

UMATILLA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting of Thursday, March 26, 2015
6:30 p.m., Stafford Hansell Government Center
Hermiston, Oregon

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COMMISSIONERS

PRESENT: Randy Randall, (Chair), Gary Rhinhart, (Vice Chair), Don Wysocki, David Lee, Don Marlatt, Suni Danforth, Cecil Thorne.

ABSENT: Tammie Williams.

STAFF: Tamra Mabbott, Carol Johnson, Shane Finck.

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CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm and Chair Randall read the opening statement.

New hearing: TYPE III LAND DIVISION REPLAT REQUEST, #LD-2N-191-15; Wells Surveying, Applicant, Mary A. Amundson, Property owner. Chair Randall asked if there was bias, ex-parte contact, abstentions, bias or conflict; there was none.

Staff Report: Carol Johnson, Senior Planner, summarized the application, the replat of a parcel of land located in Rieth. The Rieth area is zoned Unincorporated Community which allows for residential and some commercial uses. Mrs. Johnson pointed to a map of the Amundson properties, similar to the one in the commissioner’s packets. County standards for a Subdivision replat are found in the Umatilla County Development Code 152.697(c). These standards consist of compliance with the plat map requirements and zoning standards. The county sent the public notice for today’s hearing on March 5, 2015. One comment was received via email from Planner Evan MacKenzie from the City of Pendleton. His comment was regarding the vacation of the street that abuts the property. In summary, the landowner seeks to remove several parcel lands which would result in one larger parcel that would be better suited for a home site. The conditions of approval are listed in the Final Findings.

Applicant representative testimony: Jim Amundson, son of property owner, Mary Amundson, 55231 Bingham Road, Adams, Oregon. Mr. Amundson told the Commissioners that his mother has owned several properties for a number of years. She decided that she would like to have a new home so he has been working with Jason Wells of Wells Surveying to do this replat in order to make that happen for her. He also talked with the power company, the City of Pendleton for sewer, the Rieth water district, and would like to move forward to help build his mom a house.

Commissioner Wysocki asked when the lots were platted. Mr. Amundson replied 1916. Mrs. Johnson added that if they had been platted more recently the lots would have been much larger.

Chair Randall closed the hearing saying he would entertain a motion from commissioners.

Commissioner Danforth made a motion to approve the replat LD-2N-191-15, and adopt the findings and conditions in the staff report. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lee.

The motion passed unanimously.

Next agenda Item: Presentation on the North Highway 395 Economic Development Project.

Planning Director Tamra Mabbott gave a background description of the Hwy 395 study and explained that she and Commissioner Elfering had been working the consultant Eric Hovee since October of 2014. The goal of the project is to improve the aesthetics of the Hwy 395 corridor and possibly change the zoning in some areas making it more retail friendly.

Mrs. Mabbott stated that she worked with the economic development department at DLCD (Department of Land Conservation and Development). Together they prepared a grant proposal and received funding to hire Eric Hovee, an economist and business consultant. Mr. Hovee will show a power point presentation and give his report. She explained that they had four meetings with the Technical Advisory Committee which was comprised of eleven people who own land and businesses along the Hwy 395 corridor. An open house was held in February and Mrs. Mabbott reported that about 50 people from the general public attended that meeting.

Eric Hovee – See attached Power point

Objectives

1. To create a viable approach to the redevelopment of the Hwy 395 North corridor between the UGB's (Urban Growth Boundaries) of Hermiston and Umatilla.
2. To develop a template that will be applicable statewide for other highway corridors.
3. To make a plan grounded in sound analysis and identify resources that might be used with implementation of some of the project ideas in the future.

Baseline Information: Land. The study area has approximately 861 acres, with 267 tax parcels. There are 21 land owners which account for about 2/3 of the land area. The largest land owner is the BLM (Bureau of Land Management). Seven hundred and nine acres are zoned for industrial use and 152 acres are zoned for commercial use. A number of land owners have multiple properties. The assessed value is \$51.7 million. The vacant land is 37% of land area and only 8% of the real market value, as these parcels don't have improvements on them. The highly improved land has about 30% of the land area but account for about 63% of the areas valuation.

