

**THE MEETING OF THE PRINCETON PLANNING COMMISSION BOARD HELD ON NOVEMBER 17, 2014, AT 7:00 P.M., AT THE CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

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The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M., by Jack Edmonds. Members present were Jeff Reynolds, Eldon Johnson, Mitzi Mellott, Chad Heitschmidt, and Jim Kusler (Princeton Twsp. Rep). Staff present were Jolene Foss (Comm. Dev. Director) and Mary Lou DeWitt (Comm. Dev. Assistant).

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING ON OCTOBER 20, 2014**

JOHNSON MOVED, SECOND BY HEITSCHMIDT, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 20, 2014. UPON THE VOTE, THERE WERE 5 AYES, 0 NAYS. MOTION CARRIED.

**AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS:**

DeWitt said under Verbal Reports she will inform the Planning Commission Board of a possible Interim Use Permit that maybe on the December 15, 2014 meeting.

JOHNSON MOVED, SECOND BY REYNOLDS, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA. UPON THE VOTE, THERE WERE 5 AYES, 0 NAYS. MOTION CARRIED.

**PUBLIC HEARING:** None

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. MN Design Team Findings Presentation**

The PACC Downtown Committee asked to be on the Planning Commission agenda to discuss the outcome of the MN Design Teams visit. The memo below is what they presented to the City Council at their November 13, 2014 meeting and also wanted the Planning Commission to have the memo.

*To: City Council*

*From: PACC Downtown Committee Members*

*Subject: PACC Downtown Committee requests and priority of the MN Design Team designs pertaining to Downtown and delegation of other aspects of designs to be supported by a joint effort between the Princeton Visionary Committee, Beautification Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Park Board, Planning Commission, and EDA.*

*Date: Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014*

- 1. Requesting City Councils support of Mille Lacs County pursuing “Bumpouts” at the corners along Rum River Drive and along First Street.**
  - Bruce Cochran-Mille Lacs County Engineer has made the initial application for Federal funding. Richard Baker-Mille Lacs County Economic Developer and Genny Reynolds County Commissioner are campaigning at the county level.
  - County has been given records from 96 accidents that have occurred on Rum River Dr. in the last 10 years both auto and pedestrian, three hospitalizations and one death.
  - Police Chief Todd Fredericks can speak to the number of “near Misses” that go un-recordable due to lack of pedestrians able to get license plates.
  - There are other avenues for funding and we request that the city work with the county to help ensure this safety and beautification of our downtown corridor. (See attached notes from Dan Anderson).
  
- 2. Requesting instillation of “In-street Crossing Signs” on Rum River Drive starting at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street North (Hy Tech/Riverside Park entrance) and ending at 6<sup>th</sup> Street South. We are asking for two at each intersection: North and South crosswalks-crossing over Rum River Dr. in the center of the crosswalks.**
  - We are asking the city to head this addition on the county road and look at funding the signs and work with county as they resurface and repaint crosswalks in 2015.
  - In-Street Pedestrian Crosswalks Signs are the best way to get the attention of drivers on town streets. Put the sign right in the middle of the crosswalks alerting drivers to Stop or to Yield to Pedestrians.
  - Available with fixed or removable bases for winter/snow months. Re-attached in spring when foot traffic is at its highest.
  - When impacted by a vehicle each panel’s reactive spring gives upon impact and is designed to consistently return the post or panel to its original position.
  - Panel dimensions are 12” Wide and 47” High double sided.
  - For Minnesota state laws on these signs please visit [www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=169.21](http://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=169.21)
  
- 3. Remove the Wrought Iron fencing along Rum River Dr. west of Riverside Mall to visibly and physically connect our community’s public parking and with both the east and west businesses allowing for better access and aesthetics-connecting the community.**
  - Installing concrete (etched or terracotta color stained concrete) to minimize the garden maintenance and increase foot traffic around town.
  - Many of the fence panels need repair or replacement at this time.
  - The benches and Prairie Restoration planting would remain/concrete areas would be installed around trees and where much of the day lilies are at present.
  
- 4. Plant trees along both sides of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street North starting alongside Steven’s and Sherburne State Bank down to the entrance of the park per the drawings as a first phase of the “Front porch and Promenade”**

**FUTURE PLANNING TO ADDRESS OTHER ASPECTS and FUTURE PLANS AND EFFORTS**

**BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE:** We ask the City to support the Beautifications Committees request for hanging baskets bracket placed on light poles and budget for hanging baskets along Rum River Drive starting at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street South to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street North and 1<sup>st</sup> Street from the Library to 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and budget for winter greenery for 2015 holiday season.

