

JOINT MEETING OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, PLAN COMMISSION, AND ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Council or Committee: Joint meeting of: P & D, Economic Development, Plan Com. and ZBA

Date: January 24, 2007

Observer: Sue Calder

Aldermen Present/Absent: All aldermen except Hanson, and a cast of dozens from the various entities

Staff Present: Again, all staff for the committees and Julia Carroll, City Manager, and Judy Aiello, Asst. City Manager

Media Present: Bill Smith, RoundTable

Meeting Began. 7:15 p.m.

Meeting Ended: 9:15 pm

No. of Citizens in Attendance: A number from the Central St. group and about 15 others

Jean-Baptiste chaired the meeting and was gracious in having everyone, citizens included, introduce themselves. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to have a brief review of what each committee/commission has worked on in the past year, what they are working on now and provide an opportunity to discuss how the process could be improved or the work load better distributed.

Plan Commission Does the City have a plan for the downtown area?? There will be 4 vacancies in the near future - a concern because of lack of experience (3 terms are up and 1 resignation).? Zoning Ordinance: Bernstein - should it be revised? Aiello - need to track changes in neighborhoods and make adjustments to the zoning (response: Commission has a neighborhood sub-committee but it's just "plotting" items (railroad tracks, sanitation routes, etc) which may eventually help in defining the neighborhoods or, changing a sanitation route to fit more with the neighborhood), Council is undermining the ordinance when they make changes to the commission's recommendations.? What does P & D want from the Plan Commission?? Decisions should be made with the "public benefit" in mind, not just the amount of new tax dollars.? Length of meetings was a concern as the length taxed citizens and developers. Suggestion was made that the agenda include a time limit so people would know when to come. If an item wasn't completed, then it would have to be continued to the next meeting.? Should a zoning amendment committee be revised?

Memos prepared by the Plan Commission for the meeting were available which summarized the new rules and the work for the past year. The Plan Commission sent 25 planned developments to P & D; of those 20 were accepted, 4 were rejected, and 1 was sent without a recommendation.

Economic Development They are accelerating the downtown planning process to complete it in 7 months vs. 12. Working on the West Side development, Howard St. Concerned about business retention

Zoning Board of Appeals: The ZBA is "law-based." Type 2 restaurants take up 20% of their time; not the board's responsibility to determine if there are too many of these, just if they fit the zoning. "Over population" is the Council's concern.? Worried that if they ok a new building for a particular restaurant another restaurant may take over the spot in the future and that new restaurant would not have to abide

by the stipulations of the first (clean up, etc; sounds like the stipulations are with the owner, and not the building)' Concern in 2006 was a large turnover and they had to cancel 4 meetings for a lack of quorum (are fully staffed now. A second concern was about special uses of structures. Third concern was affordable housing: to provide affordable housing, they often "shoehorn" a building into a lot and ZBA is not the place for such decisions, there is really nothing in the zoning ordinance that addresses affordable housing. They continually have to deal with issues that are not in the ordinance -the example given was the size of trellises which take much time to research.

There were 74 cases in 2006. There are no cases for 2/6/07 so the meeting has been cancelled.

How can the process be streamlined?

Plan Commission Need more analysis from staff - tap into their professionalism. Would like a set of "rules" for developers so that staff could make more routine decisions. Recommend that a developer provide a "mass" model of each development ("mass" means just the size and bulk, does not need to include windows, etc); there should be a standard ratio (1 foot = x) so that all the models could be put into one master "map."? Developers should have to provide a computer model of the anticipated congestion of their buildings.? Wolinsky said that "planned development" was initially tagged at 25 + units; is that still the right number. Ald. Wynne suggested that it seems to be working, but should probably be revisited every year.

Klaeren Rules. These are dropped as they were redundant and made it a strain on public process. New streamlined rules were adopted on 1/17/07. Despite this change, it was mentioned that there should be joint meetings of the Plan Commission. and P & D so that developers and citizens only need to speak on an issue once, not one month at the Plan Commission. and then again at P & D. However, if things are too "efficient" we may lose our checks and balances.

The chair of the Site Plan Review Commission also spoke up. She's been chair for 10 years. She contends that it is good Evanston does not have binding review as it allows for creativity - all agreed that one person's idea of beauty is not everyone's. However, she did think there should be guidelines.

League response/action This type of meeting should be encouraged. There were a number of issues raised and although they may have been known before, just putting them out in a public meeting allows for some discussion. The commissioners also were able to voice frustration and Council should be able to make some process changes without sacrificing integrity of the process. There was a wide spread concern that the process asks a lot of citizens and developers.