Baseline information: Roads. Once off of Hwy 395, most of the internal road network is gravel or dirt. There are some county roads but the majority are public and private roads. The committee focused a lot on infrastructure and getting the internal roads improved would improve the area for truck and auto traffic.

Baseline: Real Market Value. A comparison was done between the Hwy 395 North study area and the City of Hermiston. The city has about double the acreage of

commercial and industrial land. The commercial land values are about double in the city, a little closer by comparison for industrial lands.

Baseline: Jobs Benchmark. There are approximately 1200 employees in the study area. The largest category is a combination of agriculture and wholesale trade activities; the second largest is transportation and warehousing. Compared to the employment of the entire 97838 area, the study area includes about 9% of the total employment.

Mr. Hovee interviewed each of the stakeholders to ask about strengths and weaknesses, identify opportunities, what resources are needed and how they would measure success, etc. In terms of strengths, this is an area that is very good for retail growth, central for agriculture business and distribution, large low cost sites are available in the area and the taxes are lower because the parcels are outside the UGB. Water and septic systems are also available.

One weakness identified by the committee members was excessive speeds on Hwy 395, which is a real problem for trucks making turning movements. Also identified was a lack of municipal water for fire flow especially in newer developments which may be forced to put in very expensive holding tanks for firefighting. Of water related issues, fire flow is the key one. Another related issue to fire flow is the challenge to get insurance due to a lack of fire protection. A lack of sewer is a long term issue and usually requires businesses to be on larger parcels and install expensive septic systems. Zoning with limited flexibility is a problem committee is interested in looking into. Unkempt image is a concern of businesses within the corridor but as well as residents of the area. Another concern is the uncertain regulatory roles, e.g. whose responsibility it is to address the water issues.

The general consensus of the committee members is that there are great opportunities for new businesses, existing business expansion and added highway corridor retail/service with infrastructure. See slide on “opportunities.” Items related to infrastructure and design that are important to the committee members are street calming e.g. signalization and slowing down traffic, improved landscaping and lighting. One of the questions asked of the members was if promotional activities, e.g. corridor branding was important. There were mixed responses to that question but it may be considered in the future as the development of the corridor moves forward. A final opportunity is organizational capacity. The business owners need to advocate for themselves. It was done before when the area was identified by the Goal 14 exception area.

Tools, Comparables & Metrics:

People are concerned about who is on first in terms of developing the fire flow issues. There are questions about how to get ODOT (Oregon Department of Transportation)

more involved with improvements to the Hwy 395 corridor; from the way it looks to the way it functions. The question was asked, how to measure success: how can businesses be more competitive, can we attract other similar types of businesses and build on the strengths already in place and can we solve some of the infrastructure problems.

Best Practices: The state is interested in examples of what is taking place in Oregon and around the United States. A lot of communities in Oregon and nationally have focused on commercial district revitalization, there has not been a real focus on corridor revitalization; especially industrial corridors.

Some examples in Oregon: The Hood River waterfront district is combining commercial and industrial development. Portland's Airport Way is a greenfield development which connects I-84 to airport which serves transportation functions for trucking as well as commuter traffic. Long Beach California improved facades of buildings using grant funding for design systems.

The take away lesson is the importance of having a vision of what you want to accomplish and customize it to local area. It is important to have the cooperation of landowners and to leverage public and private funding to make it happen.

It is important for industrial areas to look nice but functionality is important as well. Trucks need room to make turning movements, etc. Incentives for development can be important to make sure the corridor is competitive with other areas.

Oregon has a long list of economic development tools which are used in different ways and can be adapted for corridors. Sandy, Oregon is another example of a city that improved the look of businesses along the Hwy 26 corridor using façades.

The Technical Advisory Committee came up with three redevelopment scenarios. See slide.

- A) Status quo
- B) County/Owner Partnership
- C) Urban Incorporation = eventual transition to UGB status.

The committee looked at the value of the redevelopment scenarios. The current valuation of the area is just over 50 million dollars. By choosing A) Status quo it could get to the 75 million dollar range; B) could get to the 120 million dollar range and C) could get it to the 250 million dollar range. These numbers were determined using rough figures to get an idea of what it would look like for land values and taxation.

They also looked at a range of Development Tool Box incentives including three types: place-based including zoning, etc., business-based such as state economic development programs and employee-based, to recruit trained employees.

