

ALGONQUIN DOWNTOWN PLANNING STUDY
STEERING COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
Historic Algonquin Village Hall Second Floor
January 24, 2013
6:15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 1: **Call to Order**

Present: Debby Sosine, Tony Bellino, Jim Dawson, Sara Mason, Howard Brinn, John Breugelmans, and Jeffrey Kroeger.

Absent: Ed Mudra, Ed Wolowiec, Gabriele Reego, and Wade Merritt.

Consultant Members Present: Ron Lanz, Land Vision; Bridget Lane, Business Districts, Inc.; and Stacey Meekins, Sam Schwartz Engineering.

Guests Present: John Schmitt, Village President; Timothy Schloneger; and Jack Pfingston, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

Village Staff Present: William Ganek, Village Manager, Russ Farnum, Community Development Director; Bob Mitchard, Public Works Director; Katie Parkhurst, Senior Planner; and Ben Mason, Senior Planner.

AGENDA ITEM 2: **Request Approval of December 13, 2012 Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Debby Sosine made a motion to approve the December 13, 2012 minutes. Mr. Jim Dawson seconded the motion to approve the minutes as presented, with an amendment to clarify the village's statement that it will not use eminent domain for economic development purposes. The voice vote noted all ayes and the motion carried.

AGENDA ITEM 3: **Project Status**

Mr. Ron Lanz, Land Vision explained that a full draft of the Downtown Planning Study has been completed, including a final chapter on implementation priorities. Village Staff distributed this updated version of the planning study to the Steering Committee for review and committee members were encouraged to offer any final comments on the draft recommendations.

AGENDA ITEM 4: **Review Public Input on Draft Recommendations**

Mr. Lanz explained that Village Staff conducted extensive public outreach over the past several weeks to publicize the study's draft recommendations and a total of fourteen new public comments were received.

The committee discussed the new public comment and overall recommendations set forth in the planning study. In particular, Ms. Sosine and Mr. Dawson recommended reconsideration of the height and scale of some of the plan's redevelopment proposals; they mentioned a general public preference for development less than four stories and specifically cited the response to an earlier workshop's image preference survey, which identified as desirable buildings similar in scale to the primarily two-story structures currently existing downtown.

Ms. Sosine also expressed concern about the height of the mixed-use building proposed on N. Main Street, between Front and Edward Streets, and inquired about the purpose of the parking garage. Mr. Lanz explained the minimum recommendation for the subject property is consideration of a shared surface parking arrangement for neighboring businesses and the maximum recommendation is for a mixed-use development with an attached parking garage to serve the property.

Mr. Lanz reviewed the sites identified in the planning study for possible redevelopment and noted that the majority were less than four stories. He emphasized the study's market analysis found more residential units are needed to help support the economic viability of downtown and that three- to four-story buildings should be considered, primarily at street intersections where a structure with a more significant physical presence can better "hold" the corner visually.

Ms. Sara Mason and Mr. Howard Brinn expressed their general support for the scale of the redevelopment proposals included in the planning study and suggested that economic feasibility and market conditions should be taken into account when considering future development.

AGENDA ITEM 5: Review Full Draft of Downtown Planning Study Report

Mr. Lanz asked the Steering Committee for general comments and feedback on the overall planning study. Mr. Dawson stated that the final plan will provide a roadmap for future development downtown and reiterated his concern about the height and scale of some of the redevelopment proposals; for example, he suggested that the plan recommend a maximum of two stories for new development and require developers to request any increase in height.

Mr. Lanz offered a general comment that not all two story buildings are the same height, for example, Columbia Hall (119 S. Main Street) is a two-story building, however its' high ceilings lend the structure a more substantial façade. He also noted that due to economic feasibility, surface parking is required for most single-story and small-scale developments, which is generally less visually attractive than an enclosed parking garage that could more likely be incorporated into development projects that feature additional floors.

Ms. Katie Parkhurst, Senior Planner, reminded the committee that the conceptual drawings included in the planning study are meant to provide a general representation of possible redevelopment opportunities, and private developers and property owners will have their own proposals as well.

