

**MINUTES
CITY OF ST. CHARLES, IL
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TASK FORCE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29, 2011 – 7:00 P.M., DENS A & B**

Members Present: Chairman Mark Armstrong, Ald. Bessner, Brian Doyle, Dr. Steven Smunt, Steve Gaugel, Betsy Penny

Members Absent: John Rabchuk

Also Present: John Houseal and Luke Hogan, Houseal Lavigne Associates
Russell Colby and Matthew O'Rourke, City Staff

Call to Order

The St. Charles Comprehensive Plan Task Force meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Armstrong.

2. Introductions

Chairman Armstrong introduced himself and thanked the members for their participation and asked them to introduce themselves.

Betsy Penny

- As of 5/2/11 retired as alderman after 16 years, served on the Housing Commission. Lived in St. Charles since 1974, raised four children, does a lot of volunteer work.

Dr. Steve Smunt

- Moved to St, Charles in 1981, owns a dental practice on West Main Street. Chairman of the Historic Preservation Commission for almost 20 years, involved with the Downtown Partnership and is on the board of directors. Participated with the First Street Redevelopment Public Space Task Force.

Ald. Ed Bessner

- Alderman for four years and going into second term, served on the Plan Commission for three years. Part of the Homeowners Association in Harvest Hills, has lived in St. Charles for 10 years and sells wine during the day.

Steve Gaugel

- Lived in St. Charles since 1971, married with four children. Works full time at Fermi Lab. Ran for 4th Ward Alderman in last election. Looking for some involvement with the City and Ald. Martin recommended him to the Mayor who called about this Task Force Committee.

John Houseal

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- President and co-founder of Houseal Lavigne Associates seven years ago. Work on comprehensive and municipal planning of all sorts throughout the mid-west and other parts of the country. Have worked on 35 comprehensive plans over the past 10 years in several states. He will be the director of the project team for this assignment working also with Conservation Design Forum and Gewalt Hamilton.

Luke Hogan

- Associate of Houseal Lavigne to assist with this project.

Russell Colby

- Planner for City of St. Charles, Community Development Department. Staff liaison to this Committee. A resident of St. Charles since 1993.

Matthew O'Rourke

- Planner for the City of St. Charles and assisting Russell Colby with this project. He is staff liaison for the St. Charles Housing Commission. A resident of St. Charles since 2010.

Brian Doyle

- Grew up in Oak Park and moved to St. Charles in 2005, married and has a 5 year-old son. Works in Chicago and got involved with the City when the St. Charles Towne Centre proposal was before the City.

Mark Armstrong

- Joined the St. Charles Plan Commission in 1997, and became chairman in 1998 until 2006 when he became the County Tax Assessor. Chairman for the St. Charles Zoning Task Force that rewrote the current 2006 zoning ordinance.

Chairman Armstrong discussed the difficulties with the City's previous 1960 zoning ordinance. He said while rewriting the zoning ordinance the Comprehensive Plan should have been updated. He noted which sections of the Comprehensive Plan had been updated but these sections are also now outdated.

Chairman Armstrong mentioned examples where the City's zoning and planning documents reflected outdated information or policies. For example, he recalled that the Fox Valley expressway was proposed north/south at the west edge of the DuPage Airport but the idea was halted in 1986. He noted uses and standards were created within PUD ordinances based upon having an expressway in that area.

3. Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Houseal stated the Comprehensive Plan is the foundation and guide for decision making, but is not a regulation or zoning requirement. It is a 10-20 year vision with detailed goals and objectives that cover issue of land use, transportation, community facilities, sustainable solutions for development practices, etc. The Comprehensive Plan will be detailed in some regards and more general in other regards with the idea to guide development decision making. One reason the Comprehensive Plan is very important is that it is a stepping stone for seeking funding at state or federal level programs. This plan will be used by staff, the Plan Commission, City Council, and developers and needs to be friendly to use. Mr. Houseal said this process will be done over a 12-14 month period.

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4. Role of the Task Force

Mr. Houseal said this working group is the community sounding board. Typically the group will receive materials a week before a meeting for review. He said Houseal Lavigne is an extension of staff and this group is an extension of the project team and the team will rely on their input. Meetings will be every 2-3 months with community outreach workshops in between meetings.

Chairman Armstrong advised materials will be distributed in a PDF document by e-mail. He also advised that this body is subject to the Illinois Open Meetings Act. Therefore no discussions of business before this Committee can be held outside of an Open Meeting, and that includes e-mail communication. He encouraged the members to not do a reply-all if they respond to any information provided to them by e-mail. Mr. Houseal agreed and said Russell Colby is the point of contact for all inquiries and correspondence and that can greatly help in preventing any chance of Open Meetings Act violations.

