

MINUTES OF THE ALBERT LEA PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting
February 7, 2023
5:30 pm – City Center

Chairman Lucas Schuster called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Lucas Schuster, Chair
Wyeth Anderson, Vice-Chair
Jared Dawson
Matt Dorman
Steve Thompson
Rachel Christensen, Ex-Officio

MEMBERS ABSENT

Leon Axtman
Chuck Paczowski

STAFF PRESENT

Megan Boeck, City Planner
Cierra Maras, Planning Commission Secretary

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Anderson and second by Dorman to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Schuster and second by Anderson to approve the September 6, 2022 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Staff report prepared by Megan Boeck, City Planner, is to become part of these minutes by reference.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Comprehensive Land Use Update

Boeck read aloud the staff report and explained that Bolton and Menk served as a consultant along with a steering committee of over 20 community members to determine priorities for the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update.

Harry Davis, ACIP, Planner for Bolton and Menk presented the update in greater detail with a PowerPoint that is available upon request. It explains what a comprehensive plan is, why it is needed, and how public participation was used to update it. The Comprehensive Plan is comprised of four chapters: built environment, social environment, natural environment, and economic environment. Within these four chapters there is historic preservation, land use, housing, transportation, public infrastructure and facilities, parks and natural resources, and economic development.

Historic Preservation: Continuing to preserve and rehabilitate the commercial historic district and laying the groundwork for future historic preservation activities.

Land Use: Preserving and expanding existing strengths, commercial growth, growing local workforce, developing community identity, outdoor recreation, quality of life and blue zones.

Housing: Expanding housing choice and affordability, preserving and enhancing existing housing stock, and creating vibrant and well-connected neighborhoods.

Transportation: Safety in transit, maintaining and leveraging existing transportation infrastructure for potential development, non-motorized transportation, multimodal and connective transportation, and providing a holistic aesthetic transportation system.

Public Infrastructure, Facility, and Services: Expanding existing utility system infrastructure, improving the condition of each utility systems infrastructure, operating public facilities at the highest level of service, constructing and maintaining a safe environment for children and district staff, and fostering an environment for learning, growth, and cooperation.

Parks and Natural Resources: Uniting a network of parks, open spaces, and natural features, protecting natural resources, fostering community engagement, and addressing climate resiliency.

Economic Development: Creating a strong economic development system, helping to connect schools and employers, enhancing and promoting quality of life amenities, and prioritizing activities to ensure the city is prepared for business growth opportunities.

The three main parts of implementation are official controls, area and subject plans, and funding mechanisms. There are low, medium, and high levels of effort that are required depending on which action item is being implemented. The land use implementation

worksheet helps with guiding the actions needed to make the goal and objective happen, the effort required, and the tools needed.

Schuster opened the hearing to the public at 6:52 pm.

Schuster asked what the process was if there were any amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. Davis explained that it depended on the changes and at what level, noting that smaller amendments can be handled by the Planning Commission and City Council but recommends hiring a consultant for larger changes. He suggested the Planning Commission and City Council getting together once a year to discuss progress and if needed, make small continual changes as time goes on. Davis said it ultimately depends on resources and comfort level.

Schuster closed the hearing to the public at 6:55 pm.

Motion by Dawson and second by Thompson to recommend to City Council approval of the proposed Comprehensive Land Use Update.

Motion passed on a 5-0 voiced vote.

PUBLIC HEARING

- a. **Re-zone 114 Front Street East from (R-2) One- to Four-Family Residence to (B-2) Community Business District.**

Schuster opened the hearing to the public at 6:58 pm

Boeck explained that the owner of the gas station locally known as the Clark Station has submitted an application to re-zone the property at 114 Front St E from R-2 One- to Four-Family Residence to B-2 Community Business District. The applicant has plans to demolish the house on the property regardless of the outcome of the re-zone application as it is not feasible to repair. The re-zone would result in business expansion.

Schuster closed the hearing to the public at 7:02 pm.

Motion by Schuster and second by Dorman to recommend to City Council approval of the re-zoning 114 Front St E from (R-2) One- to Four-Family Residence District to (B-2) Community Business District.

Motion passed on a 4-0 voiced vote with Thompson abstaining.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

COMMISSIONER COMMUNICATION

Schuster expressed his thanks to the members for showing up for meetings and knowing the importance of their roles. He also wanted to convey the boards excitement of the updated Comprehensive Plan to City Council.

STAFF COMMUNICATION

Maras mentioned that there is one opening on the Board of Appeals and that it can be a Planning Commission member. Schuster expressed interest.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Schuster and second by Thompson to adjourn the meeting at 7:06 pm. Motion carried.

Cierra Maras, Planning Commission Secretary

Lucas Schuster, Chairman