, local education activities, and by taking part in the research and public participation process.

Furthermore, the commission hereby directs staff to engage other community and private interests to secure letters of support, resolutions, and correspondence as necessary to fulfill the needs of SHPO and the grant process timeline.

Yeas: All. Motion was passed.

Commissioner Fox left at 7:20 p.m. Quorum no longer was met with five members remaining.

2. Focus Group Update and Discussion

Mr. Zettel talked about the Westown Focus Group in which Chairman Wascher also attended. Some of the things they are looking towards are curb appeal; blight enforcement; and parking on the south side of M-21 (Main Street). Currently all the south side parking is private parking. The north side has a parking lot. There is signage that there is a parking lot behind, but the building is vacant.

Economic Development

Mr. Zettel continued and stated that Brent Smith was at this meeting. They looked at the ordinance to limit nonprofits downtown, and to encouraged an entertainment area around the movie theater and bowling alley; and a retail area up Washington Street. They want to keep a green buffer near the river / riparian area.

Discussion of the three dams in town and the possible changes to them; the rapids; some history; mud flats; and the removal of the dams.

The future of Jerome Street was also discussed. It is viewed as wasted riverfront. There is not enough space to put in any businesses. Deliberation continued about shutting off a portion of the street and creating some recreation area.

Another discussion about the SRI or the Lebowky becoming a large draw to the city. We need to do a market study for tourism – maybe draw in school kids all week long and adults on the weekends, like a day bus trip to Stratford, Ontario. Maybe we could get investments from SEDP, etc.

Education and Healthcare

We have already added trails and walkability to the city. The county healthcare already has one mil as extra insurance – sold on its own merits. We need to pursue and promote the YMCA.

Education

Support and encourage investment to schools. What position should the city take with the Master Plan? Chairman Wascher thinks we should keep the schools in Owosso city limits.

Baker College wants more student housing; wants to see students come downtown, but not see zoning changed on Washington Street for businesses. They like the good housing for students. Woodard Station is not as close to downtown as Washington Street is. Students don't like it as well as on-campus living.

The Hoddy House is general college institutional space. Commissioner Renfrow said that he heard the other houses on that block may be used for student nurses. Mr. Zettel said that the Hoddy House is coming to the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting tomorrow at 9:30 a.m. for a variance request. Then they can have the site approval for the parking lot after the variance is approved.

3. Wind Energy Ordinance

Previous submission had ordinance for wind farms. Someone called Mr. Zettel that wants to install a wind turbine in his back yard. Adam can add another section about roof mounted turbines. We need to continue discussion about noise level and safety features. We also may add shadow flicker language. Commissioner Bandkau suggested the city build a wind mill at Bentley Park. Chairman Wascher suggested one at Holman Hill. Commissioner Renfrow suggested the Soccer Complex.

ADJOURNMENT:

CHAIRMAN WASCHER ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 8:26 P.M.

m.m.s.

Melvin Renfrow, Secretary