Ordinance Committee

Notice of Public Hearing
Date: October 2, 2019
Time: 4:35 PM
Location: Tippecanoe County Office Building
Tippecanoe Room
20 North Third Street
Lafayette, IN 47901

AGENDA

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
   from the September 4th meeting

   Documents:
   ORD 09.04.2019 MIN.PDF

II. SOLAR ENERGY:
   A brief update on how solar energy companies are regulated by the IURC (Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission) - Zachary Williams, APC Attorney

III. THE WEST LAFAYETTE DOWNTOWN PLAN
   An update on comments received regarding the proposed plan during the month of September's public comment period. (To read the draft plan, please visit the county website at Tippecanoe.in.gov/apc) - Ryan O'Gara

IV. CITIZEN COMMENTS

V. ADJOURNMENT
Chair Jackson Bogan called the meeting to order.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Gary Schroeder moved to approve the minutes from the August 7, 2019 Ordinance Committee meeting. Carl Griffin seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

II. THE WEST LAFAYETTE DOWNTOWN PLAN

Ryan O’Gara presented the West Lafayette Downtown Plan. He said late last fall, City Council authorized the Area Plan Commission to conduct a study of the West Lafayette Downtown area to develop a land use plan and transportation improvements. City Council adopted a boundary for the studied area. A steering committee of elected officials and stake holders was created that has been meeting since last December. The committee wrapped up this summer and has transitioned into the last phase with a month-long public comment period; people can contact committee members directly or speak to their elected official with any comments or feedback. At the end of the month, the steering committee will meet again to assess all the feedback they have received to create the final draft that will be presented to the full APC and City Council. This plan started with the New Chauncey Neighborhood Plan. There were specific recommendations and implementation strategies to study the area to relieve development pressure from New Chauncey. The development community focused on the traditional central business district on the Levee and in the Village. Projects are starting to materialize utilizing the general strategy created. After the first Hub project, a simplistic land use map was given to City Council as an insight into staff’s thinking when planned development projects are negotiated. There are certain areas where projects of this magnitude were appropriate and areas that could not sustain it. The boundary that City Council adopted contains the historic area of Chauncey Village and runs from Fowler to River Road includes the Levee, the Wabash Riverfront, and the Harrison bridge. An analysis of existing conditions, land uses, and historic structures was conducted. Certain historic structures like the Purdue State Bank and the Morton Center will be preserved.
Ryan said flood plains and wetlands are a huge concern within the plan. The 500-year flood zone engulfs most of the Levee. The areas within the 100-year flood zone would need to be filled in or certified through the flood plain certification process. Odds are most areas in the flood plain zone would be certified since most are full of roads.

Larry Leverenz asked if the state studied the flood plain zone.

Ryan O’Gara said that it is not typical for the state to conduct a study. A private developer that is interested in developing an area would attempt to get it certified to see if it is developable. If the area is in public right-of-way there is not much of an incentive to study the land because roads are allowed in a flood plain. Other areas that are more formally defined as having wetland features would need to be mitigated to establish a road grid.

There are two main strategies for the project: future land use and transportation improvements. There are seven main areas of transportation improvement which includes pedestrian facilities, two pedestrian bridges, new roads, and plaza spaces. The Wabash River Enhancement Corporation submitted their plan to improve the Brown Street Bridge into Lafayette as a pedestrian bridge facility. The second bridge, the KB&S Rail Bridge, is a secondary project. The railroad bridge is considered a historic structure that the state would like to preserve. KB&S is a two-track bridge with only one set of railroad tracks; the side without tracks would be ideal for a trail.

The plan contains various recommendations on road improvements and roundabouts. The objective is to complete the grid system of streets on the Levee between Chauncey Hill and Downtown Lafayette which have two-acre blocks platted. The Levee is an odd bit of suburban development sandwiched between two very well-established downtown grids. The plan is to pull these grids in to create a seamless downtown to keep the hilltop to hilltop theme. Columbia Street and Wood Street will be pulled down from the Chauncey Village area into the Levee area. The existing streets will be extended to create new streets and try to create roughly two-acre block sizes with some blocks being big enough to be split by 15-foot alleys. The West Lafayette Fire Department felt comfortable with that as an absolute minimum for an alley.