**PAVC:** We ask the city to continue to support the PAVC of connecting Riverside Park with Riebe Park via a bridge and their efforts to expand the repaving and expansion of the camping sites and a trails through the park.

**PLANNING COMMISSION:** We make the request to have the Planning Commission research how other cities maintain city sidewalks and snow removal pertaining to sidewalks that are in front of businesses. Current state of affair regarding weed control and snow removal need to still be addressed for the overall health of our business community.

**EDA:** We ask the EDA head or work on "Motor Vehicle Access" drawings/addressing how we enhance the entrances to the city. Adding gateway signage leading into Princeton working with MNDOT and both Counties to help direct individuals off the highway to enjoy what Princeton has to offer: Food, retail, parks, library, depot etc. Our committee has started this conversation with Sherburne County in February 2014 meeting with both city and county officials at Prairie Restorations discussing the median improvements of trees, grasses and signage. (remember: the city has one large "Princeton" sign in storage).

**PARK BOARD:** We ask that the park board strategically plan how we as a community can connect all our parks per the drawings designed by the MN Design Team and we ask the City support their efforts on moving forward with possible improvements, additions and maintenance of such future plans.

**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:** We ask that we as a Downtown Committee of the PACC look to increase visibility of our businesses, with the creation of a "Shopping and Eating Guide" for the Downtown area. Secondly, establishing a Promotions Committee and looking at how we, united as a city, reach a broader market of customers/patrons that can strengthen our local businesses and additional new businesses.

Downtown Committee

Chair, Troy Minske and Co-Chair Kelly Guptil

\*\*\*\*\*End of Memo\*\*\*\*\*

Kelly Guptil (Downtown Committee Co-Chair) introduced Troy Minske (Downtown Committee Chair), and Shawna Tonn (Real Estate Connection) who is new to the Downtown Committee. This was a six month process to plan for the MN Design Team visit. There were many groups that came together in the planning process. The MN Design Team had eleven professionals who are very knowledgeable in this process and another person who was not part of the MN Design Team, but was at the visit, and this person works in the grant process. A number of

residents hosted the MN Design Team in their homes for the visit. Dr. Julia Espe (Princeton Superintendent) did a presentation, along with the Chamber of Commerce and Mille Lacs County Historical Society. The MN Design Team also took a two hour tour of the town on Friday and that evening was a community event where the MN Design Team could learn more about the community. Saturday was the presentation and that went very well.

Minske said David Patten, Engineer that has been working with the Visionary Committee was involved with the MN Design Team visit. Patten was also involved in a Princeton project about eight years ago so he was a helpful advocate to the visit. Minske continued that the MN Design Team wanted information from all ages in the community on what they would like to see in Princeton.

Guptil pointed to the poster boards that were hanging up in the City Council room. She explained the first poster is the concept plan. It has three points to it "No Vision, Imposed Vision, and Shared Vision". Guptil explained each of the three points. "No Vision" is groups move in various directions and no plan or coordination. "Imposed Vision" is a plan without community involvement, lots of energy spent, and no forward motion. The last point is "Shared Vision" which is community planning, all groups acting in concert, forward movement, and plans become reality.

Guptil said it basically breaks down that the City needs to work together with different groups to move in the same vision so there is forward motion. Strong community planning was put into this. The MN Design Team said the local Princeton tiger symbol is a strong identity in our town.

Guptil continued with the next poster board that stated respect for community, connections, resources, and recommendations. They thought there was a lack of connection in the community. What the MN Design Team broke down the connections in three categories. The first is Personal and that breaks down to sports, groups, relatives, work, and neighbors. The next is Physical and that breaks down to river, streets/trails, and architectural. The last is Channels and those are media, signage, and calendars. They believe the downtown district was lacking connection and boundaries.

Guptil said the MN Design Team recognized that three bumpouts are needed in the downtown areas from Rum River Drive to First Street. Guptil said that Bruce Cochran (Mille Lacs Engineer), Richard Baker (Mille Lacs County Economic Developer), and Genny Reynolds (Mille Lacs County Commissioner) are campaigning at the county level. She understands this is not an immediate fix, but is asking the City Council support this recommendation and help find other avenues for funding.

The MN Design Team noted that we need a gateway from the roundabout down to downtown. Guptil said the MN Design Team suggested growing the main street into a square feature. They also suggested planting trees along both sides of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street North starting alongside Steven's and Sherburne State Bank down to the entrance of the park as the first phase of the

porch deck feature and promenade to enjoy the river. Guptil pointed to the poster for the Planning Commission Board to view. They recommended a bridge to connect Riverside Park and Riebe Park. The MN Design Team suggested a restaurant with outdoor sitting and an outfitter with canoe rental in that area. Guptil hopes the vacant Party House location is open to something to go with this plan. The wrought iron fence along Rum River Drive by the north and south mall area should be removed for better access to the parking lots and replace with pop up benches. This would give the area a better aesthetic look.

