

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

(January 28, 2021)

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) held a virtual meeting on January 28, 2021 at 6:30 p.m., via Zoom. In attendance were Commission Members: Dan Olson, Russell Kula, Frank Altmaier, Steve Devlieger, Martha May, Brenda Jergens, Rich Robinson, Laurie Wilson, Brian Gregory, Linda Swenson, Steve Faivre, and Dawn Wucki-Rossbach. Also, in attendance were: Pete Stefan, DeKalb County Finance Director; Dan Chambers; Shelia Santos, Bruce Hamilton, and Chad Bergeson, of the DeKalb County Information Management Office; and, County Staff members: Derek Hiland, Jolene Willis, and Marcellus Anderson.

Roll Call – Ms. Aldis, Ms. Seguss, and Ms. Morphey were not in attendance. Mr. Robinson sat in for Sandwich, and Ms. Wucki-Rossbach sat in for Maple Park. Ms. Swenson joined the meeting shortly after it began.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Hiland informed the Commission that Mr. John Frieders, Chair of the DeKalb County Board, who was scheduled to speak to the Commission, had contacted him that afternoon to inform him that he was feeling ill and would be unable attend the meeting. Adding that Mr. Frieders offered his apologies and asked that he be allowed to come to the March Commission meeting instead. Mr. Hiland suggested that the agenda be amended to remove Mr. Frieders' presentation.

Ms. Wucki-Rossbach moved to approve the amended agenda, seconded by Ms. May, and the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Devlieger moved to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2020 meeting, seconded by Mr. Gregory and the motion carried unanimously.

Public Comments

None.

GIS Infrastructure Agreement Status and Update

Mr. Hiland introduced Shelia Santos, Bruce Hamilton, and Chad Bergeson, of the DeKalb County Information Management Office (IMO), who then gave an update to the Commission on the status of the GIS Infrastructure Agreement program. The Commission was reminded that for those communities which signed up with the program this year, the annual fee for the program would not begin until 2022. It was noted that eight (8) communities had already signed up, one of which was actively collecting data. Mr. Bergeson gave a detailed demonstration of the data collection app.

Mr. Hiland talked about how this program would be a useful resource for the communities. Mr. Gregory and Mr. Olson described how Sycamore and DeKalb both use similar in-house software, and echoed the usefulness of such software.

Mr. Altmaier inquired as to who would be a good contact person for more information on the program. Mr. Hiland responded that the DeKalb County Community Development Department was currently acting as liaison for the program, but that eventually IMO would be handling it directly.

Mr. Bergeson then demonstrated the end user maps which had been created for the Village of Waterman, and talked about the work that had been done for the Village of Somonauk.

Ms. May inquired about arranging for IMO to put on a demonstration for the Village of Lee, and Mr. Hiland said he would look into arranging it.

Ms. Santos suggested that as the different communities find different ways to utilize the program over the coming months, they (IMO) could return to update the Commission about the program and possibly give other communities ideas for their own use.

Introduction to Zoning 101 (Rezoning, Special Uses, Variances)

Mr. Hiland noted that every year the Commission looks at what issues are topical and timely for them to discuss. He noted that in 2012, the DeKalb County Planning Department gave a Zoning 101 presentation. He presented the members with the outline for the presentation, and asked that the members give some thought to what topics or issues they felt should be addressed in the coming year, or for which speakers could be sought to talk about. Mr. Hiland finished by suggesting possibly getting someone from the Capital Development Board to speak to the Commission upon the new accessibility requirements adopted in 2019.

Mr. Devlieger suggested that urban agriculture would be a good topic.

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Mr. Altmaier suggested looking at the State energy code and the requirements that municipalities have for adopting it. He noted that it changes from year to year, and getting someone to speak to them about it would be helpful. Mr. Hiland noted that this topic could also be rolled into a bigger look at the building codes used in the communities.

Mr. Chambers, of Kirkland, suggested having a discussion of the impact of the new Facebook and Ferrero facilities being on the surrounding communities, in particular on housing and other economic development.

Mr. Hiland asked that the members give some thought about possible topics and to get back to him.

Mr. Hiland talked to the outline developed by his predecessor, Mr. Paul Miller, for the 2012 Zoning 101 presentation. He noted that the outline was a useful resource and inquired whether the Commission would rather look into hosting a similar seminar, or breaking down the elements of the seminar into smaller portions to be discussed over the coming year. Mr. Olson responded that either would be a good idea, noting that the outline listed many good practices. He briefly touched on several of the topics noted in the outline and noted the usefulness in addressing them. Mr. Olson also noted that discussing how the different communities address the various items would be helpful to everyone. He finished by asking that the members review the outline and think about any which topics they would like to explore in future meetings. Mr. Hiland reminded the members to contact him or his team with any ideas they have and he would bring list to the next meeting for consideration.