Ryan said we acknowledge that this street plan will not happen overnight; it will take a long period of time. The alignments may not look the way they do in this plan because this is the first attempt at creating a system of street grids. We have a timeline of short-term to mid-term to long-term implementations based on what is in the way of the development. Land that is just grass can be turned into streets quickly and would be considered short-term. Whereas driveways and parking lots that require more intrusive measures would be considered mid-term. The long-term phase will include taking out buildings and realigning intersections. It is stressed that this is not in any way trying to tie West Lafayette to Lafayette. This is going to be driven by development. As projects come along, rights-of-way will be dedicated and streets will be constructed to allow the area to develop organically.

Tom Murtaugh asked if the proposed eastern roundabout is on Harrison Street.

Ryan O’Gara said that is a roundabout on Harrison Street. He said Doug Poad studied this area because the Harrison Bridge is a fixed point in good condition. Doug calculated the height of the bridge deck and distance that allowed a reasonable slope to have an at grade roundabout for the Tapawingo extension. This was the furthest east the roundabout could be placed without too severe of a slope up the current bridge. The Tapawingo extension becomes the downtown outer loop; the right side of it is riverfront and the left side is the downtown environment. If we decide not to develop the interchange, it is possible Tapawingo could go under the bridge to make an intersection with Robinson Street and River Road. We wanted to make a placeholder for a roundabout that had thought put into it. All the street options are subject to further study.

Ryan said the plan outlines an acreage count for each block to give developers a tool when considering the area. The future land use plan is broken up into three areas. These are then divided into land use categories. The first of the land use categories listed is Conservation and Recreation areas which would
be considered greenspace. The second, Urban Historic Residential, acknowledges the historical significance of the fraternity’s mansions on the bluff. All the historic structures are listed by address to recommend their preservation. He said we would like to see them preserved and reutilized if they were to vacate for whatever reason. Third, the Downtown Riverfront district, will directly overlook the Wabash and is designed to show symmetry across the river. The Downtown Edge would be mainly residential with townhouse developments and small apartment buildings. This steps up to Downtown Village space with mid-rise structures for a mix of residential and non-residential uses. The last, Downtown Core, has high-rise structures with an intense urban environment. These categories are then placed appropriately in the three different areas on the map shown in the plan. When assigning these categories to spaces, we go into detail what we would like to see developed and how potential open space can be mixed in with these.

Ryan said there is a lot greenspace along the river. The Launch, formerly Williamsburg on the Wabash, is recommended to go away. He said with the flood plain area, we could certify out the village. If there is any mitigation needed it could potentially be done upstream while creating new habitat and flood plain areas. Rec is wanting to do some activities with the riverfront public open space that could be programmed with all sorts of things like natural habitat for wildlife all the way to hardscape park plazas. This plan promotes urban intensification but is offset by these greenspaces primarily along the river and strategically placed areas in the more intensely developed areas to provide people with places to go.

Tom Murtaugh asked about the historic preservation in the middle of the map.

Ryan O’Gara said they are the fraternity mansions that are considered Urban Historic Residential.

Tom Murtaugh asked about the bottom two blocks, 30 and 31, of Downtown Edge.

Ryan O’Gara said these blocks are a purely residential environment that borders the New Chauncey Neighborhood. He said we wanted a dramatic step down in intensity as we move forward from the core area which is highly intense. There is some logic to the development pattern starting in Chauncey with single-family detached homes stepping up to a townhouse environment then to mid-rise buildings and finally high-rise buildings. The Downtown Riverfront area is there to create the symmetry across the river with Lafayette. North of the Harrison Bridge, we are purposefully calling for only mid-rise buildings as requested by the steering committee.

Larry Leverenz said from River Road east to the river there are some open spaces however it seems like there are a lot of streets there. He said knowing the area, it seems like a very dense street grid. He asked what Ryan sees going into that space.

