

Athens City Planning Commission
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Thursday, January 7, 2016, 12:00 p.m.

The regular meeting of the Athens City Planning Commission was held in the Council Chambers, third floor, at City Hall on January 7, 2016.

Attendees: David Moran, Eric Gryszka

1. **Call to Order**

RJ Sumney called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 12:05 p.m. and administered the oath to all who intended to speak before the commission. Quorum was established.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS:

RJ Sumney, Vice ChairPresent
Christy ZempferPresent
Nancy Bain Present
Steve Patterson, Mayor Present
Paula Horan Moseley, Service-Safety Director..... Present

STAFF:

Paul Logue, City Planner Present
John Paszke, Director of DEFPresent

2. **Disposition of Minutes**

Paula Horan Moseley noted a simple punctuation change, and moved to approve the minutes of December 3, 2015. Nancy Bain seconded. All voted aye. Steve Patterson abstained.

3. **Cases**

None

4. **Communications**

12 West Union Street, Title 41 Modification

John Paszke

The excavation revealed a higher than anticipated water table. The modification proposed will abandon plans for a basement and add a 4th floor to the structure. He noted that because they are requesting a change in mass (height), code requires that they have to go through the Title 41 review process again. Because there are severe time constraints, there will be an open communication today to introduce the changes, it will be advertised for two weeks and will be up for formal approval at the next meeting.

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David Moran, RVC Architects, Inc.

After the site was cleared, they hit water at 9-11 feet during excavation. Originally the intention was to excavate down 12' to build the foundations and a basement, but because of the water table issue, this is cost prohibitive. They are proposing to add a fourth floor; the footprint will not change. The final height will be 48' 6" with a flat roof. The elevator, instead of going down to a basement, will now go up to the 3rd floor to address ADA accessibility. In response to a question from Paula Horan Moseley, he noted that the original Title 41 design always included two floors of commercial space (one in a basement).

RJ Sumney

Inquired about the increase in height blocking light in the neighborhood, in particular to the street/sidewalk across the street. David Moran noted that the shading on the south side would not increase.

John Paszke

Noted the B2D does allow 4 stories 50' in height, so it this is a permissible use.

Paula Horan Moseley

Expressed concern that the new elevation looks "blocky". David Moran noted that the design could be adjusted to be more ornate/historically correct.

Paul Logue

Noted that although this is a new build it is in the historic district and will require review by the Preservation Commission. He will forward the information to the commission who are meeting Monday, 1/11/16. He noted that dozens of buildings in the uptown district look blocky and so in that regard it will be in conformance.

RJ Sumney

Suggested that the design could go beyond conformance and attempt to improve and enhance.

David Moran

Noted that efforts will be made to tie in 12 and 14 W. Union by finding brick to match the existing brick, however, the brick may not be available. Other options could include installing an EIFIS and paint it to match the existing color of the brick, or a continuous cornice could be installed that would tie the two structures together.

John Paszke

14 W. Union has shared ownership, so half of 14 will be absorbed by 12 and the other half will be absorbed by 16.

David Moran

The design will allow for a better egress system than prior to the fire.

Steve Patterson

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The fourth story they are proposing will create a different look to the whole run of W. Union between Congress and Court.

Dave Moran

16 W. Union will have added stories as well, however, they will be gradually stepped back from the front elevation.

2016 Organizational Structure

Steve Patterson

Requested that at this time the structure remain the same.

Nancy Bain

Noted that the Title 41 process has become a lengthy reactive process and suggested that changes be considered that would allow the process be more streamlined and proactive. Changes could include extending the meetings or adding additional small group reviews.

Paula Horan Moseley

Reiterated that it feels like a permitting board.

RJ Sumney

The commission should be a window for the community to see with public transparency.

Goals Discussion

Comprehensive Plan Update

Nancy Bain

Suggested that before public meetings are held, a review of the original Master Plan be initiated in order to determine what objectives from the original Master Plan have or have not been met.

