

**Minutes
Cheney Planning Commission
Regular Meeting**

January 8, 2017

Commissioners Attending: Vincent Barthels , Dan Turbeville, Vara Lyn Conrath, Rick Mount, Daniel Hillman, Brian Mangis and Kristine Williams.

Commissioners Absent: None.

Staff Attending: Brett Lucas, Todd Ableman and Susan Beeman.

Councilmembers Attending: None.

Call to Order: Chairman Barthels called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Minutes: Minutes of the November 13, 2017 regular meeting were approved as distributed.

Citizen Participation: None.

Information Item: #2018-01
Economic Development Update

Mr. Lucas gave a presentation on regional community indicators and an economic snapshot of the Spokane region. This included an overview historic population growth in Spokane County and Cheney, labor & income statistics, employment by industry, and maps showing employment production nodes. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Mount asked if we know the percentage of households in Cheney that are owner-occupied. Mr. Lucas said that data is not readily available, but he will check. Commissioner Hillman asked if there is a cultural component to the siting of food service establishments. For example, in the South, there are numerous chicken restaurants, but around here, pizza and hamburger restaurants are far more numerous. Discussion continued on what criteria may be considered when chains are deciding where to locate.

Discussion Item: #2018-02
2018 Work Plan Priorities

Mr. Lucas identified two items that we must address during 2018 that are required by the Growth Management Act: the 2018-2019 Capital Facilities Plan update, and an update of our critical areas ordinance. He suggested several other items for consideration, and asked what items the Commission would like to see addressed during the year. His suggestions included:

- Residential densities, especially in the R-3 and R-3H zones;
- Whether multi-family residential should be allowed in the commercial zone;
- Economic development.

Commissioner Mount said that it is critical to look at single family neighborhoods. There are many people who choose to live here but work in Spokane. We don't have much variety of single family housing available. The new homes in Harvest Bluff sell as quickly as they are built. There are many housing choices on the West Plains, but not much choice in Cheney.

Mr. Ableman noted that we have the next phase of Harvest Bluff just about ready to final plat, and the Golden Hills Phase 5 & 6 subdivisions have been dormant for a number of years, but we're finally seeing some movement on that project. The View Acres development at the south end of town is also expected to start construction this year.

Commissioner Hillman said this may be more a topic for City Council consideration, but quality of life issues are huge. He is acquainted with several people who live in Spokane but work in Cheney, and the common thread in their stories seems to be a bad experience living in Cheney, whether it was overcrowded parking or someone throwing up on their front lawn. You can have available houses, but if we don't address quality of life issues, then price points will not hold and the houses are going to become rentals.

Chairman Barthels commented that he always appreciates when STA comes and gives a briefing to the Planning Commission about their priorities and projects. He wonders if there is a way we could connect with EWU to have a similar kind of information sharing throughout the year about their plans for growth and development on the Cheney campus.

Commissioner Mount commented that the University has a big campaign in the works by the EWU Foundation. He agrees that it would be a good platform for information exchange with the City. The way we build community is for everybody to work together toward the same thing, not just everybody sitting on their own little islands in isolation. The University is focused on providing housing for students, and we are concerned about providing housing for families. If there is a way to work better together, he thinks that would be a great idea.

Discussion continued. Commissioner Mount commented that the economic growth in Airway Heights seems to be driven largely by traffic going to and from Fairchild. Commissioner Hillman added that the casinos are a huge draw; when he returned to this area, one of the most surprising things was the impact of the casino on the West Plains.

Mr. Lucas agreed, and suggested that the casinos are probably more of an attraction to visitors than the university. EWU football is a seasonal draw, and the casinos are 24 hours a day, year round.

Discussion continued. Mr. Lucas discussed factors that impact commercial development, and added that Maverik is a good example of a gas station with very minimal margins on the gas prices that has built a clean, trendy convenience store, and they have cornered the

market for gas stations in Cheney. In fact, they have recently applied for permits to expand the pump canopy to add additional gas pumps.

Commissioner Turbeville suggested that there are a lot of gas stations and convenience stores that have a fast food establishment built into them, such as a KFC. He wondered if anyone has considered that format for Cheney. If someone went in with Maverik, we could expand food service options in Cheney without too much grief and expense.

Chairman Barthels mentioned vacant commercial buildings in the downtown, and asked if there are any incentives the City could offer that would help attract businesses into some of those vacant buildings. Mr. Lucas said there may be incentives available, and he will look into what might be possible. He added that there are many factors that are outside the City's control, such as the rent increase that drove New Boundary Brewing out of business. Property owners can set whatever pricing they want, and we don't have any influence over that.

Commissioner Barthels asked if waiving permit fees if a project met certain criteria might be an option. Mr. Lucas said that the State of Washington defines what local governments are allowed to do in terms of incentives, and that is mostly limited to infrastructure development. There are some tax deferrals available for development of historic properties, and we saw the Fisher Building, now known as School House Lofts, qualify for two different historic tax incentive programs. One was a state-level property tax deferral, and the other was a federal-level income tax incentive program.

Mr. Ableman cited the example of the Cheney Industrial Park, where we had 20-some acres of developable land, and we used a \$1.8 million grant to put in streets and infrastructure. That is money that a developer does not have to spend in order to build in that area.

Commissioner Mount said that the state can give incentives to businesses; why can't the City?

Commissioner Turbeville noted that the reason 787s are being manufactured in Charleston rather than in Everett is that the State of Washington does not give tax incentives anything like Alabama or South Carolina do, or other states that have aggressively pursued economic development. The problem is in Olympia. It's not in Cheney.

Mr. Lucas added that the current search for a second Amazon headquarters is a case in point. It is not going to be in Washington State.

Commissioner Williams asked if Cheney owns any surplus property. Mr. Ableman said that we own approximately 18 acres at the Industrial Park.

Commissioner Turbeville said that about a year ago, he suggested that we need an economic development position to be out there making the connections to bring business

to Cheney. Mayor Trulove was not in favor of that idea, but Commissioner Turbeville still feels that is crucial.

Chairman Barthels asked about the comprehensive plan matrix that showed various development sub-plans; are any of these coming up on the radar this year? Mr. Lucas said that the Capital Facilities Plan is due for an update, and the critical areas ordinance is due for consideration this year. We also have a Water System Plan under development right now, and it will come before the Planning Commission sometime this year.

Commissioner Reports:

Commissioner Turbeville mentioned that the road trips he takes have given him a lot of perspective. He owns a 2013 model car that has been to all 50 states. He described a recent trip on US Highway 52 from Charleston to Portal, ND. He commented that there is a different America once you get off the interstate highway system. Discussion continued.

Commissioner Turbeville suggested that the issues we deal with here are more similar to the issues in Reardan and Wilbur than to Spokane Valley or Liberty Lake. He suggested we look at how some other comparable rural communities in other parts of the country are approaching economic development.

Mr. Lucas noted that Washington State no longer has a tourism bureau; he believes there is quite a lot that could be done to develop tourism in this area.

Staff Reports:

Mr. Ableman reported that we are in a time of transition with our new mayor, just beginning to learn his priorities.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved By:

Susan Beeman, Secretary

Vincent Barthels, Chairman