

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE LAND USE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, September 15, 2016

Committee Members Present:

Phillip Klein, Marvin Johnson, Chip Halbach, Karl Drotning, Bill Droste, Pamela Harris, Kathi Hemken, Kathi Mocol, Jennifer Geisler, Elizabeth Wefel

Committee Members Absent:

Jon Commers, Bill Neuendorf, Michael Webb, James Saefke, Kristina Smitten, James McClean, and Jamil Ford

CALL TO ORDER

In the absence of a chair and a vice chair, Commission Member Klein called the regular meeting of the Council's Land Use Advisory Committee to order at 4:04 p.m. on Thursday, September 15, 2016. He noted that Chair Commers was unable to attend and that Vice Chair Smitten was expected later in the hour.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Klein noted that while there was a quorum present to approve the Agenda and Minutes of May 19, 2016 and July 21, 2016, because he was not an officer of the Committee, this would wait until Vice Chair Smitten arrived. The Committee chose to proceed with the agenda as presented.

INFORMATION

Mixed Income Housing Feasibility Education and Action Project – Cathy Bennett, Urban Land Institute Minnesota, Tara Beard, Family Housing Fund, and Libby Starling, Regional Policy and Research

Cathy Bennett introduced herself and Tara Beard (formally with the Metropolitan Council) and noted that they were before this Committee to discuss the Mixed Income Housing Feasibility Education and Action Project as outlined in the materials provided.

Klein asked who provided the grant money for the technical assistance. Bennett stated grants were specifically funded through the McKnight Foundation and noted that Metropolitan Council funding supported the regional data portion and the workshops.

Beard noted that this tool is to be used to explore an area of mixed income development that hasn't been talked about before. Beard and Bennett gave some examples of how the tool can be used to identify specific options and opportunities for different cities using different scenarios.

Klein asked in order to qualify (from a developer's standpoint) for certain tax credits, do they have to have certain things in place, i.e., transit? Bennett explained that this tool isn't about the tax credit market but more about the local tools that can help to include some affordability. This will help communities diversify their housing stock.

Hemken asked if this information is available online. Bennet responded, yes, and stated it can be found at www.housingcounts.org and click on 'Resources' and then 'Mixed Income Housing Calculator.' She stated that related to upcoming comprehensive plan updates, this can be a tool that cities may find helpful to understand how different incentives might help in their community.

Drotning stated he could see where this would be helpful for his community. Beard stated that this is also linked through the Local Planning Handbook on the Metropolitan Council's website.

Pre-Application Best Practices in Affordable Housing Development – Alex Kleppin, Intern, Regional Policy and Research

Kleppin gave a presentation on a project designed to make development of affordable housing easier and less costly. He stated they came up with 12 best practices recommendations.

Kleppin focused on one of the areas identified as a problem area – administrative processes and delays. He noted that nearly every developer mentioned delays in these processes as a major and widespread problem with virtually every city.

Kleppin outlined the three phases of project approval where these delays occur:

- Developers exploring feasibility of a project; discussions with city staff or elected officials may shape a planned project.
- Staff and then public official consideration of the applications takes place.
- Inspections subsequent to issuance of building permits.

Kleppin discussed the research questions asked for the 25 interviews with cities and affordable housing developers, as well as the six recurring themes discovered.

- Putting policies in place.
- Creating a user-friendly development guide.
- Development review committee with all relevant parties present.
- Potential sites on file.
- Education on affordable housing.
- Building relationships early.

The question was raised if developers discussed discrepancies when working with just staff versus staff and city council members. Kleppin stated that while this did come up a few times mostly they found that staff was directing their elected officials to refer developers back to city staff to get the most accurate information.

The committee discussed the various ways projects are brought to the council and how they are vetted through city staff and planning commissions first.

Halbach asked for an expansion on the comment regarding education on affordable housing and ongoing conversations. Kleppin stated some cities did yearly updates with their planning commission or city council. Some did retreats or tours around the metropolitan area to see what was new. These ongoing conversations help to keep new projects in a manageable scope.

Mocol discussed developers saying that some cities were doing a good job. She would like to know specifically which cities those are. Kleppin stated that without his notes in front of him he would be hard pressed to recall which developer said what. He reiterated that there was not one specific city that 'nailed' every best practice and his recollection was that developers mostly discussed those that did not do well.

Geisler suggested it would be helpful to hear what developers said was new, different, or unique. Kleppin stated part of the written report identifies a few unique approaches that were interesting but not necessarily widespread. One was expanding online options for application submission and application review by the different city departments. Another innovative approach was making sure that city staff

are communicating to developers that an online presence is important to neighbors that may google them when they first hear of an upcoming project.

Drotning commented that developers have their own agenda and city staff has a responsibility to support the ordinance as written. It all comes down to respecting the process.

Harris stated the strength of the planning commission is really important.

Geisler asked if the larger report is available for the commission to read. Kleppin stated it is currently available with existing Regional Policy and Research documentation online and they hope to link it to the Local Planning Handbook.

Detrick stated she would make sure that this and Cathy Bennett's presentation will be shared with the Committee.

ULI MN/Regional Council of Mayors Housing Initiative and Advisory Services - Cathy Bennett, Urban Land Institute Minnesota

Bennett gave a presentation on the work being done by the ULI MN and the Regional Council of Mayors and stated that a lot of the work they've been doing has resulted in much of the same findings that Kleppin just discussed. She discussed some of the tools they've used to help communities understand how to be development ready as well as housing tools to help communities be a partner in achieving housing goals.

Bennett discussed the Mayors Housing Initiative and their advisory services and also the impact this work has made over the past 8-9 years as outlined in the materials provided.

Droste discussed some of the challenges they face, i.e. getting information to the planning commission and also dealing with new commission members or elected officials.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Next Meeting – November 17, 2016 (An alternative date may be sought due to some foreseen absences).

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary