

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SODA SPRINGS, CARIBOU COUNTY, IDAHO HELD JANUARY 8, 2019.

ROLL CALL SHOWED THE FOLLOWING PRESENT: Charles Fryar - Chairman
Rod Worthington
Demian Guthmiller
Veda Mascarenas
Lori Anne Lau

EXCUSED:

ALSO PRESENT: Kathy Ray Alan Skinner, City Director
Gary & Robbie Lemarr Jon Goode, Councilmember
Gina Guthmiller JoAnna Ashley, Secretary
Rikki Wood
Ron Myers Rodger Sorensen
Gregory & Summer Fullmer David Patterson
Dan Lau Ryan Carpenter
Austin W. Robinson Jason Maughan
Ashley Rupp Robert Lau
Reid Herron Katy Bergholm
Keller Crane Marvin Anderson
Dillon Liechty Irene Torgesen
Molly Stein Kristin Skinner
Preston & Mallory Rutter Roger Hooley
Lisa Jenkins Riley Phillips
Rodney Fraser Eric Hobson
Austin E & Jacki Robinson Shannon O'Donnell
Chris Thomas Chris Gonzalez
Drew & Micaela Erickson Chris & Heidi Thompson
Jori Johnson Tysen Hopkins
Rae Dawn Dock Kyle Wangemann

Chairman Fryar opened the meeting and welcomed all those who attended. He explained the plan for the meeting and asked all those in attendance to please stay on task and keep their comments to around three minutes. He turned the time over to Secretary Ashley to explain the scope of the meeting. Secretary Ashley explained that there were handouts that explain the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan as well as the City's zoning code. She explained the basic foundation of Land Use planning, how zoning works and ways that zones can be changed as well as how one can deviate from the code using conditional uses or variances. She explained that the Comprehensive Plan is meant to be a guide to help the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council to help determine how far they deviate from the code when making decisions regarding re-zones, subdivisions, conditional uses and variances. Further the Comprehensive Plan is meant to be a guide for the Council when making decision regarding the City's budget. She stated that the plan was not intended to have very specific details as those are meant to be in something like a Community or Capital Improvement Plan.

Chairman Fryar thanked everyone for showing up and wanting to share their opinions. After consulting with the commission he asked anyone who wanted to speak to please stand, state their name and address, and share what part of the plan they were addressing as well the corresponding page number if possible. He also

asked that everyone keep their comments to just a couple minutes and to please keep their comments to the scope of the plan. A member from the audience asked if the Commission planned to revise the plan based on public feedback. Chairman Fryar explained they would utilize the community input and the commission had been working on it for the past three years and were hoping to finish it up in the next few months. Secretary Ashley explained that the Comprehensive Plan is a living document and can continue to be amended even after it is formally adopted. The implementation portion of the Plan outlines that both the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission are supposed to be reviewing it regularly. Further as new information is gained or as changes arise in the community the Plan can be revised to reflect those changes.

Katy Bergholm 265 S Main St., said she understood that the document could not be project specific. However, she felt it needed to be narrowed down to a smaller scale because it was easy to lose sight of what the intent of the plan was in its current version. For example she felt like it would be a good place to clarify what the City was going to do to enhance City events, improve infrastructure and or to support events. Her concern is if the plan is not more detailed it allows the space for someone to possibly move in with an agenda. Further she felt like the lack of detail in the Plan did not address things such as if and how the City is going to try to bring in additional industries. Further she did not see where it mentioned the hospital as it is a major employer and other businesses. She asked further what the implications could be if one of the plants or mines shut down and what the plan for success is for the community outside of the plants and mines. She noted that the plan was focused on property owner rights but felt like the lack of details left it too wide open for someone to move in with an agenda and change things for what they thought was best, instead of what was best for the community as a whole.

Shannon O'Donnell 795 E Woodland DR, she said that some of her concerns are for people who don't drive nor are able to drive. The sidewalks aren't maintained in the winter and there are several places where sidewalks are missing and this causes dangerous circumstances for pedestrians as they have to walk in the road. She said the City lacks options for transportation like a taxi, or Uber service. Lori Anne Lau asked for clarification as PRT is available in the community. Mrs. O'Donnell said they are very limited in the community and she has not been able to utilize their services due to drivers being unavailable or unprofessional.