Ryan O’Gara said in terms of uses, the Downtown Village and Riverfront districts are meant to be eclectic, mixed-use environments like downtown Lafayette is. This space could have office, residential, commercial, retail, and restaurant uses. This is the downtown central business district that tends to trend more business oriented however, residential is implied and encouraged. The Downtown Edge district is the only area that is purely residential. The rest is really envisioning mixed-use scenarios but that is not to say that the Downtown Village could not be just residential. He said we would want it to have an urban disposition.

Larry Leverenz said the current Levee area seems open and spacious; this plan seems like it is packing it in.

Ryan O’Gara said looking at the blocks in Chauncey Village, you can see that we are trying to copy that size block while pulling it down into the Levee. There is an intensification as well as an offset with an expanded greenspace area along the river. He said we are not trying to bring something into the Levee that is alien to the community. We are looking at either side of the river and seeing that this area is urbanizing; Wabash Landing and River Market were the first examples of this. Development interest in this area has only increased. There have been two planned developments that had withdrawn at the City’s request for this process to finish out. The first was located at the PEFCU ATM on Brown Street where the developer was prepared to negotiate to give up a couple of the streets to establish the first parts of the grid. The second development was a hotel next to the Hampton Inn that was prepared to give up Roebuck South.
There is already a developer interested in trying to get these large blocks into more of an urban size. If it looks congested, it is understandable with the existing conditions being so familiar to people. It is worth noting that we are trying to bring in an urban environment that is unfamiliar to the community.

Larry Leverenz said this area is an assortment of streets right now.

Ryan O’Gara said after Wabash Landing was created, there was an addition to the Thoroughfare Plan to create Tapawingo North as a road that cuts through Levee Plaza west to intersect with Howard Street. It was an early concept plan that never became part of the Comprehensive Plan. We have incorporated Tapawingo North’s route with the middle street that goes through the Levee. Roads are needed to cut this area into more blocks; where these roads go and what the configuration of the blocks will be is still to be determined. This plan is the first attempt to have some logic to figure out how to create two-acre blocks on the Levee.

Jackson Bogan asked if we were to have a bookend of Lafayette Downtown, would there be scalable block sizes.

Ryan O’Gara said the grid would be roughly comparable. Downtown Lafayette across the river is flat so there is more room to push the grid out.

Jackson Bogan asked if it would be as congested.

Ryan O’Gara said it would roughly be this congested. There is not a clean slate to work with. There are existing streets that are not going anywhere like State Street and River Road. The blocks had to maneuver around these fixed points making them odd shaped. It is possible some of these blocks will not develop in this manner. This plan has plenty of caveats to that extent. The plan is subject to further study; the city’s priorities and private developer demands may change. This is our first take at making order of this because up until now, West Lafayette had been designed by planned development after planned development. We are trying to get ahead of that and lay out some ground rules, so developers have a better sense of what the city wants as this will ultimately be adopted by City Council. If that happens, we as staff will defend it when people come in for rezone petitions or planned development concepts, we will ask how this conforms to the plan.

Sallie Fahey said that Lafayette is more uniform in its grid, but the block sizes are roughly the same.

Ryan O’Gara said it is possible there could be an alley placed through some places that are over two acres. It is good to take advantage of that because alleys are great for moving vehicles and other activities. They function very well in Lafayette.

Sallie Fahey said one of the things to avoid in the downtown grid is having deliveries made by semis on the streets. It is a danger to bicyclists, pedestrians, and drivers. Using these alleys would be ideal to keep semis from blocking the street.

Ryan O’Gara said we always want to have public alleys to allow that public infrastructure is available to be utilized.