Mr. John Breugelmans stated that there is a need for additional foot traffic downtown to support the commercial businesses and make under-utilized sites more marketable to private investment. He noted that if a developer proposes a particular architecture and building scale, ultimately it will need to be presented to the village and proceed through a public review process.

Mr. Lanz stated that the village's underlying zoning will help guide redevelopment as well and the planning study is not intended to supersede existing regulations. He also noted that after discussion with the Steering Committee over the past few weeks about building height, it appeared there was significant interest in reducing the scale of a couple of the conceptual renderings included in the planning study, most notably potential future redevelopment of the northeast corner of Washington and S. Main Streets (Algonquin State Bank site). Mr. Lanz presented a revised drawing for the bank site, which reduced the height of the conceptual rendering to two stories (from three) and featured an alternative architectural design that attempted to be more compatible with the roofline and massing of surrounding buildings.

Ms. Bridget Lane, Business Districts, Inc. mentioned that the market study performed as part of the study found that an increase in residential and office uses in and around downtown should be considered to help support the existing core commercial area. She also noted that traffic congestion on Route 31 has created a negative perception of downtown and the Western Bypass road project should be used as an opportunity to create a new environment. Ms. Lane cited the example of a similar road bypass project in Plainfield, Illinois, which removed heavy truck traffic from the commercial area and opened up the desirability of increased outdoor dining.

Mr. Tony Bellino stated the Western Bypass project is very important and that physical improvements and redevelopment downtown is critical to its' future economic viability.

Mr. Howard Brinn voiced support for the planning study and viewed the alternative to the recommended improvements as a continuation of the status quo. He also noted that new investment in downtown will increase tax revenue to the village.

Mr. Lanz stated that support of the planning study from the Steering Committee is critical because the final plan will serve to provide a general vision of downtown's future and will be an important tool in attracting private investment.

Mr. Lanz concluded his presentation by reviewing the final chapters of the study on Order of Magnitude Costs and Implementation Priorities. Ms. Sara Mason inquired about the recommendation to possibly adopt the village's O-T zoning classification for all property in the downtown, to which Mr. Lanz stated the suggestion is included for

consideration by the village as it would allow for more flexibility with regard to encouraging mixed-use development.

To address comments and concerns from the Steering Committee, including those from Ms. Sosine and Mr. Dawson about height and scale, Mr. Lanz asked if there would be support from the committee to remove the top (fourth) floor of the proposed building on N. Main Street, between Front and Edward Streets, and retain the remainder of the two-to three-story conceptual drawings in the planning study as is, with the inclusion of the revised drawing for the Algonquin Bank site.

The Steering Committee endorsed the planning study with the changes to the two conceptual renderings described by Mr. Lanz. While the drawings in the study then would be kept to a maximum of 3 stories, Mr. Russ Farnum, Community Development Director inquired as to whether the committee would support a general recommendation in the text for consideration of new development up to a maximum of 4-5 stories, to which there was consensus from the committee that 3-4 stories should instead be the maximum height referenced in the study.

AGENDA ITEM 6: Questions and Next Steps

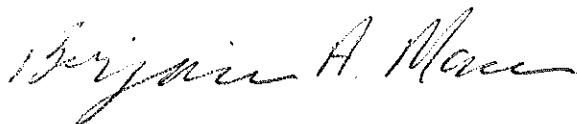
Mr. Dawson recommended consideration of a gas station on N. Main Street in the future, near the northern terminus of the Route 31 Western Bypass corridor. He also suggested encouraging the establishment of a commercial marina with a residential component on the east side of the Fox River, to which Village Staff noted traffic is a significant issue on N. River Road and would need to be carefully analyzed as part of any development proposal in that area.

Village Staff indicated a public hearing for the Downtown Planning Study will be held in February, tentatively scheduled for Monday, February 18.

AGENDA ITEM 7: Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Benjamin A. Mason".

Benjamin A. Mason, Senior Planner