Reid Herron of 2444 Wheel Place, Soda Springs, said he is new to town and his wife is a teacher at the elementary school. He said he works from home in Information Technology (IT) for Farmers Insurance and they hope to buy or build a home in Soda Springs. He noted the Plan talked about the lack of housing being a major flaw for the City. He wanted to know if there was a plan to incentivize building homes such as short term tax breaks and if there were other ways to encourage the development of housing. He said there is a lot of older out dated homes and on the other spectrum very expensive high end homes. He said another concern is a lack of options for internet speed and providers and wondered if the City had a plan for trying to increase internet options for speed and providers. He said he has to establish a VPN connection to his employer's servers in order to do his work from home. These upgrades he felt would better the environment in the technological sector especially into the outlying area. He said he has seen how businesses have been affected by the slow internet speeds when trying to process transactions. Improvements to the internet directly affect quality of life as well as business success.

Lisa Jenkins 2482 Afton's Way, said she mirrored Reid's sentiment on housing. As a realtor there are several people looking to rent and or buy and the market has very little options. She said the problem with expansion in the City is landowners do not want to sell their property. She said it took three years to get Afton's Way Subdivision started and another three years to get it established. She says the community has a chance to grow and we are missing out due to the housing issues and people are going to Montpelier or Lava for options. She said there are a lot of local builders who would be interested in building homes. Rod Worthington asked Mrs. Jenkins if she had seen the old Comprehensive Plan as well as the new. She said

she had and feels the Comp Plan is doing what it's supposed to but there needs to be more done to move forward in creating growth in the community. She felt that the housing is of utmost priority. Rod Worthington said that in both the Bengal Solutions and in the Comprehensive Plan it discusses the need for housing. She said she agreed it does and this is an issue that was happening when she was on the Planning & Zoning Commission some years ago. She said she knows they've tried hard to entice people, but there is a lot of old family land where farmers aren't willing to sell. She wondered if the City can look at having discounts on sewer and water hookups and property taxes to encourage development. She further noted that with the local industry as strong as it is there are people constantly moving in and out of the City. Katy Bergholm asked why the City doesn't incentivize for construction within the City as said they could include things like extension of sewer and water lines on the City's part and or helping with curb, gutter and sidewalk; possibly a revision to the City code regarding requirements. Lisa Jenkins said they have tried to pursue development on the land out by the airport. She noted that even during the recession this area was not affected due to the jobs and industry in this area and rentals are filled so quickly because of the demand for housing. Secretary Ashley asked for clarification for what Mrs. Jenkins would like to see added to the plan, such as an additional objective added to the plan to address the incentives. Mrs. Jenkins said the solution may be the City could form a committee to look at other areas that are having growth and glean information for how to encourage growth in the City. Then as a result of the Committees finding maybe have changes to the City's Zoning Code and Comprehensive Plan. Mrs. Bergholm asked if Mrs. Jenkins was implying the City should look at annexing land into the City to provide land for development. Secretary Ashley pointed that annexation is a difficult process as there are several things that must be in place and should only be pursued after infill within the current City boundaries has been pursued. Mrs. Bergholm said she did not believe there were any large pieces of land in the City left for development. Further that the cost of extending lines and the fees charged by the City make it cost prohibitive for anyone to look at developing within the City. Mrs. Jenkins said there is land near the airport that is not developed and would make sense to develop.

Rod Worthington pointed out there was really only one item mentions that wasn't already in the Comprehensive Plan and it's the issue regarding internet speed and services. He emphasized that the housing shortage had been abundantly addressed within the plan. He said the problem is very clear and has been for some time and he would like to hear of solutions anyone may have for the problems particularly with housing as this issue has been brought up consistently through all the public meetings for several years. The Plan does address the issues in a comprehensive way, but solutions are what is needed and he felt like the details should be left to the City Council to address outside of the Plan, especially as they are the governing authority for the City.

Dan Lau, 60 W 4th S; expressed his opinion that none of the City's Plans have any objectives or things people are going to be held accountable for. He felt that in 10 years we will be back here for the 2030 plan and there will not be hardly any changes. He said that when he graduated high school from here everyone lived inside the City limits. He said we are allowing people and pushing people to live outside the City limits. Rod Worthington asked what the solutions are. Mr. Lau said the City should offer incentives such as free sewer, water, and power hookups to encourage growth in the City. Demian Guthmiller pointed out to do that is quite a bit of money from the City. Mr. Lau felt like the City would recoup their money in time through taxes. Mr. Lau said there are a couple of pieces of properties within the City that could have subdivisions. He said most subdividers are not willing to come in and build four or five homes a year as part of a 50 house development because the cost of that would have to be recouped over a large period of time. He reiterated that he felt the City could be doing the infrastructure expansion. He said that the approval process is very difficult as well as trying to get answers that are consistent. The City has no plan to improve the business district area. He said the Greater Soda Springs Community Development Committee said they were waiting on the Comprehensive Plan to give them guidance before moving forward with projects for the business district. He felt that the Plan is too vague and too "pretty" not focusing on the realities of the City

