

Athens City Planning Commission
Minutes of Regular Meeting
September 3, 2020, 12:00 p.m.

The regular meeting of the Athens City Planning Commission was held virtually on September 3, 2020.

Attendees: Rob Delach

1. **Call to Order**

RJ Sumney called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 12:00 p.m. Quorum was established.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS:

RJ Sumney, Chair	Present
Christy Zempter	Present
Nancy Bain, Vice Chair	Present
Steve Patterson, Mayor	Present
Tom Pyle, Interim Service-Safety Director	Present

STAFF:

Paul Logue, City Planner	Present
David Riggs, Code Enforcement Director	Present

2. **Disposition of Minutes**

RJ Sumney moved to accept the August 20, 2020 minutes. Steve Patterson seconded. All present voted aye. Motion passed 5:0.

3. **Cases**

None

4. **Communications**

2040 Comprehensive Plan – Paul Logue

Shared his PowerPoint presentation with group and proceeded to review the slides. The slides that were reviewed are attached for reference. Additional notes for each slide included below:

Background and Basis for the Plan

- Typical to update comprehensive plans on a 20 year basis.

Plan Outline

- Survey still available and continues to accept feedback.

- Feedback has been positive.

Broad Community Takeaways

- Reliance on OU – need to diversify economy.
- Public art and preservation efforts have been well received over the last few years.
- Autism spectrum needs are included in disabilities planning.
- Affordable housing is key.

History, Culture, Artistic and Creative Spirit

- Improve coordination between art calendar and City Source app.
- “Heritage Square” in the northern block of Court Street – convention capabilities.
- Remove the brick sidewalks.

Housing and Neighborhoods

- Little uptown housing available.
- Best practices observed at other college towns in the US is the movement to 3-BR units. This is to whether the downturns in the economy.

Economic Development, Entrepreneurship, Technology

- Utilize the incentives that already exist in the state.

Sustainability and Energy

- Will be deploying more solar in Athens.
- Outdoor recreation opportunities are a priority of Terri Moore. Bailey’s Trail and Wayne National Forest offer opportunities.
- Focus on how to better utilize the Hocking River as an outdoor recreation resource.

The remainder of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan presentation will be taken up at the next Planning Commission meeting on September 17th.

5. **Report from City Planner and Director of Code Enforcement**

Paul Logue

- Working on Age Friendly Athens planning. Executive Board meeting this morning. Survey will go live in November. Co-chairs the housing committee with Shawna Bolin, and Chris Knisely is involved as well. Will do a random mail survey, may use the voter rolls. In 2021 will have a lot of topical discussions.
- Please complete census - go to [icensus2020.gov](https://www.census.gov/2020census/data). Enumerators are talking with landlords directly.

David Riggs

- Bringing back the Herrold Avenue 2019 case to the commission next week. Final plat and dedication of right-of-way will need to have Planning Commission approval/recommendation to City Council. A public hearing will be held prior to the next meeting.

7. **Opportunity for Citizens to Speak**

No comments

8. Announcements & Other Business

Steve Patterson

- Civic responsibility to complete the census.
- COA received over \$460K in July through CARES Act and we have been using some of it for the rent/mortgage relief program (via HAPCAP). Council will review legislation for another grant package (to HAPCAP) for utility relief.
- City received a second allocation of \$230K yesterday.
- SB 357, \$650M, per capita, currently going through and will result in \$880K to Athens, so we may receive a 3rd influx. Some may be used for broadband expansion so city is exploring a way that we can use the money for this.
- Face covering ordinance still in effect. Can incur a \$100 civil fine. Complaint based. Governor's mask order is still active, as well as limiting gatherings to no more than 10. City has received several complaint calls for large groups. Call non-emergency number to lodge complaint 740 592-3313.

The next meeting will be September 17, 2020.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:33 p.m.

RJ Sumney, Planning Commission

Patricia Witmer, City of Athens

Background and Basis for the Plan

- Last plan completed about 15 years ago, adopted 13 years ago
- Much of the last plan has been completed or no longer needed/feasible
- Plan is rooted in other plans including ACEDC, OU Master Plan, various city plans (bike and pedestrian, arts, Arts, Parks, and Rec, sustainability, uptown parking) OU/City affordable housing committee
- Plan takes a 20 year look into our future
- Comprehensive in nature– tries to pull it all together

Process Objectives

- Increase opportunities for citizen engagement
- Seek out contributions from people typically underrepresented in planning
- Be responsive to citizen concerns
- Be responsive to external influences and their impacts on Athens
- Keep expenses to a minimum
- Ensure that the plan is accessible and transparent

Plan Outline

- Draft Vision Statement Set (March 2018)
Athens is a welcoming, forward-thinking, and diverse community that celebrates its eclectic college town roots while growing sustainably.
- Vision informed by guiding principles that include inclusivity, transportation, public health (physical, mental, and wellness), arts, history, emerging technology, sustainability, economic development, entrepreneurialism, housing, and cultural assets.
- Public outreach included public workshops, surveys, stakeholder meetings
- Draft writing started in mid-2019
- Completed draft in early 2020, draft distributed for comment in April
- Wrapping up feedback and comments before finalizing the draft for Planning Commission and City Council

Broad Community Takeaways

- Need to diversify the economy
- Not much room to grow
- More renewable energy
- Public art and preservation efforts
- Corridors will change esp. Union Street and Stimson Ave
- Inclusion– How can we make Athens “home”
- Disabilities planning benefits all people
- Housing needs are not being met

History, Culture, Artistic and Creative Spirit

- Continued growth for the Athens Community Arts and Music
- The recently created Athens Armory Art Park should be value-added
- An Athens Art Calendar should be integrated within the City Source app
- Implementing a design review of historic buildings and districts
- Formalize the funding process for public arts
- Designate the Mt. Zion/Armory/Southeast Ohio History Center as “Heritage Square”; coordinate planning efforts between these three institutions
- Preserve existing brick streets
- Make Creative Placemaking Week an annual event

Housing and Neighborhoods

- Conditionally permit accessory dwelling units (garage conversion, accessory structure) in R-1 zones.
- Give design flexibility and permitting benefits for accessible design/universal design
- Desire to live near uptown and campus by all age groups (not just students)
- Allow co-op housing in R-zones
- Reduce minimum lot size in new subdivisions
- Encourage compact design with new residential subdivisions
- Utilize TIF tools to reduce costs for development (make housing more affordable)
- Incentivize universal design, senior housing
- Permit senior co-housing that exceeds the 3 unrelated residents regulation.
- Create an online searchable database of rental permit and rental code violation records
- Limit new apartment construction to 3-bedroom units or less

Economic Development, Entrepreneurship, Technology

- Package economic development incentives that includes Tax Increment Financing (TIFs), Downtown Redevelopment Districts, Innovation Districts, Historic Preservation tax credits, and zoning changes.
- Incentivize economic development and job creation that offers living wage standards as defined by the ACEDC.
- Deploy free municipal WiFi
- Corridor specific recommendations

Sustainability and Energy

- Oversee execution of the SOPEC Carbon Fee
- Take Zero-Energy Commitment or Zero-Energy Building pledge
- Outdoor recreation via Arts, Parks and Recreation that better connects us with nature, especially for children.
- Prioritize native species, pollinating plants and contiguous green space
- Continued implementation of the [Athens Sustainability Action Plan](#) and recommendations from the Athens Environment and Sustainability Commission.