

Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.

DEKALB COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

(October 22, 2020)

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) held a virtual meeting on October 22, 2020 at 6:30 p.m., via Zoom. In attendance were Commission Members: Cheryl Aldis, Dan Olson, Alyssa Seguss, Russell Kula, Steve Devlieger, Martha May, Rich Robinson, Laurie Wilson, Becky Morphey, Brian Gregory, and Dawn Wucki-Rossbach. Also, in attendance were: Pete Stefan, DeKalb County Finance Director; Kevin Buick; and, County Staff members: Derek Hiland, Jolene Willis, and Marcellus Anderson.

1. Roll Call – Mr. Altmaier, Ms. Jergens, Ms. Swenson, and Mr. Faivre were not in attendance. Mr. Robinson sat in for Sandwich, as a replacement for Les Redden, and, Ms. Wucki-Rossbach sat in for Maple Park.

2. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Gregory moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. May, and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Aldis moved to approve the minutes of the August 27, 2020 meeting, seconded by Mr. Gregory and the motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Comments

None.

5. Election of Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission

Mr. Hiland reminded the Commission that the term for Chair of the Commission was expiring. He also noted that the former Vice-Chair, Mr. John Fisher, was no longer representing the Village of Kingston, and had stepped down from the Commission, thus the position of Vice-Chair also needed to be filled. He then called for nominations for the two positions.

Mr. Olson announced that he would be willing to volunteer as Chair or Vice-Chair.

Mr. Gregory announced that he would be willing to serve as Vice-Chair, if Mr. Olson served as Chair.

Ms. Morphey nominated Mr. Olson to serve as Chair of the Commission and Mr. Gregory to serve as Vice-chair, seconded by Ms. Aldis. A roll call vote was called and the motion carried ten (10) yes and one (1) abstention (Wucki-Rossbach).

6. Annexation Types, Processes, and Resources

Mr. Hiland informed the Commission that the next discussion topic was Annexation. He noted that the topic had been discussed by the Commission approximately seven years prior, but that it was good to revisit the topic. He then Introduced Kevin Buick (Foster-Buick Law Group), a local attorney who has worked with many of the local municipalities and was well versed in Land Law.

Mr. Buick gave a presentation, in which he introduced himself and elaborated on his experiences working with DeKalb County and the local municipalities therein. He talked about the importance of the Regional Planning Commission and how it had brought the local communities together, and about how bad it had been prior to its creation. Mr. Buick then launched into an in-depth discussion of annexation, how it worked, the legalities involved, and various challenges that could be faced. He delved into the state law on annexation, the various types of annexation, disconnection (de-annexation), and annexation agreements.

Mr. Gregory had a discussion with Mr. Buick about the creation and consequences of “Doughnut holes”, the disconnect of an incorporated parcel which is completely surrounded by incorporated parcels, essentially creating a “hole” within the community.

Mr. Olson asked Mr. Buick about pre-annexation agreements, which he did, highlighting the differences and similarities between them and regular annexation agreements.

Mr. Olson then asked about forced annexations. Mr. Buick talked about the pros and cons of forced annexations, detailing why voluntary annexation is the best course. Mr. Hiland then described his experiences force annexing roughly fifteen doughnut holes while working with the City of DeKalb, elaborating on the cost/benefit analysis the City undertook in deciding on whether or not to pursue the force annexations.

Mr. Olson noted that when a property is annexed, the annexation actually extends to the other side of any adjoining roadways. Mr. Buick confirmed this to be the case.

Ms. Aldis noted that when an annexation occurs, that entities such as: IDOT, the Census Bureau, and FEMA, also need to be informed about the annexation, and described an issue Cortland had when they were contacted by IDOT regarding an annexation. Mr. Buick agreed with MS. Aldis, noting that there are a host of notifications and checklists that need to be addressed with annexations.

Mr. Buick informed the Commission that the next ten years are expected to be a challenge in regards to annexation. He pointed out the past beliefs about growth continuing non-stop had not proven to be the case. Noting the need for communities to challenge their assumptions, to be flexible, so that they can prepare themselves for what may come.

Mr. Buick finished by informing the Commission that Ancel-Glink has a great resource on this topic called the “Municipal Annexation Handbook”. He noted that the resource was specifically written to be easy to

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understand. Mr. Hiland noted that staff would get a copy of the link to the handbook and send it out the members.

7. Covid-19 updates

a. Community Impacts

Mr. Hiland talked about the Governor's phone call that had occurred earlier that morning, noting that the call was really brief. It was noted that Region 1 could expect further restrictions. Mr. Hiland noted that Representative Underwood was sending out emails regarding the State's financing programs that they were currently introducing statewide.

Ms. Aldis reported what she took out of the call was that they would be implementing a Tier 2, possibly within a week, noting that as of October 23rd, they would be down to the groups of ten again. She noted that these limits would not apply to polling places or schools. Ms. Aldis reported that the Tier 2 would drop this to groups of six. She noted that it will be up to individuals to make the changes happen, and noted that things will not change much for Cortland.

Mr. Gregory reported that Cure funding includes qualified police and fire payrolls, and encouraged all the communities to register for it.

Ms. Aldis reported on an email put out by Representative Jeff Keicher, in which he was very clear that if a community has its certifications, but hadn't yet done their reimbursement requests, to get it done by November 1st, because after that date the State was going to review the numbers of the unobligated funds and then start a round two with the leftover funds.

Mr. Hiland noted that the papers had reported that something was being done regarding liquor licenses and asked Mr. Gregory or Mr. Olson to clarify what was happening. Mr. Gregory replied that staff had recommended to the City Council to waive the restaurant and bar tax for October for establishments impacted by the new standards. The City Council will be addressing it on November 2nd.

