

Council of Neighborhood Association (CONA) Meeting minutes
February 12, 2019

Present: Paul Ash, McDoel; Judy Berkshire, Eastside; Cynthia Bretheim, Prospect Hill; Sandi Clothier, Near West Side; Marc Cornett, Bryan Park; Elizabeth Cox-Ash, McDoel; Peter Finn, Arden Place; Don Granbois, Covenanter; John Kennedy, Spicewood; Steven Layman, Arden Place; Patrick Murray, Prospect Hill; Dave Rollo, Somax; Tom Shafer, Park Ridge East; Ralf Shaw, Blue Ridge, Chris Sturbaum, Prospect Hill.

President John Kennedy called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and introduced Steven Layman, Arden Place Neighborhood Association.

Secretary's report

President Kennedy asked for approval of the January meeting secretary's report, which had been forwarded electronically. Elizabeth Cox-Ash noted a correction on p. 2, "UDO Discussion." The letter "e" needs to be added to "Catherine" in Mary Catherine Carmichael's name. Sandi Clothier also noted a change needed on p. 3. The following sentence needs to be deleted since Sandi did not state it: "Sandi states that there are still affordable small units in the Near Westside neighborhood, but owners raze small 1 to 2-bedroom houses to build apartments." Ralf Shaw moved to approve the report with the corrections identified, and Paul Ash seconded. The secretary's report was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Treasurer's report

Treasurer Elizabeth Cox-Ash reminded attendees that the minutes are always 1 month behind; the report presented is actually for January. Since CONA paid its yearly post office box rental fee of \$60, there is an ending balance of \$584.99 in the checking account and \$2018.48 in the savings account. Green Acres has an ending balance of \$246.31. Sandi Clothier moved and Tom Shafer seconded the motion asking for approval of the treasurer's report. The treasurer's report was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Announcements

President Kennedy stated that Dave Rollo would join us later in the meeting to address issues in the Transportation Plan.

Sandi Clothier announced that the Historic Preservation Commission has unanimously approved the Maple Heights Conservation District. A conservation district designation has less regulation than a full historic district and affects only moving, demolition, or new construction of a principal or accessory building. After three years, it will elevate to a full historic district.

Transportation Plan Issues

Dave Rollo, District IV City Council Representative and Council President, arrived at 7:17 p.m. to update CONA on issues related to the proposed Transportation Plan.

Dave reported that he has met with several neighborhoods to discuss problems they have identified. Chapter 3 of the plan has street typologies designated for different capacities and needs on its map, but these do not match what is on the ground. Therefore, the plan needs amending. There is too much change required to accomplish in the time allotted.

The Council can accept the plan as is, accept it with amendments, or reject it. If it is rejected, it will go back to staff and the plan commission to make changes. After the plan is amended, it will be used to create code to be incorporated into the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), already at 700 pages. The Transportation Plan is a blueprint for the next two decades.

Tom Shafer asked, "Does the plan have the same strength as an ordinance?"

Dave responded, "No, but plans tend to have a life of their own." To illustrate, he gave the example of Tapp Road and an I-69 extension. A planner wanted to extend Tapp Road because it was in the plan.

An example from the proposed plan designates Hunter Avenue as a "General Urban Street," making it a major connector with medium to high volumes of autos and transit that would extend to College Mall Rd. Hunter Avenue has no sidewalks, no space for street trees and city landscaping, or street width to sustain 2-3 travel lanes. To extend it to College Mall Rd would entail purchase of two church parking lots as well as the lot space for Eastland Plaza. Actually making this plan reality at some future point would cause major upheaval to the residential neighborhood, remodeling or relocation of two large church organizations and a school, and significant size reduction in parking for a retail area.

The Administration wants to move forward with the plan as written, but the City Council is saying, "Slow down." The plan does not have adequate public support, but the administration thinks it is sufficient. This appears to be a question of product v. process. The product needs to be revised and the process needs to strive for public understanding.

