

ROUTT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES August 15, 2019

The regular meeting of the Routt County Planning Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. with the following members present: Chairman Steve Warnke and Commissioners Troy Brookshire, Brian Kelly, Bill Norris, Andrew Benjamin, John Merrill, Roberta Marshall, Greg Jaeger and Geoff Petis. Peter Flint was absent. Planning Director Chad Phillips, Assistant Planning Director Kristy Winser and Deputy County Manager Dan Weinheimer also attended. Sarah Katherman prepared the minutes from a recording.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Ms. Winser reviewed that this discussion is a follow-up to the previous work sessions and the DOLA presentation made at the previous meeting. She stated that the purpose of this meeting is to provide a status report and review the update process. She noted the comments provided by Commissioners Marshall and Brookshire. Ms. Winser stated that an ad hoc committee had been formed to assist with the update process. The committee consists of County Commissioner Beth Melton, County Manager Tom Sullivan, Assistant County Manager Dan Weinheimer, Planning Commissioners Troy Brookshire, Steve Warnke, Planning Director Chad Phillips and Assistant Planning Director Kristy Winser. The committee has met three times.

Chairman Warnke noted that when the Master Plan update process started many Commissioners felt that only a very focused update was needed. He stated that since then, he has come to understand the full scope of the update. He said that public input is important and will take time. It will begin with a short survey to provide initial direction, conducted by the County's communication consultant, Slate.

Ms. Winser stated that the survey will be the first step in a robust plan for the public engagement. The survey will be broad-based, and will help to determine what will be included in the scope of services listed in the RFP for a consultant. The application for DOLA funding will be submitted during this time period. Ms. Winser reviewed the elements of the public engagement plan. She stated that following public input, the next steps include reviewing the document in preparation for a first draft, the drafting of the document, reviewing and editing the document, more public outreach, adoption of the plan and implementation. Ms. Winser said that Slate, the communications consultant, will assist with formulating the survey to ensure that it provides useful results.

Mr. Phillips offered that one of the more difficult steps in the plan creation process will be identifying community position. He noted the importance of ensuring that the plan reflects the community's vision and not just that of Planning Commission and a small group of engaged citizens. He said that the consultant will assist with this. He stated that the degree and nature of the involvement of the Board of County Commissioner has yet to be determined, but will be active throughout the process. Mr. Phillips stated that communication is important to make certain that all parties are on the same page throughout the process.

Chairman Warnke stated that during the time and the beginning of December when the survey will go out, it might be appropriate to invite Erin Light of the Colorado Division of Water Resources (CDWR) to make a presentation to Planning Commission on the status of Routt County's water and the issue of over-appropriation. He said that understanding the over-appropriation issue and the seriousness of the problem would be important in the Master Plan update process. He offered that a presentation from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) might also be useful, as well as a review of the status mineral resources in County, including oil & gas. Chairman Warnke acknowledged that the state Oil & Gas regulations have not yet been finalized. Commissioner Petis suggested that it might be preferable to have these agencies review the Master Plan and comment on areas that need to be revised, updated or enhanced. Mr. Phillips said that he would reach out to CDWR and CPW. Ms. Winser said she would distribute to Planning Commission the list of stakeholders that have been identified so far. Commissioner Brookshire suggested asking water attorney Tom Sharp to attend the CDWR meeting to answer questions. Commissioner Merrill noted that the current plan includes next to nothing regarding water.

Ms. Winser discussed the development of map overlays to use in the public engagement process. These overlays could show many different features of the County, such as water resources, conservation easements, recent development, etc.

In response to a request from Chairman Warnke, Ms. Winser stated that vacation rentals, wedding venues, agri-tourism operations, couch/meal-surfing, etc. are examples of new land use trends in recreation and tourism that could be considered under an updated Plan.

Commissioner Brookshire asked about the distinction between particular issues to be addressed in regulations and the larger policies or goals suitable to the Master Plan. Commissioner Petis cited the state statute regarding the suitable contents of master plans. Mr. Phillips noted that the statute is very general. The only required element is a section on Recreation and Tourism. Mr. Phillips stated that after the consultant is provided with the input from Planning Commission, from the referral agencies and the public, then goals may be formulated. The policies and action items are then developed to support those goals. Commissioner Brookshire offered that the goals of the existing Master Plan remain valid.

Chairman Warnke read a bullet point under the “updates/conversation topics” section of the minutes from the July 31st meeting of the ad hoc committee regarding the difference between a Master Plan and a Comprehensive Plan. Following a discussion of the public perception, and what is to be included in the plan, there was consensus on Planning Commission that the document should continue to be called the Master Plan. Mr. Phillips agreed, stating that the wording “Master Plan” is referenced in statutes, pending input from the public. Commissioner Brookshire suggested the “Master Plan” has a more rural, simple and straightforward connotation, as opposed to the urban, bureaucratic connotation of “Comprehensive Plan.” Commissioner Petis added that the Planning Commission has the statutory authority to create a Master Plan, not a Comprehensive Plan.

ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Mr. Phillips reviewed the master list of all activities that go through the Planning Department. He said this list would be provided to Planning Commission periodically. He said that he used to do an annual report and is considering resurrecting it. He said that he would discuss this matter with Chairman Warnke.

Mr. Phillips reviewed the upcoming agendas through November. Since Planning Commission met last, the Board has not made any decisions regarding recommendations from Planning Commission.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.