Annual Dues

Mr. Hiland informed the members that notices were going to be sent out the following week regarding the annual commission dues. He talked about the usefulness of the Commission, and reminded the members that the annual fee was \$500.

Mr. Olson inquired whether all of the communities paid the same fee. Mr. Hiland responded that they do, and explained why he would advise against changing it.

Ms. May noted that she had heard that the dues were going up. Mr. Hiland responded that they weren't, and suggested that maybe people were confusing the fee for the GIS program next year with the Commission dues.

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Mr. Gregory suggested that, in terms of the Zoning 101 discussed earlier, to do a case study when talking about particular topics, so that the commission could do a walk-through of a real issue, thus giving them practical experience with the topic. Mr. Olson and Mr. Hiland agreed that it would be a good idea.

Ms. May related her experiences being at the 2012 Zoning 101 presentation.

Member Appointments and Re-Appointments

Mr. Hiland informed the Commission that the terms of seven of its members would be ending on March 31st, and asked that those communities give consideration to submitting names to the County Board for appointment, or re-appointment. He noted that the Commission packet identified whose terms needed to be addressed.

Ms. May inquired whether all terms were three-year terms, noting that she thought the terms were staggered at one, two, and three years. Mr. Hiland explained that the staggering was setup as tool for when the Commission began, but that all the terms are all currently three-years. He also noted that the departure or death of various individuals on the Commission has also impacted when these terms have had to be filled.

Mr. Hiland then verbally listed those communities needing appointments, for those members attending via phone connection only.

Mr. Robinson inquired about the timeline for getting the appointments in, expressing his discomfort with recommending an appointment with local elections coming up. He noted that he had no way to know who might win, and felt that they would need to wait until after the elections to make a choice. Ms. May noted that the Commission representative does not have to be an elected member of a village board, and inquired as to why it would be an issue. Ms. Wucki-Rossbach responded that they were expecting a lot of change in Maple Park after the elections and noted that the new board members might not be happy with the choices made by outgoing board members. Mr. Robinson added that he personally would not feel right making such an appointment, if he did not get re-elected.

Municipal Development Permits / Projects / Challenges / Champions

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

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Mr. Altmaier (Kingston) reported that not much was happening in Kingston, mostly typical maintenance permits, although he did not that quite a few solar panels had been installed. He noted that the Village did not have any zoning regulations on them, and inquired whether other communities have any did and what forms that took. Mr. Olson responded that the City of DeKalb did have rules regarding solar panels, and that he would send a copy of those rules to him. Mr. Hiland added that the City adopted their regulations around 2014-2015, noting that, at the time, the big issue was whether the panels were attached or detached (ground mounted). Mr. Altmaier noted that the Village might want to look at establishing regulations for solar panels used on non-residential sites.

Mr. Devlieger (Kirkland) reported that they had no current permits. He did note Aircel was looking to drop fiber lines into the local residences in spring and summer. Mr. Chambers added that this change was good for the community; noting that previously just had line-of-sight high speed internet. He noted that they would be doing it in phases. Mr. Chambers noted that solar was picking up for them, and also noted that a commercial project was coming up for a 2.5-acre solar array. He reported that Resource Bank had knocked down an old building and would be building a new structure, the second level of which would be a community room. Ms. Wucki-Rossbach said she would send them Maple Park's solar ordinance, and related an issue they had with a solar array project which had lost some of its credits with ComEd.

Ms. May (Lee) reported that one challenge they had was the local meat packing plant had a fire in July, leaving an unsightly mess. She noted the fire happened right after the Village had received grant money for the beautification of the Village. She added that after several delays, the property is cleaned up now. Ms. May reported that they had another challenge somewhat tied to that one. She noted that the Village had applied for a federal loan, in excess of a million dollars, for their water system. The problem is that the old Village wellhouse had been partially built on the meat packing plant property, and according to their village Engineer, to get the federal loan, the Village needs to have all land in the project free and clear. She noted that many years ago, an approximately five-foot-wide by fifteen-foot-long addition was built extended onto the property, and that it was all done through a handshake agreement, which isn't legal. She noted that the Village has been trying to get the land free and clear from the owner, but it still has been done. Ms. May noted that the Village has also had some zoning issues over on the Lee County side of the Village.

Ms. Wucki-Rossbach (Maple Park) reported that Maple Park had eleven house permits for the year. She also noted that for a while they have had five or six solar permits coming in every couple of weeks for during the summer months. She added that the Village has been working on some infrastructure items, like the water tower location and treatment plant location.