Guptil said in-street crossing signs on Rum River Drive starting at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street North by the Hy Tech/Riverside Park entrance and ending at 6<sup>th</sup> Street South should be installed. The Downtown Committee is asking for two at each intersection on the north and south crosswalks and crossing over Rum River Drive in the center of the crosswalks. Guptil has provided information of what the pedestrian crosswalk signs would look like and the cost. They would be removed in the winter months for the convenience of plowing.

Minske said the MN Design Team went with what the community wants. From the roundabout to downtown is so hard to cross the streets. Let's use the river as a focal point. The community wants better communication and to utilize the river. We should take down some of the trees where you can see the river. They would like the DNR to come in and see what we are looking at doing. We need to improve the motor vehicle access on how we get people to come off the highway and come to the downtown. An electronic billboard with the School District and City where events are displayed is needed. We need to beautify the boulevard on Rum River Drive by Shopko and Coborns where it is more welcoming. There is a lack of welcoming coming off the highway into the City. The tiger pride logo is big in Princeton and we need to continue it. We need to work with different entities in town to get that to happen. It will take baby steps to get the changes to happen. He does not want to see the recommendations from this visit dismissed for another six months or so like another project that was done and forgotten.

Heitschmidt asked what a bumpout is.

Minske said it is for the safety of crossing the street. They do not reduce parking spaces.

Reynolds said they are marked better. They are made with a different texture or color and are made for the safety issues for crossing the street.

Guptil said even the stained concrete that is on the roundabout would be a good look for the bumpouts. Guptil has one request from the Downtown Committee to the Planning Commission Board. She knows they understand the current laws and how to handle weed control and maintenance. The sidewalks have large weeds growing out of them. How can we curb that. Is it the business owner's responsibility to control the weeds and also take care of snow removal. There is empty buildings downtown and how is that being taken care of. This effects the other stores. She is asking the Planning Commission to do research and find a way to change this. The weed control is from Coborns all the way down to the roundabout.

Minke asked advice from the Planning Commission on the bumpouts and trees.

Johnson said we had bumpouts here many years ago and they were taken out because people were driving over them in the winter. He is not sure narrowing or limiting vehicle traffic is a practical way to make this work. On First Street and Rum River Drive a lane would have to come out.

Minske met with Bruce Cochran (Mille Lacs County Engineer) and an architect from Sherburne County and they supported it. The bumpouts proceed to go flat as they extend to the street level. It will not be a problem with cars running over them.

Heitschmidt said the bumpouts extends only to where the parking space extends out too, so it will not take a lane of traffic out.

Johnson said years back it would narrow the road and it did not work. If it goes down to street level he would support it.

Edmonds said he thinks Rum River Drive is the main collector road, and they are designed to increase the traffic flow and his thoughts are there is a lot of traffic that is not needed to go downtown Princeton. He thinks that needs to be dealt with first before street structure. Is there a group that will move this forward.

Minske said the Downtown Committee is taking that role to be a downtown hub of this.

Guptil said a bunch of volunteers is not the ones who should be the only people to make this happen.

Edmonds commented that grants and such are needed to make this happen.

Minske said that Richard Baker (Mille Lacs County Community Development Director) and Bruce Cochran (Mille Lacs County Engineer) have been very good help in this.

Edmonds said this is a MNDOT road and they set the rules on it.

Mellott said enhancing safety for crossing the street is a great idea. The sign to stop at crosswalks is a great idea. Who will put that in.

Edmonds said the county would put them in.

Minske agreed it is a simple idea to help people cross the street at the crosswalks.

Mellott said the City should be removing the snow on the sidewalks for all downtown.

Edmonds said property owners are responsible to remove the snow by their building.

Mellott said where there are vacancies in the buildings, it needs to be done by the City. Why would we want to discourage commuter traffic when they may see something downtown and not want to stop because of the poor sidewalk care.

Edmonds said it is a main collector road, and if the road extension from the Industrial Park was done it would make a difference with traffic. There is also three schools that will be on the north end of town and that will make a traffic difference.

Mellott asked Guptil what she is requesting from the Planning Commission if they could research how other cities maintain city sidewalks with snow removal and weed control.

Guptil said she would like the City to take care of the snow removal on the sidewalks and weeds. She understands it might not be feasible and wants them to hold the property owners accountable. It is very difficult to run a business with the snow issues. She wants it looked at and how we support this. She travels to different cities and sees how they look. First impression is what makes people do things. A clean City makes people come and take part in it.

