

MINUTES FOR THE NORMAL NEIGHBORHOOD WORKING GROUP
Thursday, April 15, 2015
Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way

Chair Pam Marsh called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. in the Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way.

Mayor Stromberg, Michael Dawkins, Rich Kaplan, Mike Morris, Brandon Goldman, Bill Molnar, and Mike Faught were present.

1. Consent Agenda

Kaplan/Dawkins M/S to approve the minutes of November 20, 2014. Voice Vote; all ayes. Motion passes.

2. Discussion

Open Space Framework revisions

Brandon Goldman, Senior Planner, showed the proposed open space plan and noted that it incorporates the Planning Commission and Working Group's prior recommendations stipulating that the open space areas presented include wetlands, riparian areas, floodplain lands and potential recreation areas.

Goldman introduced Parks Director Michael Black to discuss the Parks Commission's review of the plan. Black explained that the Parks Department found no current need to acquire land at this time as public parks, and that they were in agreement with the location of the active open space presented in the proposed plan. Black elaborated that the Parks Department would like to work further with future development proposals on the details of locating trails.

The group asked questions of Black:

- 1) Would the Parks Department be interested in purchasing land within the neighborhood? Black clarified that Parks would not be interested in purchasing land at this time.
- 2) Would the Parks Department be interested in accepting gifted lands? Black stated that that absolutely be interested in accepting donated land if they have the ability to maintain the property. He elaborated that Parks would be an option to consider for maintenance of the open space.

Land Use Framework revisions

Goldman reviewed the land use framework and ordinance amendments that were made to reflect the Working Group and City Council direction. Specifically he explained how the zone designations and densities had all been modified to be more consistent with existing City zones, and that the area designated as NN-2 had been relocated to the south along the railroad tracks.

The group asked questions of Goldman:

- 1) What were the Planning Commissions concerns regarding the area designated as NN-2? Goldman noted that the Planning Commission had discussed this location of higher density due

to the concentration of water resource areas in the vicinity and had concern over whether this was the best location for NN-2 designated land given the physical constraints to develop outside the riparian areas. Commissioners Dawkins and Kaplan concurred that the Planning Commission had raised the issue but had made no formal recommendation during their study session on March 31, 2015.

Transportation Framework revisions

Goldman showed maps reflecting the street network changes that have been incorporated into the plan to address the Working Groups recommendations.

Mike Faught, Public Works Director discussed the report included in the packet by Hardy Engineering, explaining the methodology used to calculate the cost of improvements to East Main Street, and the railroad crossing. He noted that using the total developer portion of the costs of these improvements, and dividing it by the estimated number of units (472) that the estimated per unit cost calculated was \$8700.

External infrastructure cost analysis. Public Works Director Mike Faught discussed SDC charges and possible advanced financing options for both the East Main Street entrance and the railroad crossing. His figures are based on the total number of potential dwelling units represented in the current plan. If those amounts change, the figures would change too.

The group asked questions of Faught:

- 1) What's the railroad's willingness level to convert the crossing from private to public? Faught not 100% sure, but understands that it is still possible, though it would not be an easy process. The biggest risk is that this change might not be allowed in the future.
- 2) Are there grant funds for either project? Faught doesn't think that they are many possible, as it's for neighborhood benefit, rather than city- (or county-) wide. East Main street might have a better chance of finding funding. This doesn't mean we can't look for available grants.
- 3) Are there SDC funds on-hand? Yes, but those funds are competing with many other current projects such as the East Nevada Street bridge crossing, the new street connection between Washington Street and Tolman Creek Road, and many others.
- 4) Could the City build the improvements and borrow the money? No, because there is no guarantee of development, so no guarantee we'll get the monies back. We could do debt financing from a dedicated source, like the streets fund but how that money is re-paid is important and development is not a steady, reliable source.

A development agreement could help somewhat to protect the City from loss, if the City decides to advance the funds for development. If there is a developer serious about developing on the land, they should be willing to sit down with the City to work out financing and agree to requirements of a development agreement.

Another option is phasing the project – doing only either the railroad or the East Main connection. This would reduce the costs greatly while development builds out.

- 5) Do we have to build all of East Main Street improvements and the railroad crossing at the same time? Generally, no, both aren't critical until traffic density is such that the infrastructure is needed. We could phase the East Main Street improvements by only completing a partial

improvements 250 feet on either side of a new intersection, along with the sidewalk all the way to Walker Avenue but leave the rest until development is further along. Or, if development occurs only near the railroad, we could do just that crossing until further development near East Main occurs. Once you do both connections, all the improvements on East Main become necessary. Additionally, the traffic engineer [Anne Sylvester] suggested a signal at Normal and Ashland street to protect left turns. Either phased approach gives the City time to collect SDC funds to mitigate the costs involved.

Street network amendments: Group discussed internal roads and how they would be built if multiple developers over multiple properties developed, but not all properties were developed. Developer would likely build streets to three-fourths completion until further development occurs. Group made no amendments to the street layout.

