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DeKalb County Government
Sycamore, Illinois

DEKALB COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

(April 26, 2018)

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) met on April 26, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. in the DeKalb County Administrative Building, Conference Room East, in Sycamore, Illinois. In attendance were Commission Members: Cheryl Aldis, Jo Ellen Charlton, Rich Gentile, Russell Kula, Steve Devlieger, Martha May, Dan Nolan, Becky Morphey, and Adam Orton. Also in attendance were: Paul Borek, Executive Director of the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation; and County Staff members: Derek Hiland, Jolene Willis, and Marcellus Anderson.

1. Roll Call – Commission members John Fisher, Bryan Rhodes, Les Redden, Linda Swenson, and Kevin Bunge, were absent. Alternate Commission Member Adam Orton took the place of Brian Gregory for the meeting.

2. Approval of Agenda

Ms. Morphey moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Gentile, and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes – *Ms. Morphey moved to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2018 meeting, seconded by Mr. Gentile, and the motion carried unanimously.*

4. Public Comment

None.

5. Presentation – 30 Years of DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation (DCEDC)

Mr. Borek gave a presentation regarding the state of economic development in DeKalb County, highlighting the past 30 years of growth and accomplishments that had occurred in DeKalb County and detailing many of the businesses and resources available to support additional development.

Mr. Hiland pointed out the benefits to be gained by the local communities by working together in groups like the Regional Planning Commission and from learning from one another.

Mr. Devlieger noted that Mr. Borek’s presentation would be good to share with the local community boards. Mr. Borek noted that the work being done by the DCEDC could only happen with the aid and participation of the various local municipalities and their local community and business leaders.

6. Parking Regulations in Your Community

Mr. Hiland noted that a member of the Commission had inquired as to the type of parking requirements/regulations in downtown districts being used in the various local communities around the County. He noted that in the unincorporated parts of the County, various uses had required parking standards, but as there are no downtown districts in these areas. He then asked if the members could talk about what regulations and requirements their communities have for their downtowns.

Ms. Aldis noted that the Town of Cortland had no downtown parking regulations, but that their Code required that onsite parking be provided. She also noted that the Town had received on-street parking from IDOT in the downtown area for the first time in 2003. She added that the requirements in their Code were too strict and needed to be amended allow for more on-street parking.

Ms. Charlton noted that the City of DeKalb had similar issues, but that language had been included into their Code exempting certain downtown properties from the parking requirements. She noted that in other communities that she had worked in did the same thing, in particular exempting commercial uses in the downtown to allow shoppers to use on-street parking to access them, but keeping the residential requirements. She did caution using these methods with mixed-use developments.

Mr. Orton noted that the City of Sycamore also had similar issues. He highlighted the steps taken to address parking with the new Fargo Hotel redevelopment in their downtown area.

Ms. Charlton added that another method used by the City of DeKalb was to address the parking as part of a Planned Development. She noted that in DeKalb it is its own zone, but that it can also be done as a Special Use. She then described how they used a planned development for a recent downtown renovation.

Mr. Hiland noted that flexibility is the key in addressing these issues.

Ms. Charlton noted that part also depends on the supply of on-street parking available. She also noted that another method was Fee-in-lieu-of, where if you have a requirement or are negotiating something through an agreement, and you know there will be redevelopment opportunities down the line, you can have them pay a certain fee per space that they can't provide to be in compliance with the Code, and that becomes a fee you hold onto to use develop improved property you already own with a surface parking lot.

Mr. Orton described the agreement made between the City of Sycamore and Autometer, wherein the City used TIF funds to help Autometer pave and improve its employee parking lot and gained use of it as a public lot during the evenings.

Mr. Gentile noted that the City of Genoa uses all the methods previously noted, but that they have tried to get away from using Special Uses and Planned Unit Developments to address these issues. He also

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discussed some of the other parking issues they have experienced, and pointed out that the City had two public parking lots.

Ms. Charlton noted that DeKalb also has leases with the railroad running through the city to use parts of its property as parking areas.

Mr. Orton noted that Sycamore does not allow parking in the downtown between 2:00 am to 5:00 am, to allow for road maintenance. Mr. Kula noted that the Village of Hinckley has the same regulation for the portion of State Route 30 that runs through the Village.

Mr. Gentile shared that one of Genoa's issues is that too many people not parking in their driveways. Mr. Orton and Ms. Charlton described similar issues they were having in their communities.

Mr. Nolan related that the Village of Shabbona had the typical issues, such as people parking over long periods in fifteen minute parking spaces. He did note that things were somewhat complicated by having two other jurisdictions in town: IDOT for US Hwy 30, and the County Highway Department for Shabbona Road. He noted that fortunately, the Village road system is pretty good.