Mr. Doyle asked what the expectations were between meetings in terms of volume of communication between members of the Task Force and staff. Mr. Houseal said typically there will not be much communication back and forth. He said the members will receive their packet material and it will be discussed at the meeting. Chairman Armstrong added that it is better to have interaction within the meeting format.

5. Goals for the process & review past planning efforts

Mr. Colby referred to the current Comprehensive Plan, its size and content, and stated it is now outdated. He said the document contains too much information. The River Corridor Master Plan, the Downtown Strategy Plan, and the amendment for the Applied Composites appendices are a bit more modern in format but they have not been well integrated into the actual plan. He said the City needs a document in an easier format that is more accessible to everyone. He said the plan does not serve the function that is needed now.

Mr. Houseal said the goal is to produce a document that is useful to staff, development community, property owners, appointed and elected officials, and is attractive and easy to use. Chairman Armstrong said developers often told him they did not care what the City plan was, as long as the plan was clearly understandable. He said the biggest problem is uncertainty. Mr. Houseal added that if a plan is overly restrictive and inhibits reinvestment, it is a bad plan.

Ald. Bessner said that the plan should stream line the process for the developer but also protect the City. He noted it was said the plan is legally binding, but asked what if they get to the point and a developer comes in with a different plan, does it tie the hands of the Council. Mr. Houseal said the Comprehensive Plan is not regulation like zoning but helps guide to determine if a plan is appropriate, but it is legal in the sense that the Council can deny a development application by not meeting the Comprehensive Plan objectives or what is planned for an area. He said it has legal significance but does not regulate like zoning.

6. Review Scope of Work/Planning Process

The consultant distributed and reviewed information regarding the scope of work that has been done, what is on-going, and proposed over the next year. He explained the web-based outreach includes an interactive project website that will be free of charge. He said this site may go live within a few weeks. Chairman Armstrong acknowledged the one of the advantages of this site is that we want the citizens to be confident that the City is doing what they say they are doing.

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Mr. Doyle asked what the role of the task force is. Mr. Houseal said members do not have a role similar to the Plan Commission, BZA, etc. He said this group will recommend a draft plan which will go to Council to refer to the Plan Commission for public hearing. Ms. Penny asked for direction if citizens contact the members for information. Chairman Armstrong said the members can discuss the process with any residents, but encouraged that they direct them to the website.

7. Discuss/Identify Key Stakeholders

Mr. Houseal explained how the focus group/key person interview process will be conducted. Houseal Lavigne will work with staff scheduling for two days, 45 minute interviews with different individuals. He said the intention is to interview people who have unique perspective and insight.

Mr. Colby distributed a draft list of general topics for focus group input. Staff suggested approaching the focus groups based on a topic or issue they want to address and try to find representatives in the community who are informed about those issues. He asked the Task Force to review the list of topics. Ms. Penny asked if each group on the list would be a focus group. Mr. Colby indicated that was correct, and 1 to 3 people would be considered. Mr. Houseal said this will not be done until all other community outreach has been done, which is scheduled in the fall. Chairman Armstrong asked to have this item listed on the next agenda.

Mr. Doyle suggested social service agencies and he referred to the business community and said there are particular subgroups that might have clientele and asked if that was covered by the Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Houseal said the Comprehensive Plan may not cover all perspectives. He reiterated the need to understand what can be addressed within the limitations of the Comprehensive Plan and the need to focus on people who have insights in areas that fall within the purview and legal authority of a Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Penny said some of the social service issues might be covered by the Housing Commission. Mr. Houseal referred to "Community Facilities" and said they will look at community service providers and different agencies to contact. He listed the organizations and agencies that provide facilities or services that will be contacted and he suggested they not be interviewed. Ms. Penny said she has concern with interviewing neighborhood groups. Mr. Houseal indicated these types of groups should not be key person interviews and Ms. Penny agreed. He said they can attend community workshops. Mr. Houseal stressed that there will be very few surprises throughout the process because they do such an extensive job of getting input and said there is usually a lot of community consensus. Chairman Armstrong said he would like this list finalized at the August meeting.

8. Project Schedule

9. Comments and Questions

10. Project Initiation/Workshop Session

Mr. Houseal passed out a worksheet to the Task Force members and conducted a short workshop session. He said this is the same format that will be used at the first Community Workshop.

11. Meeting Announcements:

Comprehensive Plan Task Force Meeting, Wednesday August 24, 2011 at 7:00 pm in Dens A & B

Mr. Doyle advised he will not be attending the meeting on August 24th.

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12. Additional Business

Mr. Houseal thanked the Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 8:53p.m.