2. New Normal – family friendly housing template

Mayor Stromberg presented a plan (included in the agenda packet) based on the Council's strategic planning and the things he thought this group failed to have discussions about. They included:

- Family Friendly Housing. He proposes detached housing, with a certain number of bedrooms required, or it could be cottage housing with amenities for growing families.
- Climate Change Awareness. He proposes that everything be required to be built with specific energy/water/solar requirements.
- Aging in Ashland. He proposes that housing be required to be built so that folks can remain safely in their homes longer.
- Cluster Development. He proposes that we build neighborhoods rather than developments.
- Micro-agriculture. He proposes that we require either open space with community gardens or require that homes be built with systems in-place for grown their own food.
- Fire-adapted Communities. He proposes that we provide requirements and ways to improve fire safety.

Stromberg's idea is to make this development a proto-type for all future development (a "pilot-project") to help with State requirements regarding population requirements and also to possibly help in getting funding for the public improvements. He also suggested that we could be the advanced financier on unique projects (we buy solar panels, and owners pay us back the difference in their lowered bills). He recognizes that the mechanics of this project would be challenging. It's more than just affordable housing – it's how to tailor this project for middle-class residents who are not only retirees.

Stromberg proposed to the group that he continues working on this "New Normal" plan with Marsh and staff to see how his vision can be fulfilled.

Group discussed their reactions to this plan. Some were glad topics like urban farming (micro-agriculture) were finally being discussed, others felt it was too far into the process to be changing direction. The group mostly agreed that the ideas the Mayor is proposing are al mostly already in

the plan.

The group discussed how this approach may or may not differ from master planning. They also discussed annexation and the minimum requirements necessary which naturally lead to discussions of what would be required for approval. The challenge is that without a pre-determined plan developers are left with lots of uncertainty. This uncertainty has always been a cause for contention between the City and the development community.

3. Public Forum

Randy Jones: He likes the general direction of the Mayor's plan and believes it can be incorporated into the current plan. He also appreciates Faught's more firm numbers. He doesn't know how his group could phase the project and believes all the infrastructure needs to be completed at the same time so that neither Normal Avenue or East Main take too much extra pressure. Agrees that cluster housing is good but is still concerned with the location of the higher density housing near the railroad. He prefers to build "workforce" housing rather than subsidized housing and the current affordable housing requirements make the project a non-starter. Reminded the group that the SDC numbers given by Faught don't include all the improvement costs.

Gil Livne: He has recently sold 20 homes in the valley, 19 of them outside of Ashland and of those 20 only 1 was sold to a family with children. It's the new demographics of the whole area, not just Ashland. He believes that at the costs the group are suggesting, only the elderly would purchase them. Family-sized style housing is always somewhere in the low \$400s.

The group asked him to reiterate the statistics of only one house in twenty being sold to a family.

Jan Vidmar: Encouraged the group to really consider what families want in housing. She lives in the Meadowbrook Park Estates subdivision and they are losing families because there are no room for families. One family moved to Talent recently because they could have a home with larger yards. She worries that they are so many parts of town like her area with no yards or little open space and families need more space.

Bryce Anderson: He is concerned about East Main Street. If the 10 acres likely to develop (currently the Baptist Church) do develop there could be 70 new homes. The extra traffic and population from those homes mean that East Main Street must be improved entirely or it will be too unsafe. Believes East Main Street can't be phased that any improvement must be full improvement all the way from Toman to Walker.

Sue DiMarinis: Agrees that the Mayor's design seems reasonable, and the space in-between homes and extra open-space is good. Recently her son moved back to the area but wouldn't buy a home with the neighbors close by or with high traffic amounts. These requirements really limited the available areas he could purchase in within Ashland. He appreciates that the Mayor reiterated in the goals the suggestions the public attendees of these meeting have been suggesting for three years. Believes his plan is not far from what we're working on.

Marsh took a moment to make sure the members of the public understood that the Mayor's plan,

as presented, would have the same density as Meadowbrook Park Estates, which so many have mentioned as a plan they don't like.

Mark Prescott: Wants the group to take a big picture view of this plan. It could bring in up to 472 new housing units, which would mean roughly 1500 new residents. This is a 6% increase in Ashland's current population and would mean thousands of new cars on the road impacting not just East Main Street but every side street near businesses like the Co-op, for example. Last year's water problems would just be exacerbated by a 6% increase in population. He wonders how the group can justify this growth when Ashland citizens voted 8 years ago to limit the urban growth boundary, and therefore limiting growth. Worries that we're turning into a community like Walnut Creek and that we'll no longer be able to function.

Max Lawson: Recently moved to Ashland and lives on Normal Avenue. He has concerns with whether this plan would mean the City would exercise eminent domain to take part of his land. (Marsh confirmed that the City would not, that this plan is for many, many years down the road). He would like the development to be done compassionately, with improvements taking into consideration the impact on neighbors.

4. Next Steps

The group agreed that staff will need to cancel the upcoming public hearing before both Planning Commission and City Council. They will need to be re-noticed at a later date. The group agreed to meet on May 7 at 4:00 p.m. to discuss how to move forward with the plan and with the Mayor's proposal.

Meeting adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Diana Shiplet
Executive Secretary