as much of it is aged and not as beautiful as it once was. The City could encourage Silverstar or other providers to get better internet connections in our area as most are not on fiber optic. Mr. Lau said he felt that our business district needs improvements. Rod Worthington asked for what kind of improvements. Mr. Lau said Afton is a good example of a community who takes pride in their business districts. While the buildings are older they've been updated, the sidewalks are nice, etc. He feels there is a lot of apathy with landlords of commercial property who have no intention to improve their buildings and felt the City should take a more proactive approach in encouraging the improvement of their buildings. Mr. Herron said volunteer work could be a great way to try and create improvements in the community and doing things as simple as painting buildings, planting flowers and greenery, sprucing up the City as volunteers. He feels it is possible to organize such an effort especially after seeing everyone come together to build the Community Playground this summer.

Ryan Carpenter, 240 Court St, said he understands the importance of why the comp plan has to be vague due to the time frame of the plan being so broad. He said his wife telecommutes for her job and emphasized that she needs faster internet speeds to better support her job. Mr. Herron pointed out there is True Fiber in Pocatello which is getting fiber optic to homes for \$60 or \$70 a month. Mr. Carpenter said there is a fine line between offering incentives for new homes while the established homeowners and business owners are holding the weight of those incentives. He said he wanted to know what the City felt like was the anticipated growth. He said he is huge into Urban Forestry and as an arborist feels where the City is a Tree City USA it could be doing more such as Urban Forestry and incorporating more trees into the City.

Micaela Erickson of 356 S 2nd E, asked whose door does the community need to be knocking on and who can they go to for solutions regarding housing and the other issues brought up in the meeting. Demian Guthmiller said that while annexation is technically an option it is very difficult and it's very possible it could fail. Further, if people don't want to sell their land there is nothing the City can do to force people to sell the land. He said as far as incentives they are not cheap, and further can create legal problems. Mrs. Erickson asked if there are any other taxes or costs associated with incentives or other costs that would deter the development of homes. Rod Worthington asked Mr. Skinner what the cost was to run the new lines on South 1st East this past fall. Director Skinner said the cost was \$662,000 just for a new water line and put new asphalt on the roadway. Mrs. Erickson asked how that was funded. Director Skinner said part of the project for the road was funded through a grant, and the remainder comes from the utilities customers pay for. Mrs. Erickson asked if the citizens are not being taxed enough or if the finances were being addressed correctly. Mrs. Bergholm said she felt South 1st East was not comparable to extending a major sewer and water line for a new development regarding costs as there is cost involved in tearing out the old and then reinstalling it. Director Skinner said the City does not have the money upfront to pay for major extension of service lines and then have to wait years to recoup money via taxes. Further what money is available has gone to infrastructure replacements projects as they are a higher priority.

Lori Anne Lau said she has been on the P&Z for a year and she feels like as a community we haven't come together to decide what everyone supports and wants to get behind as goals. She doesn't feel like she knows what the citizens want and now everyone has come together and she wants to know what the citizens want. Mrs. Erickson asked what the City was striving for as far as population, does the City want growth. Secretary Ashley said the City has emphasized several times in the Plan that it does want to see growth. However, the City cannot pursue funding nor do the extension of services on its own without partnership with another business or entity that wants to become established in the City. She explained that when Caribou Memorial Hospital was doing its expansion project and Cobblestone Inn was trying to be built, the City partnered with both of these entities to apply for a \$50,000 GEM Grant to pay for the needed upgrade to the water line. The City involvement in all of the questions and hopes for change in the community can only be the arm per say of the greater body of the community. Individuals, local organizations and grass roots efforts have to come together and collaborate for the betterment of the community. She pointed out

there was a City in Idaho who had a population smaller than Soda Springs that had applied for and received a \$500,000 Downtown revitalization grant through the Community Development Block Grant program. That City and its citizens realized that if everything including labor was paid for in the planned project the money would be gone very quickly. As a result the community came together with the City and the City donated its equipment in off hours for equipment operator citizens to use and tear out the sidewalks and do the prep work. Their local Veterans of Foreign War group did the forms for the sidewalk and the majority of the entire project was completed through local volunteers and most of the money went to materials. As a result of the collaboration and volunteer efforts they made a phenomenal community revitalization project. She pointed out that it is very likely that with enough support Soda Springs could do something similar.

