

Athens City Planning Commission
Minutes of Public Hearing & Regular Meeting
September 17, 2020, 12:00 p.m.

The regular meeting of the Athens City Planning Commission was held virtually on September 17, 2020.

Attendees: Joe McCabe, Rusty Rittenhouse

1. Call to Order

RJ Sumney called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 12:02 p.m. and administered the oath to those in attendance wishing to speak before the commission. 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 September 3, 2020 minutes. Steve Patterson seconded. All present voted aye. Motion passed 5:0.

3. PUBLIC HEARING – Herrold Avenue Major Subdivision

David Riggs/Summary

This is the final plat for Herrold Avenue major subdivision. It splits 3 lots off of one parcel. There is a right of way dedication that will be included in the final plat.

No comments/questions from commissioners or public. Public hearing concluded.

4. Cases

Case #20-06 Herrold Avenue Major Subdivision

David Riggs/Summary

The legal notice appeared in the 8/29/20 edition of The Athens Messenger.

No comments/questions from commissioners or public.

Christy Zempter moved to recommend approval of Case #20-06, Herrold Avenue Major Subdivision final plat and right of way dedication, to Athens City Council. RJ Sumney seconded. All present voted aye. Motion passed 5:0.

**Case #20-10 Zoning Designation for Annexation (Old Hope Farm)
Request from City Council**

Paul Logue/Summary

This is a piece of real estate that the city has been working on with the developers for about a year. It is an affordable housing project and tax credit project where WODA Cooper Company is looking to annex a piece of real estate across the street from University Estates. The annexation is in process right now, has been forwarded from the County Commissioners (approved release of land) to Debbie Walker. Before City Council discusses it goes to Planning Commission to look at potential zoning. WODA Cooper requesting to do R3. The project has about 100 units (2-3 bedroom).

Joe McCabe/WODA Cooper

The initial phase of development will include placing 51 and 56 units straddling an existing pond at the site, for a total of 107 units. It will provide much needed housing in the area. The have been in front of the Disabilities Commission – a number of the units are accessible and universally designed. These are affordable housing units. The investment is about \$18M for the first 107 units. Mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units, certified green project. Will come back for final plan approval based on input from city administration and committees, etc.

Rusty Rittenhouse/Attorney, Lavelle & Associates

This is an annexation via an agreement between the township and city. This creates an expedited type 1 annexation. It has been moved forward to Debbie Walker.

Discussion

Steve Patterson: There is a substantial need for affordable housing in the city. The Affordable Housing Commission has worked hard on this to expand affordable housing in the city. The city's comprehensive plan also addresses this. There is limited ability to expand to the east due to the flood plain. This project fits well in line with that. Pleased that the Disabilities Commission has been involved in this. Universal design is important to the Disabilities Commission. Glad the Environment & Sustainability Commission involved as well, the green certification fits in with the city's vision and mission.

RJ Sumney: Inquired where the planned ingress/egress from 682 will be.

Joe McCabe: They want to make sure they don't impact the pond. A connection to University Estates Blvd. would not be possible. Two smaller drives are possible, one off of Luhrig Road and one would be on 682.

RJ Sumney: Inquired about whether a traffic study has been completed.

Joe McCabe: Traffic study has not been done. 51 units impacted and not everyone would own a car. Working with HAPCAP and looking into Athens on Demand and Athens Public Transit to have service into the complex. Expect some reduction in cars

due to the anticipated demographic for these units. The designation requested is R3, not B3.

RJ Sumney: This is a request is for the commission to recommend the R3 zoning designation to City Council.

Paul Logue: Before anything further can happen with the annexation process, the Planning Commission needs to make a recommendation to City Council.

Steve Patterson moved to approve Case #20-10 and recommend to City Council the R3 zoning designation as requested. Christy Zempter seconded. All present voted aye. Motion passed 5:0.

5. **Communications**

2040 Comprehensive Plan – Paul Logue

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

Multi-Modal and Active Transportation

- ASD population would benefit from improvements on sidewalks, intersections, parking lots.
- Improvements to public transit will help Athens Public Transit to continue growing like it has over the past 10 years.
- Brick sidewalks are trip hazards especially for those with disabilities. Working closely with the Disabilities Commission.
- Athens has topography and weather challenges when it comes to AV projects.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Working with Mt. Zion Preservation Society. Not many amenities for the black population in Athens.
- How to make Athens a city that all people can call “home”.
- Gender neutral restrooms are not required under Ohio building code.
- Sensory friendly examples: noise dampening headphones available at public facilities, “sensory bags”, quiet spaces/rooms, street signs on sidewalks.

Neighborhoods - General Recommendations

- More housing opportunities and choices for those outside the 18-24 year old demographic, other than single family residences. Many folks want to live close to town.
- Pocket parks within walking distance.
- Rebrand neighborhood names: Southside to “Mechanicsburg” for example, Far East Side to “Sells Park”.

The remainder of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan presentation will be taken up at the next Planning Commission meeting on October 1st.

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

Paul Logue

- 2020 Census campaign launched this week for Ohio University students, with assistance from his intern. Have had 50 people complete their census this week as a result of the campaign. Have until 9/30 to get the census in. Provided landlord info to the bureau. 9,500 people, 30 different landlords around town.

David Riggs

- No report

7. **Opportunity for Citizens to Speak**

No comments

8. **Announcements & Other Business**

Steve Patterson: Clock running on the census, 9/30 deadline. Athens is at 58.1% vs. the state at 69.9%. One tract is doing better (Southside) than in 2010. Student tracts still low.

The next meeting will be October 1, 2020.

9. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

RJ Sumney, Planning Commission

Patricia Witmer, City of Athens

Multi-Modal and Active Transportation

- Zoning changes are needed to help shift development focus from cars to people
- Improve the bike and pedestrian routes throughout the city.
- Improve the built environment for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- Increase the number of mobility options and improve the transit options we currently have
- Explore the city taking over snow and ice removal city-wide
- Revert Court Street and some side streets in Uptown to two-way traffic flow.
- Report regularly on our parking data
- Phase out brick sidewalks
- Pilot traffic calming measures on the Near East Side, along Morris and May
- Implement people-scale wayfinding.
- Prepare for pilot projects concerning autonomous/connected vehicles (AV) that wish to operate within the city

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Focus on revitalizing the Mount Zion Baptist Church as a hub for the African-American community
- Access to infrastructure like public transportation, parks and recreation, city walkability, comfortability and safety, and lastly affordable housing
- Increase in the amount of gender neutral restrooms for LGBTQA+ community and accessibility
- Sober events for community members who abstain from drinking, families, and students who are not of age.
- Training and workshops for sensory friendly, barriers within organization systems, and other inclusionary issues that were identified in the information gathering stages
- Tax incentives for economic infrastructure for businesses targeted toward a minority population
- Follow the 6 feelings planning framework for Autism Spectrum Disorder

Neighborhoods— General Recommendations

1. Improve mobility infrastructure.
2. Permit more housing opportunities and choices.
3. Small scale rezoning to encourage neighborhood business opportunities.
4. Pedestrian scaled wayfinding.
5. Develop pocket parks and public art within each neighborhood
6. Rebrand neighborhoods away from ordinal directions and towards names that capture the imagination, history, and spirit of Athens. An example for each neighborhood can be found in the header for each section.