Ms. May described a couple of parking issues the Village of Lee had with parking occurring in areas it was not supposed to.

7. Long Term Recovery Plans

Mr. Hiland introduced the topic by noting that in 2015 the unincorporated community of Fairdale was hit by a tornado, and as a result of the disaster, the DeKalb County Board adopted a Long Term Disaster Recovery Plan that helps plan for a response to events like the one in Fairdale that could strike at any time. He noted that a copy of the County's adopted plan was included in the meeting packet, and asked the Commission members to talk about what measures their communities have taken to prepare for such disasters. Mr. Hiland started off the discussion by describing the County's Long Term Recovery Plan (LTR), some of the steps taken during the Fairdale crisis, and noted that flexibility was the key to making the plan work.

Ms. Aldis inquired whether LTR was different from the Emergency Operations Plans. Mr. Hiland admitted he did not know offhand. Ms. Charlton responded that she found that the DeKalb did a memorandum of understanding acknowledging the County's Plan and adopting it or accepting it in November of 2015. Mr. Hiland later found acknowledgement in the LTR that it was to serve as a companion to the Emergency Operations Plan.

Mr. Kula inquired about the stipulations of the LTR, such as when can a person go back to their house, and would they have to be witnessed by a deputy. Mr. Hiland noted that in deference to the health, welfare, and safety of the residents, the County would have a professional first verify that the house was safe to re-enter or re-inhabit. Mr. Anderson noted that the State has a number of regulations for post-disaster situations, and that in the immediate aftermath of the event, the State took charge of the situation to try

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to prevent criminal activities such as looting and false contractors, and to keep track of who was coming in and out of the community. He noted that staff was not sure whether this was just because it was an unincorporated community or if the State would also take a similar action in a municipality. Mr. Nolan noted that he was a part of the Sheriff's Auxiliary and had volunteered that Saturday, and described the measures taken by the State Police to control the situation. He also noted that although the measures were taken to protect the citizens and their property, many of them weren't happy because the measures also limited their ability to quickly return to their property and salvage what they could. It was also noted that the area was also sealed due to the presence of so many loose and ruptured propane tanks scattered around the community.

Mr. Anderson noted that once the more immediate dangers, such as the propane tanks were addressed, the County's Building Inspector was very busy working with the County Health Department inspecting the homes for damage and determining whether they were still viable.

Mr. Gentile pointed out that the real issues occur in the post disaster recovery stage, trying to initiate various recovery efforts while dealing with emotionally charged and homeless citizens who are trying to put their lives back together.

Mr. Devlieger noted that another key issue was trying to figure out how to handle all of the money and products coming in for the recovery effort. He noted that at the time, no one else in the County had dealt with anything like that and they had to figure where to store all of the product.

Mr. Anderson noted that another major issue that arose was that many of the residents were either under-insured or uninsured, which lead to problems with what to do with many of these people. Mr. Anderson also pointed out that one upside to the disaster was the opportunity it presented to institute a number of needed or wanted changes, such as laying the lines to make natural gas available to the community, and the creation of the community septic system.

Mr. Gentile inquired as to the number of unincorporated communities existed in the County. Mr. Anderson responded that there were several other unincorporated communities or various size beside Fairdale. Mr. Gentile suggested that someone should reach out to these communities to try and educate them about the experiences learned from Fairdale.

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Ms. Willis distributed two handouts to the Commission describing a couple of opportunities that were available to their communities. The first handout detailed the Wastewater Treatment Plant Assessment Program from the Smart Energy Design Assistance Center (SEDAC), out of the University of Illinois – Champaign Campus, which is a free assessment of wastewater treatment plants owned by the local units of government in exchange for providing data back to them. She also noted that there existed a possibility that monies might be made available in the future to participants in the program.

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The second handout detailed the Energy Efficiency Program from ComEd. Ms. Willis noted that she had talked to them about possibly having a workshop at the Community Outreach Building, and asked that the commission members reach out to their communities for possible attendees who could attend the workshop.

Ms. Willis also mentioned that the IEPA Brownfields Division was planning to hold a workshop sometime in late July in DeKalb, possibly the 25th, though she was still waiting for confirmation on the date.

8. Municipal Development Permits / Projects / Challenges / Champions

Mr. Devlieger (Kirkland) reported that the building that the Village was taking down was done, with the hole covered, and the fence down, and that someone was looking at possibly developing those properties. He also noted that they have created a commission to create a community building downtown that could be rented out and where community functions could be held.

Ms. May (Lee) reported that at its last board meeting the Village Board voted to use NIU Central Studies work on submitting an application for the DCCF Economic Development grant. She also noted that in July, the Village will finally be able to acquire an eyesore on the main street that needs to be demolished.