Ms. Seguss noted that a past meeting, Mr. Gregory has informed the Commission that each municipality should have an ordinance passed by October 1st in order to apply. She noted that the City of Genoa had not passed an ordinance, and inquired whether they were now ineligible for the funding. Ms. Aldis responded that she did not believe they were ineligible, but that they should do it as a good measure, so that you have your documentation is in place. Mr. Gregory agreed that they should do it, and he could send her a link that had a sample ordinance they could use.

b. DCEO Programs

Ms. Aldis reported that Cortland had been approached by a business that would like for the Town to apply for the BIG on their behalf. She noted that they are working on it, but that the process is horrendous. She

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noted that the Town Board would be addressing the matter on October 26. She hopes that it would help this small industry would survive. Ms. Aldis commented that it is worth other small communities checking it out to help their small businesses. She noted that all of the certification requirements are on the business, and that the business can potentially get up to \$25,000.

Mr. Gregory reported that Sycamore had applied for a small business stabilization grant, noting that while the process was slow, it was worth trying for.

8. Census 2020 Update

Ms. Willis reported that the Census counts had officially wrapped up on October 15th. She noted that all but two communities exceeded their 2010 response rates. However, she added that they did not know when the actual counts will be released, but were assuming sometimes in 2021.

Ms. Aldis described some of the efforts made by Cortland to distribute the Census bags. Ms. Willis noted that the idea for the bags originated from the DeKalb County Community Gardens, and OC Creative helped get them done.

9. Municipal Development Permits / Projects / Challenges / Champions

Ms. Aldis (Cortland) reported that Cortland had eleven permits issued in September for maintenance and miscellaneous items, and in August they had twenty-eight new permits issued, two of which were for new houses.

Mr. Devlieger (Kirkland) reported that another property had been annexed into the Village, the first since the early 2000s during the boom. He noted that the building that had formerly housed DeBenedettos, which had closed down just prior to the pandemic, had been recently demolished and that a new building put into its place to house a new business.

Mr. Gregory (Sycamore) reported that Sycamore had about thirty single-family home permits to date, which was about normal for them. He noted that wood prices were really high, which in turn was raising housing prices, and which he believes may limit housing starts in 2021. Mr. Gregory talked about how a lot of talk had been occurring recently about the lead service lines in older communities, and the issues those communities are facing because of it. He noted that resources available to help communities deal with the issue, and offered to send links to anyone who was interested in learning more. He then elaborated on the steps Sycamore had been taking to address the issue. He finished by offering to send Mr. Hiland the link to the website so that he could then share it with all the Commission members. Ms. Aldis related how Cortland had received a letter from the IEPA regarding phosphates in their treatment plant, adding that antibacterial soaps which were seeing such widespread use create even more phosphates. She noted that this will become an issue for all communities.

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Mr. Olson (DeKalb) reported that the new Home2Suites hotel had opened. He reported that the old city hall building was being purchased by Pappas Development, which was proposing to redevelop the site into four buildings, with about seventy-six units and suites. He noted that the Commission had a three to three tie vote to approve it, so the developer worked with the residents on the design of the building to reduce the density and maintain the open space for the community gardens there. He added that the matter would be going before the City Council on October 26 for review. Mr. Olson reported that the candy company on Gurler Road had been approved, and that construction on the Facebook building was progressing. He reported that Campus Cinema was finally being demolished, noting that per a court order, the work needed to be completed by October 30th, and that the City now has controls of the property and is looking to redevelop it.

Mr. Kula (Hinckley) reported that not much was happening in Hinckley.

Ms. Seguss (Genoa) reported that Genoa had seen quite a few new home permits. She also noted that the Façade program was going well, with three facades currently being improved, though they still had a couple of businesses that they are trying to get to utilize the program. She reported that Cruisin', which also has a location in Gilbert, had recently opened a location in their downtown. She noted they had used both the Façade grant and their Revolving Loan program to get established.

Ms. Wilson (Shabbona) reported that not much was happening in Shabbona.

Ms. Wucki-Rossbach (Maple Park) reported that Maple Park had nine house permits this year, and that three of those included the new impact fees. She noted that the Village had recently approved TIF policy, and that they were considering doing a general improvement grant with some of the TIF funds.

Ms. Morphey (Somonauk) reported that they were in the middle of their Cures grant, and they hope to be finished by the end of next week.

Ms. May (Lee) reported that about two months prior the local meat packing plant burned, and they were concerned that the Village may be left with having to clean up the site, which they can't afford to do. She added that the owner was no longer taking calls from the Village lawyers, and they believe that the owners will relocate to a new site outside of Lee, since under current codes, he would not likely be able to build there. She noted that the land is worthless and tends to flood. Ms. May noted that the Village had just got funds from DCEO, and were debating on what to do with the money. She also noted that the Village was having a rezoning problem on the Lee County side of the Village.

Mr. Robinson (Sandwich) noted that he had nothing to report, but that the City hoped to have a new Commission representative in time for the next Commission meeting.

Mr. Hiland (DeKalb County) reported that the County posted its monthly Construction Reports online, noting that the County had 219 permits last year at this time and 279 this year. He noted that it has been

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a very busy year for the County, even with the Covid crisis, adding that many of the permits were for maintenance projects.

10. Next Meeting Date

Mr. Hiland informed the Commission that the next scheduled meeting date would be Christmas Eve. He suggested that the Commission could move the meeting to a different date or just wait for January to restart the regular meeting schedule. After some discussion, the Commission decided on January 28, 2021 for the next meeting date.

Mr. Hiland noted that he would see about getting the various resources and information discussed distributed to the members and asked that they contact him with ideas and topics for the next meeting.

11. Adjournment

Mr. Aldis moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. May, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Aldis
Chair, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission

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