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Ms. Jergens (Malta) reported that they had five restaurants still doing business and had some major infrastructure projects in the works for the upcoming year. She noted that the Village was looking to possibly connect with the Kishwaukee water reclamation district. She also noted that Syngenta would be breaking ground in the spring. Ms. Jergens noted that the Village was pretty excited about all of the big businesses coming to the county and the possibilities for continued growth.

Mr. Robinson (Sandwich) noted that they had a potential business looking at the Gjovik Ford Property, which had been left empty since Gjovik Ford had relocated to Plano in October 2020. He noted that there was also another parcel that was being looked at by a business that was planning to relocate from its old location. Mr. Robinson said that he hoped to have more information on the two projects by the next Commission Meeting.

Ms. Wilson (Shabbona) reported that not much was happening in Shabbona. She did note that IDOT would be resurfacing State Route 30, the parking areas along State Route 30, and some of the side street aprons during the summer.

Mr. Gregory (Sycamore) reported that Nicor was finishing up the building in the Thanks America Subdivision, and that lots of interest had been shown in the downtown vacancies. He noted that the City had finished the year with forty-one single-family housings starts, and another twelve fifty-five and older multi-family units. Mr. Gregory reported that Sycamore was in the middle of a comprehensive plan update, which they planned to finish in 2021. He reported that the City had finally completed a teardown project that took about four years, and that they hoped to have it sold soon. Mr. Gregory announced that he was stepping down as the City Administrator for the Sycamore and would be taking over as the DeKalb County Administrator on March 1st. He noted that Sycamore would be sending a new face to the next Commission meeting.

Ms. Swenson (Waterman) reported that Waterman has been quiet. She noted that she had sold a couple of old business properties in town, and that she had been amazed at the amount of traffic that had come to look at them. She added that she did not know what kind of business the one purchaser was looking to open, but that the other purchaser was planning to open a new coffee shop in the other one. She also noted that one of the local bars had closed.

Mr. Olson (DeKalb) reported that the City Council approved a fifty-seven-unit project for the old city hall block on South 4th Street, Johann DeKalb Suites, by Pappas. He noted that the construction should start this year (2021), following the demolition of the old city hall. He reported that Safe Passage, the not-for profit, had gotten rezoning approval to relocate their

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operation to the old DeKalb Clinic site on Franklin Street. He added that the building was demoed in the last few weeks, and that they hoped to start construction soon. Mr. Olson reported that Facebook and Ferrara had both recently received their occupancy permits. He added that the packaging center should also be coming along soon. He noted that Facebook had done a plat of re-subdivision to accommodate a ComEd substation on the southeast portion of the site. Mr. Olson noted that they had also had a lot of residential solar panels. He finished by reporting that DeKalb would begin updating its comprehensive plan in 2021.

Mr. Hiland (DeKalb County) reported that the County was in the process of reviewing a petition to allow for the keeping of chickens on residential properties of less than two acres, noting that the petition was going before the County Board in February. He noted that the County was also working with Syngenta on its new facility. Mr. Hiland reported that the meat packing plant that had burned down in the Village of Lee, had sought to relocate to a rural property in the unincorporated portion of the County, had recently withdrawn the application. Ms. May inquired whether the location had been OKed or not. Mr. Hiland explained that the petitioner had come to realize that that costs and constraints to improve the roadway and property were proving prohibitive, and so withdrew the application to seek alternative locations.

Mr. Faivre (DeKalb County) reported that he had been in contact with some solar providers that were looking at constructing some utility-scale installations in the County, one proposed project was around 200mw and another was around 500mw, and that there was a possibility of three more besides those. Ms. May noted that a similar installation was being proposed in Lee County, not far from the Village of Lee, that would extend from State Route 30 to Perry Road.

Ms. May inquired whether DeKalb and Sycamore area school systems were prepared to handle the influx of new students from the new development, such as Facebook and Ferrara, that was occurring. Mr. Olson responded that that they were, explaining that given the nature of the new businesses, they did not expect a large number of new students. Mr. Gregory added that both school systems had increased capacity that never really came because of the “Housing Bubble”, so that both should be able to handle any increase.

Next Meeting Date

Mr. Hiland displayed a proposed meeting date list for 2021, noting that the next meeting would be on March 25th. He did note that the date would likely be around the same time as many of the school spring breaks, and could be moved if needed. The Commission voiced no issues with that date.

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He also noted that the May date was traditionally moved one week, due to its proximity to the Memorial Day holiday.

Adjournment

Mr. Robinson moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Jergens, and the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Olson
Chair, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission

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