

Meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission for Thursday, August 26, 2010.

The meeting was called to order by Vice-chairman Patt Olsen at 7:30 p.m. Present were Don Bormann, Jessica Orsini, Mark Mustain, Dale Hughes, Randy Adams, and LeeAllen Smith. Also attending were Lynn Behrns, City Attorney Merritt Beck, Stan Shawver, Rev. Sandra Schaller, Charles Popeck, Rev. Joe Jimerson, Sam Jennings, and James Smith.

Smith moved approval of the minutes of April 1, 2010. Orsini seconded the motion. The question was called. All members present voted "aye" except Olsen, who abstained. There were no "nay" votes, and the motion carried.

Rev. Schaller elaborated on a letter sent by her on behalf of the Centralia United Methodist Church, where she is the pastor. The letter had been included in the agenda packet. It requested that the City amend the Zoning Code to allow a new category of directional signs permitted as conditional uses in residential zone districts. These would be off-site signs which indicated directions to non-profit private institutions which also provided public governmental-like services. Schaller said that the United Methodist Church had become the primary (and some times only) election polling place in Centralia. At this time, its staff also is the principal contact for persons seeking help from the City's energy assistance program or the Ministerial Alliance. Since the United Methodist Church is not located near a major street, it can be somewhat difficult to locate. Church members have consulted with Darrel "Dean" and Helen Munger, the owners of the property at 715 S. Jefferson St. just opposite of the intersection of Tarr St. and Jefferson. They are willing to grant a private easement for a small directional sign. If the zoning code is amended, the Church would quickly apply for a specific conditional use permit. Rev. Schaller displayed a mockup of a possible sign design. Rev. Jimerson, pastor of First Christian Church, spoke in support of the change. The First Christian Church also is a polling place and helps with the City energy assistance program. Hughes asked how high the sign might be and whether it could be an obstruction for drivers entering Jefferson from Cox St. Staff noted that such specific concerns could be made conditions within an individual permit. Behrns told the commissioners that this part of Jefferson Street is solely a city street and was no longer under MoDOT's jurisdiction, so MoDOT did not need to be involved in this in any way. Behrns suggested that directional signs of this sort might need to be taken down if the "public service" was no longer provided—such as if the polling place were to be moved. After discussion, Adams moved that staff be asked to prepare a draft ordinance to make the suggested amendment and schedule the necessary public hearings before a future meeting of the Commission and of the Board of Aldermen. Orsini seconded the motion. The question was called. All members present voted "aye". There were no abstentions or "nay" votes and the motion was passed.

Stan Shawver, the Director of the Boone County Planning and Building Inspection Department, made a verbal presentation to the Commission after he had been invited to speak to the Commission about the process of considering land use issues—which frequently come before the Boone County Planning and Zoning Commission. The County Commission regularly hears large numbers of subdivision and rezoning requests. Many of the Centralia commissioners were new and had no previous exposure to these issues. Shawver has forty-plus years of experience. He noted that a P & Z hearing is frequently a citizen's first contact with government other than paying taxes.

Shawver told the City Commission that land use matters could become volatile and emotional. They often cause divisions between neighborhoods and even families. The County uses review procedures

and the conduct of public meetings in a manner intended to limit the opportunity for confrontation. Depending on the agenda of each County P & Z meeting, Shawver prepares a document to be read by the Commission Chairman. It describes the procedure for each type of zoning or subdivision request to be considered. It also sets out standards for decorum and how information should be presented to the Commission.

Shaver noted that, as the County has developed and experience has been gained regarding the impact of past development decisions, it has come to be stricter in its requirements for the provision by a developer of the infrastructure needed to serve any proposed development. This, of course, becomes more expensive the farther the development is from existing municipal services. The County tries to head off wasted design efforts and expenses by having informal "concept reviews" with developers and governmental and utility service providers at the very beginning of the process. Most often, the County will require a formal traffic study from a specialized engineer. This is now done by consultants for the County, but paid for by the developer. This often leads to requirements for off-site road improvements, again at the developer's expense. Shawver was clear about the need for specific procedures and standards for subdivisions. If a developer is able to meeting the regulations, the Commission has no choice but to approve the proposal. The County is strict about advanced guarantees for infrastructure improvements, but most developments now proceed in smaller phases and the improvements are constructed in advance of final platting.

Shawver answered questions from City Commissioners and staff. He noted that County policies for roads and water supply to fire hydrants do tend to restrict opportunity for "sprawl". He said that the County requires all urban-density roads to be paved, even perimeter roads. He told Behrns that the County has completed adoption of a Building-residence Addressing and Numbering Plan for the county. It is available on the County's web site. Behrns said that he intends to recommend Centralia adopt all of it except for the County's addressing grid. Columbia will be doing the same, once it can find a way to regularize their address grid with the County's. The plan has the support of Joint Dispatch and most emergency services.

Shawver concluded that land use planning was not a matter of popularity contests. Commissions must rely on their staffs and legal advisors and not be fearful of citizens who threaten law suits or who characterize commission decisions as anti-development.

Behrns reported that he had received a request for voluntary annexation and zoning of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church property on Gano Chance Drive. This will go before the Board of Aldermen at their September meeting. It will require a recommendation from P & Z on the annexation and an advertised public hearing for setting permanent zoning. The Church has indicated it will then be requesting a conditional use permit for a new church sign on its own property that is not of standard size or proximity to the front property line.

In order to address the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church annexation and the ordinance amendment suggested by the Centralia United Methodist Church, the commissioners agreed that its next meeting will be on Thursday, September 9, 2010.

Orsini moved that the meeting adjourn. Adams seconded the motion. The question was called. Voting aye: all members present. Voting nay: no member. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at about 8:40 p.m.

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