Greg Fullmer, 201 Gagon Dr, said he appreciated the position of the P&Z Commission, and felt the Comprehensive Plan was a 30,000 foot plan and a vision plan, which caused it to lack detail that could make it truly usable. He felt that the definition of the word “comprehensive” indicated it was more than an umbrella and should contain more detail. He wanted to know if when this plan is adopted, is there a way to have a more in depth plan for the area if it’s not in the Comprehensive Plan. He asked when the last time the City met with developers or other professionals to discuss costs and possibilities in the community. He wondered if the Planning and Zoning Commission could be used to facilitate monthly meetings that focus on an area of the plan to make it more detailed and build that more detailed vision. He felt that a more detailed scope would be wise. Rod Worthington said that his personal opinion was the Plan should be a 36,000 view of the community and that the duty of creating the details should lay with the City Council. Where they set the budget, assess the needs of the City they would be better prepared and ultimately have the say in how to move forward. Mr. Fullmer concluded that he did not feel there was a vision within the Plan to show where it was going and more detail was necessary for the Plan. Secretary Ashley explained that it was the intention that after the Plan was adopted the City would develop a Community Improvement Plan which deals in a three to six-year window and has more detailed goals. She also addressed the concern of there not being land in the City for development explaining that she had spoken with major lander owners within City limits and everyone them agreed to being willing to have a discussion about potential development of their land.

Chris Thomas, 1699 Corder Circle, said she is the CEO of Caribou Memorial Hospital. She felt the Comprehensive Plan overall is good. If anything is missing she feels it’s the urgency that is being expressed throughout the evening regarding the housing situation. She felt it would be very important for the City, County and major community players to work together and have conversations regarding the issues at hand. She said she has heard a lot about what people don’t want to be and feels like it would better serve to hear what people do want to be. She feels it would be important if we decided as a community what type of community we wanted to be and then work towards that. She feels like a timeframe is missing from the Plan and a vision that states what the City wants to grow in regards to population. She felt that adding such detail would allow people to invest in the risk when they know it is part of the community vision and growing in such a way would be supported by the City. Chairman Fryar said he remembers Soda Springs from its hey-day years to now. In the last 20 years there has been a lot of say about not wanting to grow, however, even in the last year with the new playground the attitude of the community is changing and growth is becoming supported.

Robert Lau, 40 West 4th South; said there are a lot of people in town who are afraid of growth but in the next breath will say they hope for jobs for their friends and family. He said people have to compromise. He pointed out there is approximately 700 acres of undeveloped land in City limits which a lot of it is privately owned, however there is also a lot that the City owns of which there is 100 acres on the west side of Kelly Park where the infrastructure is there to support housing development and the City owns the land. He felt the City could divide the land and auction the lots for development of homes. He said he has reviewed the comprehensive plan of several Cities in Idaho and the ones who are thriving have specific SMART

(Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely) goals. He said the plan should have specific goals with dates. So if they want to address housing then an example would be by July 2019 Kelly park will be platted out by August 2019 the City will have an auction on the lots to dispose of the property, by another date the City will beginning running infrastructure. He said that as far as subsidies our forefathers carried the weight for us to have subsidies to have the lives we live and felt like we should do the same for current and future generations. He said that the City is using 2000 gallons of water per day, the national average is 128 gallons, per day, per person, in the winter it's 680 gallons per person. This means there are holes in the water lines; and the same for the sewer lines. He said by putting in a hundred houses at Kelly Park they will be paying into the utilities and sewer bond and formation well, plus taxes. He felt like there are ways to get money. The City could declare the entire town as blighted, even though people hate the word, but doing so could open up the community for funding from State and Federal resources. There's the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts as another form of funding. The State of Idaho does not allow tax abatement, but it does allow the City to run the utility lines. He reiterated that he felt the State intended for the Comprehensive Plan to be specific and ours needs to be more specific.