Minske said it is curb appeal. He said last summer it was a big item with the weeds downtown. It is from one end of the town to the other end where the weeds are unsightly along the sidewalks.

Guptil said this summer the Chamber members and volunteers cleaned-up the day lilies and they had about 60 bags of weeds.

Minske said they took pictures of the weeds, and the worse was by the Napa store.

Reynolds suggested a monthly community volunteer day could be a possibility.

Minske said yes, and have it listed on a community billboard.

Guptil said she does not stand by that. You cannot pass the buck onto the general public. What do other cities do to control the weeds.

Edmonds said we are just an advisor to the City Council. Jolene Foss can do research on this.

Foss said it could go to the Council and see about changing the Ordinance.

Mellott said to get on from the parking area on the street to the sidewalk in the winter is impossible. The snow piles are so high along the curb.

Edmonds said the City of Princeton is plowing and knocking it up on the sidewalk. You have to find a path somewhere to get to the sidewalk.

Guptil said the business owners are not doing the snow removal from the parking area to the sidewalk.

Edmonds said you cannot get the snow to just go away.

Guptil said in this economy store owners do not have the margin to lose a daily income from foot traffic because of the snow.

Minske said they are not trying to make the public works look bad. They just want to see how this can be changed.

Reynolds asked what the Planning Commission can do to keep it rolling. He would like information of when the Downtown Committee meets.

Guptil said looking into the information that was brought up tonight would be great. Speaking to the County on the crosswalk signs would be great. The roads will be resurfaced and repainted and having the crosswalk signs installed would be amazing and are removable in the winter.

Minske said he will email Jeff Reynolds on the information for the Downtown Committees.

Guptil said she would love the City to put a bottle and wine shop on the main street. A City owned business would help stop competitors on coming into the borders of the City. They will then see what it is to be invested downtown and see what is happening. Two liquor stores would be great. Quality beer and wines would be nice addition to the downtown.

Edmonds said if there is public pressure the City would look at it. He hopes the suggestions from the MN Design Team visit keeps going.

Guptil said the City should be excited the MN Design Team visit was done.

Edmonds said the events sign was spoken of in the past and he was involved with the School District and thinks that could be done. A participation with the School District and community.

Heitschmidt said the river should be capitalized also.

Minske said there is a lot this City has that if we can make movement with getting the ball rolling and it could happen.

Edmonds said if we push stuff to the public works it cost money. Property taxes are already too high.

Minske said new businesses to town will bring tax dollars. You cannot go in with that mind set with a negative outlook.

Mellott said changing things up will bring stuff in.

Guptil said that is where the Planning Commission needs to look at what other cities do that bring in tourism. Increase the tax base and people move here and it grows. Tourism is a huge way to bring money to this town. What is Princeton's vision. What is the standard or look that the City of Princeton wants to go for. We need code and regulations implemented.

Edmonds said as a Planning Commission we are reactionary to what comes to us. There are arguments both ways. Some think we are way over with regulations now. Have to have standards. Need a baseline to give staff something to work with.

Guptil said the City Administrator should be looking what Still Water and Anoka have done to increase their tourism. They have very little building vacancies. They have also increased their parking.

Mellott said we need to go through the City and change the standard. We updated the Sign Ordinance. What the Downtown Committee is asking for is a better commitment from the City.

Edmonds said they are doing the first step and now it falls to the public to do some of the aesthetic stuff.

Minske said it was the community speaking on what they want for this MN Design visit. It is the community speaking on what the public wants.

Guptil said having the MN Design Team visit the City of Princeton was a wonderful experience.

## **COMMUNICATION AND REPORTS:**

### **A. Verbal Report**

#### **1) Board Vacancies**

DeWitt handed out a memo with City Board vacancies and asked the EDA Board to let people know who live inside the City limits that there are some vacancies and have them contact City Hall for an application. The deadline to accept applications is 3:00 P.M. on December 5, 2014.

#### **2) Possible Church going into the former Party House location**

DeWitt informed the Planning Commission Board that there is a possibility that an Interim Use Permit application will be on the December 15, 2014 Planning Commission meeting. The interested party is possibly going to purchase the "old Party House" site in the north mall for church use.

### **B. City Council Minutes for October, 2014**

The Planning Commission Board had no comments.

HEITSCHMIDT MOVED, SECOND BY JOHNSON, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. UPON THE VOTE, THERE WERE 5 AYES, 0 NAYS. MOTION CARRIED. THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:15 P.M.

ATTEST:

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Jack Edmonds, Chairperson

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Mary Lou DeWitt, Comm. Dev. Assistant