Ms. Charlton (DeKalb) noted that she believed the City will get some single-family construction this year, noting that plans were in from a national home builder to take ninety to one hundred lots in an existing subdivision. They are hoping for twenty to thirty building permits to be submitted. She noted that a couple of hotel projects are working their way through the system. She also noted that their biggest challenge was the cyber bullying occurring on social media.

Ms. Morphey (Somonauk) reported that it was quiet in the Village. She did note they had received three calls from prospective solar farms.

Mr. Gentile (Genoa) reported that they had somebody looking at the undeveloped lots in the Riverbend subdivision.

Mr. Kula (Hinckley) reported that the Village was in the process of getting certified as a “Tree City” with the Morton Arboretum, and have started a pollination garden just east of the police department/village hall. He noted that the Village has asked the residents to do the “Harvesting Our Future” survey, which is for going for the DCCF grant. Otherwise, things were pretty quiet in the Village.

Mr. Nolan (Shabbona) reported that the Village has received two garage permits, but not much residences. He that the Shabbona Forward Initiate meeting, which is part of their DCCF grant, had a good turnout. He noted that additional research was being done on an industrial park east of town. He noted that the Village Clerk had resigned, and that the duties had been split into two positions: a Clerk and a Deputy Clerk. Mr. Nolan also noted that the Village had finally secured some space on Main Street, and will finally have an office. He noted that they will be installing concrete planters for the flowers. He

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reported that the Village has initiated a Coffee with the Mayor on Saturday mornings, and that they will rotate trustees through it also. One of the sub-committees the Village has is Curb Appeal, which worked with the Tree Board to order tree planters from Doty's in Sycamore and is looking into possibly getting hanging pots also. Mr. Nolan finished by suggesting a possible future topic of discussion: ordinances pertaining to gentlemen's clubs.

Ms. Aldis (Cortland) reported that IML lobby day was that week and ComEd had hosted a reception at which she spoke to a gentleman about interconnect in regards to solar farms and had a handout from him. She noted that Earlville was working on establishing a solar farm in their community. She reported that Grinder's Auto, which sat on property that was to become part of the new Casey's renovation, is now gone. Ms. Aldis noted that the Town had a public hearing on the small cell towers; the company had a deficient application but the Zoning Administrator put it through to the Planning Commission anyway. She noted that the Planning Commission tried to do its due diligence and listen to the presentation, but told the applicant that since it had not submitted all of the required documents, it did not have the information on which to base a decision, and therefore, it forwarded a motion to deny to the Town Board. Ms. Aldis noted that legal counsel recommended that the matter be remanded back to the Planning Commission. Ms. Aldis noted that in the meantime, the Governor had signed a bill which usurped the rights of municipalities for governing their rights-of-way in regards to small cell towers. However, the list of qualifications that still must be met is long, and there are limits to fees for review. She advised the other members that they needed to get an ordinance in place and that only had until July 31st to have it in place. Mr. Hiland said that he would send out copies of the House Bill that talks about those standards she referred to. Ms. Aldis noted that the Town had gotten some new houses, and ten townhouses were under construction, and that they had approved two Special Uses/PUDs which were revisions of Robinson Farms.

Mr. Orton (Sycamore) reported that as of March, ten Single-family homes had been permitted, fourteen commercial permits, and four industrial permits. He noted that the City Council had passed an amendment to the PUD for Hickory Terrace. He noted that street maintenance program was about to start. Mr. Orton reported that downtown façade and gateway grant programs were available to help people to freshen up the downtown facades. He noted that Metronet has established a franchise agreement with the City. He also noted that Sycamore got its first GFOA Certificate.

Mr. Hiland (DeKalb County) noted that the County had adopted solar energy systems regulations, and described how changes made in the State regulations shortly thereafter had already impacted the newly adopted regulations. He noted that one application for a solar garden had been submitted, but that more where to follow.

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Mr. Hiland asked the Commission members when was the last time their communities' Comprehensive Plans were updated, and suggested that this might be a good topic of discussion for the Commission.

9. Next Meeting Date

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Mr. Hiland noted that the next scheduled meeting date would be on June 28, 2018, at 6:30 p.m. in the Conference Room – East, DeKalb County Administrative Building.

Mr. Hiland noted that Debbie Armstrong, Executive Director the DeKalb County Convention and Visitors Bureau, as a guest speaker for the next meeting.

Mr. Hiland passed out the re-appointment certificate to several Commission members.

- 10. Adjournment** – *Mr. Nolan motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Charlton, and the motion carried unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Gregory
Chairman, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission

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