RJ Sumney

Would like the Comprehensive Master Plan to address the shared economy issue such as Uber and AirBnB. Suggested that the Planning Commission make recommendations to the Comprehensive Plan Committee.

Paul Logue

The Comprehensive Plan Committee has been inactive for about 3-4 years. He inquired about what kind of body the committee would want to have to help steer the development of a new plan. He noted that he could use an intern to assist him with research, pointing out that many items were not included in the original Master plan (i.e. sustainability, oil and gas, OU Master Plan) that should be considered in the development of a new plan.

RJ Sumney

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Commented that the Comprehensive Master Plan should interact with Ohio University's Master Plan and asked Paul Logue if he had any ideas to accomplish that. Paul Logue offered that the "edges", where OU and the City overlap, should be areas for coordination with the university.

Steve Patterson

Would like to re-engage with Ohio University using the City's Comprehensive Master Plan that is already in place. He suggested that features from the original plan that have not been addressed be identified, as well as identifying features that the city has accomplished and succeeded at. He would like council to re-establish a Comprehensive Plan Committee.

West Union Street

Paula Horan Moseley

An opportunity exists on West Union Street to create a mini corridor between Court and Congress.

Steve Patterson

The lane that is currently closed could be a pedestrian/bicycle plaza or a gathering space.

Nancy Bain

Although she liked the idea of a one lane plaza, she expressed concern about the already limited amount of parking uptown, citing that there are 3,500 beds uptown.

John Paszke

Will check the number of beds as he thought that figure was high.

Uptown Business Improvement District

Paula Horan Moseley

General improvements to uptown can be made including trash cans, recycling, parking meters and other obstructions.

RJ Sumney

If the goal is to reduce the traffic uptown, is the thought to have Athens Transit and the cab services expand their hours.

Paula Horan Moseley

Her intention was to improve traffic flow not necessarily reduce it.

RJ Sumney

Goals discussion moving forward:

Chris Zempter

Suggested extending meetings while the commission is already gathered rather than trying to schedule smaller group meetings.

Paul Logue

Asked for ideas from the commission on topics they would like to focus on. Regarding the OU Master Plan, he suggested that a presentation from Ohio University about their Master Plan could satisfactorily cover that topic.

Paula Horan Moseley

OU has been asked to present to council soon about their Master Plan, and suggested that the commission could attend that. She also mentioned that the Comprehensive Master Plan will need to include discussions with the Planning and Development Committee. She suggested that an outside consultant be hired to assist the planner in this endeavor.

5. **Report from City Planner and Director DEF**

Paul Logue

1. Historic Preservation Commission is meeting Monday, January 11th and will review the 12 W. Union St. Title 41 modification.
2. Sustainability Commission is still working on the plan. Erin Sykes with Rural Action (Director, Zero Waste Program) presented to the Commission Tuesday. Bruce Underwood from the recycling center presented to them in December. A work session is upcoming to develop a draft.
3. OU Environmental Studies Graduate Student, Marshall Cooper, is working with him and the Sustainability Commission. She is conducting a review of the city's zoning code, with respect to sustainability measures. A 2014 study rated the City of Athens zoning code low in a sustainability window. She will give recommendations to help improve the city's rating. Her priority is with Off Campus Student Housing, so she will be working with landlords and students as well.
4. Distributed handouts: APA Small Town and Rural Planning newsletter, and the Zoning Practice document relating to zoning code language.

John Paszke

1. Board of Zoning Appeals
No meeting this month. No applications in December.
2. No upcoming Title 41's other than the modification to 12 W. Union Street.
3. In February there will be another traditional use for a bed and breakfast on Richland Avenue.

6. **Opportunity for Citizens to Speak**

None

7. **Announcements & Other Business**

Paula Horan Moseley

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An MOU presentation by Ohio University is scheduled for the Monday, January 11th Council Meeting.

The next meeting of the commission will be January 21, 2016.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:53 p.m.

RJ Sumney, Planning Commission

Patricia Witmer, City of Athens