

**Minutes
Cheney Planning Commission
Regular Meeting**

September 10, 2018

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

Commissioners Absent: Brian Mangis.

Staff Attending: Brett Lucas, Todd Ableman, Mark Schuller 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 June 11, 2018 regular meeting were approved as distributed.

Citizen Participation: None.

Discussion Item: #2018-17
Possible Amendments to Landscaping Ordinance

Mr. Lucas explained that the proposed changes are an attempt to encourage people to install drought-tolerant landscaping. The amendment incorporates suggestions from the WSU Extension Service on things like grass types and native plantings. He asked Commission members to review the draft changes and provide comments back to staff over the next couple of weeks. Mr. Ableman noted that the city does not require lawn plantings for new construction, and this is an attempt to make that fact more known.

Discussion followed. Commissioner Mount said that when he sees something that is advisory in nature, his tendency is to ignore it. If we are going to the effort of amending the code, is this going to be effective in any practical sense?

Mr. Ableman said that the Public Works & Utilities Committee is taking the lead in developing solutions to the water problem. This is really going to impact commercial properties more than residential properties.

Commissioner Williams said that section A and A-1 are somewhat confusing; it is not clear whether this applies to existing yards and landscaping, or just to new construction.

Mr. Lucas explained that this is intended to apply to new landscaping installed from this point forward. We do not want to be in the business of telling people they have to change their existing landscape plantings.

Commissioner Turbeville suggested circulating a list of which trees and shrubs require the least water, perhaps in the newsletter that is mailed out with utility bills. He felt this would be helpful to many residents.

Discussion continued. Commissioner Hillman stated that he is one of the people who would hate to be told what kind of plants he could have in his landscape; he thinks suggestions and encouragement would serve better than a regulatory approach.

Mr. Schuller explained that the City has gone out for a Request for Qualifications for services to develop a water program, which would advise the City on water production, education, and conservation measures.

Mr. Ableman added that this will be widely circulated for public comment, including a public hearing at a future time. The intent of this evening's discussion was to elicit comments from Commission members, and invite early conversation on the topic.

Commissioner Williams asked about the condition of irrigation systems in City-owned parks. Are they losing any water? Mr. Ableman said that the parks irrigation systems have not been upgraded since their initial installation. The older parks have the oldest irrigation systems. He added that the Parks Department is going to be looking at green spaces, considering whether the extent of lawn that we currently have could be amended in ways that would conserve irrigation water.

Public Hearing: #2018-16

LUA2018-012 Application to Amend the Zoning Map: Alki & Terra Vista Area

Chairman Barthels explained that he has an ongoing contract with the applicant for this land use action, and therefore recused himself from this hearing. He added that Vice-Chairman Mount would chair the remainder of the meeting.

NOTE: Chairman Barthels left the meeting at this time; a quorum of Planning Commission members remained.

Vice-Chairman Mount reviewed the Rules of Procedure for Public Hearings, and noted that no written objections have been filed pursuant to the Appearance of Fairness Act.

Chairman Mount opened the public hearing at 6:22 p.m. Mr. Lucas gave an overview of the zone change process. He noted that if approved, the zone change must be based on a defined set of criteria identified in the zoning code. Mr. Lucas reviewed the objectives for the meeting, and noted that public notice requirements have been met.

Mr. Lucas summarized the proposal to 'swap' the zoning on approximately 2.8 acres of the larger 12.1 acre site as part of the proposed 224 unit apartment complex. The result of the rezone would be a zero net gain – it would not increase the amount of R-3H, High Density Multi-Family land, or reduce the amount of R-3, Multi-Family land, but would merely rearrange the configuration of the zoning to better fit the proposed project.

Mr. Lucas displayed an aerial photo of the affected area, and photographs of the subject property.

Mr. Lucas reviewed Comprehensive Plan goals and policies which apply to this proposal. He stated that the project meets the overall intent of the Comprehensive Plan. This infill development would increase available housing within the existing city limits, minimizing the need to expand the Urban Growth Area (UGA). It would also provide more housing close to the downtown, which could benefit the businesses there.