For the Council, the question is "Do we consider and vote on the transportation plan before the June recess or do we wait to do this after it?" Dave favors going beyond the June recess, perhaps into fall to revise the plan and gain a better public understanding of it. This would also entail delaying the UDO process.

Dave volunteered to sponsor any changes or amendments CONA might want to make to the Transportation Plan. In return, he asked that CONA reach out to neighborhoods to help identify how the plan impacts them. He emphasized that he wants to protect neighborhoods.

The Transportation Plan is very ambitious, looking ahead to multi-modal transport, which is a good idea. However, there are some proposed changes that are not practical with our current modes of transportation. For example, Dave does not see the proposed two-way Atwater and 3rd Streets as practical. Walnut and College Streets might work as two-way streets, but this will need study first.

Marc Cornett stated that one-way traffic ignores livability. He gave the one-way portion of Third Street as an example. There is no housing along this section. Historically, one-way traffic patterns were designed for "white flight" to get out of town quickly. They encouraged passing through towns. Marc favors two-way streets to make streets more friendly to walkers, bikers, and cars.

Peter Finn wondered whether city planners could demonstrate Marc's idea about two-way streets by returning Lincoln and Washington Streets to two-way traffic patterns.

John Kennedy sited South Bend's street pattern changes as a good example. South Bend had 5 traffic lanes that went through town. After these were converted to two-way streets, the downtown area was revitalized.

Tom Shafer asked whether CONA could form a subcommittee to work on amendments. Does the current discussion suggest there is need to go back and start over? How will the city be able to amend the current 170-page document adequately?

Dave stated that scrapping the entire plan and starting over would hold up the UDO, yet there are major elements missing from the plan. One is how to arrange the flow of I-69 traffic to the east side of town without increased stress on Sare and College Mall Roads, which are not well equipped to handle more traffic. He hopes the current plan can be amended if there is adequate time to do this.

Sandi Clothier provided a letter addressed to the City Council regarding the Transportation Plan. In the letter she points out several weaknesses and inconsistencies in the plan. One is the mismatch of street typology on the map with what currently exists. She wonders whether a street can be both a Neighborhood Corridor and a Neighborhood Greenway and why studies are used to replace empirical evidence to support the plan. There is no discussion of public transit nor is there mention of subsidizing additional sidewalks in neighborhoods where none presently exist.

Chris Sturbaum wants to see an organized process for creating greenways in neighborhoods added to the Transportation Plan. He wants neighbors to be able to give input when a greenway is added to the neighborhood.

UDO Update

Tim Mueller was not present for an update, but Dave Rollo continued with his two major concerns regarding the UDO.

First, certain changes to “streamline” the zoning process in the UDO would place more decision-making power in the hands of the planning and transportation director, who is appointed by the mayor. The mayor also appoints the majority of the plan commissioners, charged with making decisions about land use and development. Dave has a number of reservations about placing more control of land use in the hands of the mayor while leaving out city council and citizen input.

Second, the focus on increased density in the city appears to be biased against single-family housing. Dave does not want to see neighborhoods of single-family housing sacrificed for increased density. He suggests increasing density at neighborhood edges instead.

Marc Cornett suggested that we need to address student housing in the UDO to distinguish it from housing affordable for lower income workers and families. Multi-family housing units need to be set apart from student housing. We need to decide what kind of density we want in our town.

Covenants--Short Report

Cynthia Bretheim reported that the city might want to establish an underlying structure for covenants. Covenants are renewable every 10 years. They allow for change when a neighborhood wants it. Homeowners need to be familiar with the covenants governing their neighborhood or homeowners' associations, but so do the associations. People should not be forced to break the laws in their neighborhoods.

Chris Sturbaum stated that covenants in Bloomington came into being because there were no zoning regulations.

Other Issues

Sandi Clothier urged the group to identify a committee to write amendments for the transportation plan. Those volunteering were Paul Ash, Don Granbois, and John Kennedy, current transportation plan committee persons. Others were Sandi and Marc Cornett.

Due to time constraints, John Kennedy asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Patrick Murray moved the meeting be adjourned and Tom Shafer seconded. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Berkshire, acting secretary