The implementation agenda included short term, medium term and long term. Short term, (1-3 years) are shown on page 19. Planning projects would include refinement plan and Zoning Review, the latter would move away from the “Euclidian” type zoning where focus is less on the type of use and more on the outcome. An example is performance based zoning where the street orientation is toward the highway.

The cities of Wilsonville, Lebanon and Pendleton recently adopted a performance based zone and Mr. Hovee suggested the Hwy 395 north area might be a good place to consider some performance based zoning also.

The final item for the short term objective is to establish a North Business Association which could be done in conjunction with an existing organization such as the Chamber of Commerce.

Mid Term projects could occur in the next 3-10 years. List is on page 20.

Long term projects are 10-20 years out: To complete the internal street network (this could be completed earlier with LID’s etc.). Another is the UGB expansion and annexation and an Organizational Review.

Mr. Hovee invited comments and questions.

Commissioner Rhinhart commented that the Hwy 11 corridor in Milton Freewater was similar and asked if this plan is something that could be implemented there also. Mr. Hovee replied that there is some applicability. He noted that the Hwy 11 corridor is more commercial and has some interplay with agriculture so the plan would need to be customized to fit there.

Mrs. Mabbott explained that there is a limitation to applying the plan to the Milton Freewater area because there is a density limit. Hwy 11 is a rural and freight corridor and there are far fewer parcels than along the Hwy 395 corridor. She added that there were some active groups in the Milton Freewater area who working on a community visioning project and looking at design in order to revitalize the downtown area to bring out the best in Milton Freewater. Mrs. Mabbott commented that the “Tool Box” delivered by Mr. Hovee’s firm is posted on the county website and will be used by DLCD to help improve other corridors in the state that are similar to Hwy 395.

Commissioner Danforth agreed that the Hwy 395 corridor in that area needs to have some issues addressed and the Tool Box includes some good ideas for making that happen.

Mr. Hovee commented that there were a variety of interests on the committee but there was an amazing amount of consistent purpose to try to improve how the corridor functions and how it appears.

Commissioner Lee said one issue in Milton Freewater area is the overflow from flood waters which are not routed through the sewer system. In the past the water was directed to the irrigation ditches but new regulations do not allow that. The city of Milton Freewater does not have the capacity to deal with a lot of storm water and they need to look at a holding pond to contain that water. Mr. Hovee asked if that would be a separate storm water collection system and Commissioner Lee answered that was correct.

Mrs. Mabbott described how the Planning Commission might be involved with zoning and transportation issues once the land owners decided what their objectives were for the corridor. She added that she had applied for a grant through the state's Transportation Growth Management (TGM) program for a refinement plan. The transportation system plan needs to have some updates which could include a refinement plan.

Mrs. Mabbott suggested that members of the Planning Commission, particularly those who own property in the west part of the county, may want to be a part of the North Hwy 395 Business Association when it is formed. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Danforth asked about a map that was referred to earlier in the presentation which showed the streets. There was discussion about which roads were public or private, etc. and whether or not they were paved. There was also discussion about traffic speeds along those streets.

Other business: Mrs. Mabbott announced that tonight was Shane Finck's last meeting because he would be leaving the planning department. Mr. Finck explained that he was offered employment at Hanford that would be financially advantageous for him and his family so he accepted the position. The Commissioners commented that they were sorry to see him go and he would be missed.

Other business: Mrs. Mabbott commented that she mailed the comment letter that the Board of Commissioners wrote regarding the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line. Commissioner Murdock quotes previous Planning Commission recommendations for following the existing transportation corridor.

Other business: Mrs. Mabbott informed the Commissioners about the LUBA (Land Use Board of Appeals) concurring with the county that the East End Rod and Gun Club was a gun club that had been in existence since September of 1993. They also agreed that an expansion would not be allowed under our current ordinance. The Board of Commissioners then directed the planning office to move forward with legislative changes that would adopt the specific siting criteria. This matter will be before the Planning Commission as early as next month. She added that also before them would also be the matter of adopting standards for the medical marijuana issue in the county. Discussion followed.

Chair Randall adjourned the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Hendrickson

Administrative Assistant

(Adopted by the Planning Commission on April 23, 2015)

