

WHITLEY COUNTY PLAN COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2020, 7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

John Johnson
Mark Mynhier
Tom Western
Joe Wolf
Brad Wolfe
John Woodmansee
Doug Wright

MEMBERS ABSENT

Thor Hodges

LEGAL COUNSEL

Sam Ladowski

STAFF

Nathan Bilger
Mark Cullnane

VISITORS

Six visitors signed the guest list at the January 15, 2020 Whitley County Plan Commission meeting. The original guest list is kept on record in the Columbia City/Whitley County Planning & Building Department.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mr. Wright called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Cullnane read the roll call with all members present and absent listed above.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Wright introduced the election of officers for 2020. Mr. Wright stated that, during 2019, he was President, Mr. Wolfe was Vice-President, Mr. Johnson was Secretary, and Mr. Woodmansee was the Joint Advisory Board Representative.

Mr. Woodmansee made a motion to retain the same individuals for the same offices in 2020. Mr. Western seconded, and the motion passed by a vote of 7-0.

APPOINTMENT OF LEGAL COUNSEL

Mr. Bilger stated that the County Commissioners would like for the County's legal counsel to come from one firm. As a result, Bloom Gates Shipman & Whiteleather, LLP is being considered for the Commission's legal counsel. Mr. Bilger stated that this action requires the Commission's approval through a motion and vote. Mr. Bilger stated that he has reviewed the contract and that total costs should be roughly the same as what the Commission had been paying its former legal counsel, Dawn Boyd. Elizabeth Deckard, an attorney with Bloom Gates Shipman & Whiteleather, has resigned from both the Plan Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals so as to avoid a potential conflict of interest. Mr. Bilger requested that the Commission make a motion to appoint new legal counsel and, in order to streamline the process, give him the

authority to sign the contract on behalf of the Commission. Mr. Bilger asked the Commission if it had any questions or comments.

Mr. Wolf made a motion to appoint Bloom Gates Shipman & Whiteleather, LLP as legal counsel for the Commission and to give Mr. Bilger the authority to sign the contract on behalf of the Commission.

Mr. Woodmansee seconded the motion, and it was approved by a vote of 7-0.

CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE DECEMBER 18, 2019 MEETING MINUTES

The December 18, 2019 regular meeting minutes were presented for approval. Mr. Wright asked the Commission if it had any comments concerning the minutes. Mr. Western made a motion to approve the December 18, 2019 minutes as presented. Mr. Wolfe seconded the motion, and it was approved by a vote of 7-0.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Comprehensive Plan Update RFQ and Set Up of Steering Committee

Mr. Wright introduced a review of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for an update to the Comprehensive Plan and the creation of a Steering Committee to guide the process of causing an update to the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Bilger stated that, based on how the residential zoning ordinance update discussions transpired last fall, it was determined to be necessary to update the Comprehensive Plan before proceeding with zoning ordinance updates.

Mr. Bilger reviewed the need for an update to the Comprehensive Plan and presented a Request for Qualifications for an update to the Comprehensive Plan for the Commission to review.

Mr. Bilger and the Commission discussed inadequacies of the current Comprehensive Plan, how they are addressed in the RFQ, and how he and the Commission would like to see them addressed in the future Plan.

Mr. Bilger and the Commission discussed the shortage of new, single-family in the County and how that stifles population growth. Mr. Wolfe stated that he would like to see designated areas for suburban-style residential growth. Mr. Western stated that he would like to see greater restrictions on spot zoning. Mr. Wolf stated that, in his discussions,

with farmers around the county, he has found that many view selling their land as their retirement fund.

Mr. Wolfe observed that one of the stated goals of the current Comprehensive Plan is population growth and asked whether the county wants population growth. He stated that growth in the wrong areas could have negative effects.

Mr. Wolf stated that he liked the idea of a Village Residential district, but stressed the importance, as conveyed by developers, the importance of having access to utilities, specifically water and sewer. Mr. Bilger asked how the County should consider going about providing utilities to the unincorporated towns where the Village Residential district would be utilized.

The Commission discussed population growth around the county. Mr. Johnson stated that he is surprised there has not been more growth than what has been observed when taking into consideration multi-family developments on the outskirts of Columbia City. Mr. Cullnane stated that Whitley County's population growth since 2010 fares well compared to the other rural counties in the Northeast Indiana Regional Development Authority. Mr. Bilger and the Commission further discussed recent population change in the County and the implications of this change.

Mr. Wolfe stated that he would like to see an economic development component to the planned Comprehensive Plan update.

Sonya Emerick, 5865 East State Road 14, Columbia City, discussed a lack of qualified workers for her business, Micropulse, Inc., in the area.

Rhonda Salge, 5465 North 650 East, Churubusco, discussed the upcoming 2020 Census and its importance to the County. Mr. Bilger stated that the results of the Census may demonstrate some surprises concerning the demographics of the County and incorporated cities and towns.

Mr. Bilger stated that the RFQ will be posted to the website of the Indiana Chapter of the American Planning Association, that his goal is to receive five to six responses, and that he hopes the process will be completed by November or December 2020 depending on how the process goes.

Mr. Bilger stated that the Commission should provide at least one member to the Steering Committee for the Comprehensive Plan update. He stated that in 2010, when the Comprehensive Plan was last updated, the Steering Committee had approximately 12 members. He stated that this was unwieldy and that the Steering Committee for this year's update should not be so large. Mr. Bilger suggested that the Steering Committee and various Subcommittees should each contain three to five members. Mr. Bilger

discussed the role of the Steering Committee and the various Subcommittees that should be created to focus on specific topics, such as transportation and agriculture.

Mr. Bilger and the Commission discussed the Steering Committee and determined that the Steering Committee should have five members. Mr. Bilger stated that, at a minimum, the Steering Committee should include at least one member of the Commission and one of the County Commissioners.

Mr. Bilger and the Commission discussed putting together a team to conduct interviews of the consultants that submit RFQs. Mr. Wright volunteered as the Commission's representative, and Mr. Western volunteered as the representative of the County Commissioners.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Wright declared the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:40 P.M.