

Minutes
Cheney Planning Commission
Regular Meeting

October 8, 2018

Commissioners Attending: Vincent Barthels, Dan Turbeville, Vara Lyn Conrath and Rick Mount .

Commissioners Absent: Brian Mangis, Kristine Williams and Daniel Hillman.

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 September 10, 2018 regular meeting were approved as distributed.

Citizen Participation: None.

Information Item: #2018-18
Palouse Prairie Restoration Project

Mr. Lucas introduced Erik Budsberg, Sustainability Coordinator at Eastern Washington University, and Karen Wichman, EWU Facilities Coordinator. Mr. Budsberg explained that EWU owns about 12 acres adjacent to campus, mainly farmland that has been in wheat for many years. The University has determined that it is cost-prohibitive to develop anything major in that area and they have been looking at it with the idea of adding something of value to the students, creating research and educational opportunities. The goal is to develop a giant living, learning laboratory for campus, restoring that acreage to 'original' Palouse Prairie ecosystem. This could include research opportunities for students, outdoor classrooms, and recreational trails. They envision having no motorized uses, but having a cross-country trail for NCAA level track meets. This could be an area for cross country skiing in the winter. He added that they are still looking for input from the campus & Cheney communities.

Mr. Budsberg explained that as they identify potential problems, they will be developing plans to mitigate concerns. They hope to begin with a 5 to 10 acre demonstration plot next fall and expand the pilot site to encompass the remainder of the University-owned land. The University has just received an EPA grant to work with middle schools and Parks & Recreation, to explain why conservation is important. He displayed a conceptual layout of the area, and emphasized that this is only a concept drawing at this point.

Discussion followed. Mr. Budsberg explained that they are hoping to meet some ADA accessibility requirements for portions of the trail. The trail surface is likely to be dirt or wood chips, but not asphalt.

Commissioner Mount asked about the buffer area shown on the drawing. Mr. Budsberg explained that the buffer area would be treated with herbicide to prevent the spread of noxious weeds from neighboring properties onto the prairie, and from the prairie onto neighboring properties.

Commissioner Turbeville asked if there will be a fence along the border. He noted that we have prevailing winds out of the southwest, and we have altered the biome to the west for the last hundred years. Whatever grows to the west is going to blow in every spring.

Commissioner Conrath asked about the access shown near Presley. Mr. Budsberg explained that is where farm equipment is brought onto the property now. Since Presley is a city street, they would let the City determine how to handle parking in the area. The University does not plan to add parking in this area or to advertise it as a main access point, but he expects there might be an access point for residents of nearby neighborhoods who are within walking distance. Visitors to the Palouse Prairie Restoration Area will be directed to access points associated with the free parking areas on campus, such as Lot P-12 or P-18.

Chairman Barthels asked about the vision for the areas shown as forest on the concept map. Mr. Budsberg explained that they would expect some trees to begin to appear, whether through wind-borne seeds or critters bringing in seeds. He added that there is a small area on campus where a biology faculty member established a small plot 'restoration project' a number of years ago, very close to the EWU sign off Washington ST. The natural diversity of plant materials that have developed is pretty amazing.

Mr. Budsberg invited comments and said that further details on the project are available on their website at <https://sites.ewu.edu/palouserestoration/> .

Public Meeting: #2018-19
2018-2018 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program

Mr. Lucas described the City's participation in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which has resulted in approximately \$1.8 million in infrastructure improvements in the city since 1989. On average, Cheney has received between \$95,000 and \$100,000 each year.

Mr. Lucas explained how the CDBG consortium membership is set up, and the timeline for grant proposals for 2018-2019. He also reviewed types of activities and projects eligible for funding, and those ineligible for funding.

In 2017, the CDBG program received \$1,350,000, and a similar amount is expected to be available in 2018. He added that the level of funding is never certain until Spokane County receives a contract from HUD, which is expected to be summer of 2019.

Mr. Lucas reviewed a list of projects previously funded with CDBG funds, and explained that Cheney has typically used CDBG grant funds to rehab water wells and reservoirs, and to replace deteriorated water mains.

He reviewed priority needs, which include youth centers, street improvements, facilities for abused and neglected children, water & sewer infrastructure improvements, and removal of architectural barriers. Other priority needs include emergency services, youth services, health services, senior services, battered & abused spouse services, disability services, homeless services, and fair housing activities.

Mr. Lucas added that Cheney's list of projects will be presented at the October 23 City Council meeting.

Mr. Ableman explained that we have a dedicated fund for residential street repairs, and we typically use that money to match the CDBG grant for water main replacement. This year, CDBG funds were used to replace old steel water mains in the N 3rd and Oakland area. Next year, we will probably look at water main replacement between Elm & Ash, along N 3rd.

Commissioner Reports:

None.

Staff Reports:

Mr. Lucas summarized progress at Harvest Bluff, and indicated we should be seeing the final plat very soon. Golden Hills Phase 5 & 6 is not quite that far along. The View Acres 5th Addition plat will probably be finalized next year.

Mr. Ableman reported that JC Steel Targets is starting to move dirt at the top of the Industrial Park for construction of a manufacturing facility. The L Street apartments are under way, and another apartment complex next to Salnave Glen is almost ready to get started.

City staff are currently blowing out irrigation systems and getting ready for snow. We have a Request for Qualifications out for a firm to do a water study.

Commissioner Turbeville asked how much longer Erie Street will be closed. Mr. Ableman said that it should be closed through the end of 2018, not for construction of Parkside Commons, but for re-drilling the city well. The well shaft is currently at 116', and will start to go down to the next level of 750' tomorrow.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:39 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved By:

Susan Beeman, Secretary

Vincent Barthels, Chairman