III.  CITIZENS COMMENTS

Zachary Biel, 124 Connolly Street, West Lafayette, IN 47906, said he appreciates everyone’s time and energy that was put into the plan as well as the presentation at the West Lafayette Library last Thursday. He said he had his own observations and concerns with the plan. First, there is a part of the plan that has a transition between historic buildings and new developments that require them to be staggered. However, there is not anything in the plan where the Downtown Core could be three to ten stories based on the suggested layout. The current staggering is not mandated in those areas. He said he does not know if that will be used as a strategy for developers; if it is built big initially, will every other building on that block remain that size or will there be an expectation that if someone builds smaller, they would need to stagger. He said
looking at the steering committee’s make up, there was not direct representation from residents in the area. He heard at the library meeting that there was a student included however, they were reduced to an observer role on the committee with no opportunity for input. There were no retail owners involved which is a huge component as there are several retail owners in the area. He said after being involved in the New Chauncey Neighborhood Plan, there was a plethora of goals, objectives, and strategies. However, there is no good tool to audit the success of that strategic plan component nor can we see what metrics those are being rated against, cost of implementation, or what is dependent on each other. He said he does not think the strategies are organized by any priority order. Some concern at the Thursday presentation was about the openness that currently exists in the Levee and how it will look in a tight grid system. Another concern was if the housing would be affordable. This is a strategy listed in the plan, but it does not say how it will be rated in terms of what is affordable housing in this area. He said we have seen the current rents at the new high-rises be generally out of the price range for a lot of graduate students or newer professionals.

He said several individuals brought up how the transportation plan was created from a driving viewpoint as opposed to a pedestrian and bicycle friendly transportation mentality. There were concerns about people still feeling unsafe even with the modifications while crossing River Road to the new downtown. There is also a large desire for expanded greenspace outside the corridor along the Wabash River. There are a few smaller parks however there was a request to have more greenspace opportunities. He said we are all very sad that the current Chauncey Hill Mall development is on hold as they were going to incorporate a large swath of meeting and common space in that plan. He asked how the greenspaces will be funded. He said he knew WREC was mentioned as a partner to work with the city and the county. However, all these ideas are great but there is not a lot of mention or encouragement of how to pursue funding. He said the most controversial point brought up at the Thursday meeting was the aesthetic of the new buildings. Some view them as less than desirable. He asked if these buildings will be used as the reference point for future buildings. He said he knew there was not an overlay plan as part of this, but that is usually a follow up through the APC once these plans get adopted. Some residents had some concerns if these new buildings would be used as a reference point of desirability in terms of architectural aesthetics. He thanked the Committee.

Don Teder, 2110 S 9th Street, Lafayette, IN, 47905, said he is the owner of two of the blocks where Tommy Johnston Neighborhood Park is located. The current land use plan reflects an expansion of the park into 3 adjoining lots. He said if you label the land a park and do nothing for many years, it is almost worse than if they imminently domain it now. He said the labeling process destroys the value as it is in an essence a down zone. These types of properties are bought for the land and not the depreciating building on the land. The downzone prevents the development that the land was intended for. He said if allowed to redevelop, he would be respectful of the current park. He thanked the Committee.

Jackson Bogan asked if there was another meeting scheduled for when the plan will continue.

Ryan O’Gara said it will make another appearance to the Ordinance Committee after the steering committee collects public comments and makes changes to the plan. It will then proceed to the full APC concluding at City Council.

Jackson Bogan asked if there is public comment at the steering committee meetings.

Ryan O’Gara said the steering committee meetings are solely for the steering committee; it is not meant as a forum.

Jackson Bogan asked if comments made here will be taken to the steering committee meeting.

Ryan O’Gara said the minutes from this meeting will go into the comment pile.

Jackson Bogan asked if the plan will be revamped then brought back to Ordinance Committee.

Ryan O’Gara said the steering committee approved draft will be brought back to this committee.
Sallie Fahey said it will most likely be the November or December Ordinance Committee meeting before we would have a plan for you to decide if you want to take it to the full APC or not.

Ryan O’Gara said they had anticipated that the plan go before City Council in December or January.

VI. ADJOURNMENT:

Jackson Bogan moved to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 5:18 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chyna R. Lynch
Recording Secretary

Reviewed By,

Sallie Fahey
Executive Director