Mr. Lucas reviewed the zoning history on this land, explaining that it was annexed into the city in 2004 with an R-3, Multi-Family zoning designation. The eastern portion of it was rezoned to R-3H, High Density Multi-Family in 2010 when The Grove was put in. He then showed a map of the existing zoning in this area, and a map of the proposed amended zoning.

Mr. Lucas reviewed the history of service requests made to both the Fire Department and Police Department from 2013 to 2017 from addresses located south of the BNSF and Union Pacific railroad tracks, and showed maps illustrating the call density. During that 5-year span, a total of 175 fire-related calls and 1,232 police-related calls were made. He noted that many of those incidents relate to criminal and nuisance behavior. He recommended that if approved, the applicant should be required to develop a plan to include the placement of cameras and monitoring equipment in common areas such as parking lots, open areas, and other potential problem areas, with accompanying signage indicating that such areas are under video surveillance 24/7.

Mr. Lucas addressed concurrency, and said that a Trip Generation/Distribution Study was provided by the applicant. Of the 1,450 daily trips expected to be generated by this project, the forecast is for 60% of those trips to impact Cheney-Spangle Road, and 40% to impact Cheney-Plaza Road. He added that one comment letter has been received, and the writer was disappointed that the City is considering permitting additional apartments to be built while lawn irrigation restrictions were in place again over the summer.

Mr. Lucas reviewed criteria for allowing a zoning map changed, and noted that the existing zoning would allow for development of the proposed apartment project. The purpose of the rezone is to allow reconfiguration of the development to improve the site layout. He added that adopting the recommended conditions of approval should address the public safety concern. Mr. Lucas concluded that staff is neutral on this application, and is not recommending either approval or denial of the application.

Chairman Mount asked about the response time for police and medical services in this part of town, and asked if the City would have any liability if we don't get someplace in time because there is a train lined up and blocking the crossings. Mr. Lucas answered that there are response time goals in the Comprehensive Plan, but he is uncertain about liability, and would refer that question to the city attorney.

Mr. Lucas introduced Todd Whipple, Whipple Consulting Engineers, representing the owner. Mr. Whipple explained that they want to be able to move the zoning line to allow

them to put a 4-story building along Alki, instead of having the taller building located near the wetlands. He emphasized that the development would be permitted today with the existing zoning, but they are requesting the change in order to improve the project.

Mr. Whipple said that they will be preparing a full traffic study when they apply for building permits. The City's review of the Trip Generation Distribution Letter indicated they had used the wrong edition of the Trip Generation Manual, which undercounted the estimated trips; they will correct that by the time they prepare the full traffic study. He said that one of the things they need to talk to the Fire Department about is whether there is a need for a substation on the south side of the tracks. If you look at the Comp Plan maps, there is a lot of R-3 zoning. That could hold another 1300 or 1400 units, which could translate to another 3,000 people. It could make sense to locate some kind of small commercial center in this area, as well; that is something they have talked about internally. They may bring a Comp Plan amendment in some future annual amendment cycle with a convenience store or other small commercial site in mind.

Mr. Whipple added that he sees development of additional apartments taking some of the pressure off the townhouse and duplex rentals, and the apartment parking areas helping to alleviate pressure along Blackhawk Lane. With Cheney's college student make-up, he believes it is inevitable that every person will have a car. But perhaps the developer could work with the City to provide some kind of commute-trip reduction incentives to residents in the future. Mr. Whipple said that he sees the largest traffic challenge being when there are long lines of cars waiting to make a left turn into the apartment complex. He suggested that some kind of flashing light or other form of advance signage could help alleviate problems.

Commissioner Williams asked if they have talked with Spokane Transit Authority to request they extend their inter-city loop through the developments south of the railroad. Mr. Whipple said they talked to STA a long time ago, and at that time, they did not have enough riders on that side of the tracks to warrant a route change. That may be different now, and the new transit center at Westbow is going to impact traffic and ridership patterns, as well. Perhaps even a transit van to shuttle students to and from Washington Street would reduce daily commute trips.