Mr. Carpenter asked if a committee could be created by the people to address the issues at hand. Lori Anne Lau said the 2009 Community Review suggested there should be a housing summit, it sounds like this a perfect opportunity to move forward with that. Rod Worthington said he did not agree with Councilman Lau that the plan should be specific. The Comp Plan is the 36,000 view while the Community Improvement Plan would be the specific goals and dates to achieve them by and established by the City Council and Mayor and their responsibility. Mr. Carpenter said he agreed with Mr. Worthington. Mrs. Erickson asked who would create the Community Improvement Plan. Secretary Ashley said that the scope of the CIP would fall on the Mayor and Council as they have the authority in all facets regarding the budget; whereas the Planning and Zoning Commission is only advisory and can only advise on matters concerning Land Use.

Heidi Thompson, 140 N Main St, she said agrees with everything that has been said this evening. She said everyone talks about volunteering, and pointed out that the Greater Soda Springs Community Development Committee (GSSCDC) is for improving the Community and the very things being discussed in the meeting tonight. She said they have a meeting tomorrow at 5:15 PM here at City Hall and all are welcome to attend.

Preston Rutter of 451 N 7th E #30, said he is new to Soda Springs but said he grew up in the region. He said internet infrastructure is so important for technology. He said there are statutory guidelines for TIF Districts and there are an abundance of resources available. There are Idaho statutory opportunities for the City.

Mallory Rutter of 451 N 7th E #30; said she would recommend adding goals for how the City intends to move the objectives forward. For example, in regards to housing, set a goal saying the City will create a committee to address housing and development.

Kathy Ray addressed the group as the Regional Economic Development Specialist for Southeast Idaho. She pointed out there had been lots of talk about grants in the meeting and she wanted to clarify that grants always come with requirements, whether financial match or agreements from the property owners. She said that a common thread that is being heard across all other communities is that younger generations (under 40) are asking how they can improve their communities and there is a rising interest in community improvement. She said the concerns with the internet are a critical infrastructure part that the City does need to consider. It takes people coming together and working together, much like everyone coming together tonight. She said partnerships are required between the City and private parties and investors to move the City forward.

Justin Hansen 360 Mt View, stated he wanted to emphasis what he says is as a resident of the City of Soda Springs, not as an employee. He noted a gentleman earlier said we have to advocate for small towns. He did

not feel it was realistic to compare Soda Springs to Pocatello. He felt it was important to compare to towns of similar sizes. He mentioned he had a friend in Montpelier that opened a business called Bats, Bats, Bats, and then expanded it as it grew; two years after expansion he had to close his doors. He feels that us supporting our locals business is key to advocating for our businesses.

Mr. Carpenter said the citizens have a lot to offer as a community and with collaboration of our citizens a great deal could be accomplished very quickly. Drew Erickson said that as a group it's important that everyone tries to make as many meetings as possible and participate with the City officials. He felt if everyone continued to come together to improve our community in 5 to 10 years we would have a phenomenal community.

The community input portion ended and individuals gathered to further collaborate and share ideas.

The Planning and Zoning Commission reconvened and Chairman Fryar asked if there was a motion on the minutes for the October and December minutes. Demian Guthmiller moved to approve the October 9th, 2018 minutes, seconded by Veda Mascarenas. All in favor minutes approved. Demian moved to approve the December 11th, 2018 minutes, second by Veda Mascarenas. All in favor minutes approved.

Chairman Fryar asked if there was anything further that needed addressed. Secretary Ashley said the City Council had discussed changing the Planning and Zoning member residency requirement from having to live in the Area of Impact to just having to live in Caribou County which is allowed by State Statute. If the Commission was in agreement with this change then a public hearing would be scheduled for the February meeting to address it. Further there were some modifications to the P&Z bylaws to make it in alignment with the State Statute. The changes included; allowing a commission member to serve more than two terms if approved by a 2/3 majority vote by the other commission members and also to remove the portion stating that the meeting will be conducted by Robert's Rules of Order. This being removed would allow the Chairman of the Commission to vote and it was up to the Commission members to decide if they would like that. It was agreed by all Commission members that the Chairman should be able to vote.

The Commission briefly reviewed the input from the night and concluded that the points of the evening pertained to housing, transportation, internet, urban forestry and little bit on where the community is going. Rod Worthington brought up the letters that had been submitted as input for the night and he wanted to point out that Mark Steele's letter was very pertinent and they had missed including the information about agriculture activities inside the City. Secretary Ashley stated by reading the input from citizens she was made aware that she had failed to put an introductory chapter in the Plan that explained the background, research, and meetings involved that allowed the Commission to come to these conclusions and objectives in the Plan. She asked the Commission if they would like to see that included, all were in agreement that they would.

9:03 PM Demian Guthmiller moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Veda Mascarenas. All in favor, meeting adjourned.