Chairman Mount asked if investigating these options is something the developer is willing to do. Mr. Whipple indicated that they haven't done a traffic study out here in quite a long time, and you can never be sure where the point is where some threshold is reached. There may be some other innovative things they could do. He thought that improving the pedestrian trail up to the tracks would be a reasonable action for the developer to take. Addressing emergency service response time impacts is harder, but it could be part of a holistic approach to traffic in this neighborhood.

Discussion continued. Commissioner Conrath said that she is interested in the expansion of STA service, since they have recently extended their routes in Cheney to the south and west.

Commissioner Hillman noted the camera and security measures recommended as conditions of approval. He asked if Mr. Emtman would like to address on-site supervision. Mr. Emtman said that his new management company would address that question.

Chairman Mount called for public comment. Hearing no response, he called for deliberations from the Commission members.

Commissioner Turbeville said that there are three main issues that need much further attention. First is the water issue: how much water do 500 more people living south of the railroad tracks need? How much extra water did we have this summer?

Commissioner Turbeville said that his second concern is access. He feels this land should never have been zoned residential. You've got one of the busiest railroad corridors in North America right next to drunk college students. There's no way the students can get to town or get to class without crossing the railroad tracks. There are two hot spots for fire and police activity, and here we are going to make them bigger.

Commissioner Turbeville said that his third concern is that 500 more people are only going to generate 99 more vehicle trips per day. What are the rest of those people going to do, stay in bed all day? He added that this is such a huge concern for him because 50 years ago this week, his 20-year old sister was killed in a grade crossing accident near her college campus. He feels that when the inevitable happens, it's going to be really ugly for the City of Cheney, and for the planners who allowed this development.

Chairman Mount asked staff to clarify whether this development is permitted, regardless of the zone change being approved. Mr. Ableman said that is correct; the current zoning allows this development, just in a slightly different configuration than the developer's preferred layout.

Chairman Mount said that it seems to make sense to allow the zone swap, but he hopes the City understands the frustration of the Planning Commission members in having problems that are a result of decisions made years before any of the current members of this board were in place.

Commissioner Hillman made a motion to recommend approval of the rezone as outlined. Seconded by Commissioner Turbeville; the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Lucas offered a clarification that the recommended conditions of approval include language that would be rolled into a development agreement prior to the issue being considered by City Council.

Commissioner Reports:

Chairman Mount shared about his conversations with several residents who have been frustrated with the lawn watering restrictions. Commissioner Hillman added that he hears a lot from people about the water situation, too.

Commissioner Turbeville reported that he spent several days recently at Iowa State University with the head of the Iowa Main Street Program. He suggested that she would be willing to visit and perhaps have a conversation, or participate in a workshop on how to get the most out of the Main Street program. He estimated that all it would cost would be the price of a plane ticket. Mr. Ableman suggested that we follow up with the Cheney Merchants Association, as they are exploring the Main Street program as an economic development tool.

Staff Reports:

Mr. Lucas reported that Harvest Bluff Phase 5 is moving toward final plat. Golden Hills Phase 5 is also progressing. Mr. Ableman added that View Acres will be finishing up soon, but probably won't start to build until next year. Concrete contractors seem to be booked up through Christmas. Parkside Commons is getting started, and there is possibly another apartment complex going in adjacent to Salnave Glen. Commissioner Williams asked how many lots are represented by these subdivisions. Mr. Lucas said these will provide approximately 120 to 130 single family lots.

Commissioner Turbeville asked if there is any way to see Cheney benefit from construction of the Amazon warehouse on the West Plains. Mr. Lucas discussed the economic impact of that fulfillment center, and suggested that the hourly wage there is probably not going to support ownership of homes in the \$225,000 - \$250,000 range.

Mr. Ableman said that snow plowing will be on the next City Council agenda. A drill rig is on site at Well #3, filling in the existing Well #3. The new well is expected to be online in time for the next irrigation season. Mr. Ableman explained that we have 5400 gallons of water rights, and we are pumping approximately half of that. We struggle with the amount of green space in the city, and the cost to provide irrigation capacity for just 2-3 months of the year.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved By:

Susan Beeman, Secretary

Vincent Barthels, Chairman