

ROUTT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

FINAL MINUTES

June 23, 2022

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 Brian Kelly, Bill Norris, Jim DeFrancia, Andrew Benjamin, and Linda Miller. Commissioners Greg Jaeger, Ren Martyn, and Paul Weese were absent. County Commissioners Tim Corrigan, Beth Melton and Tim Redmond, Planning Director Kristy Winser and staff planners Alan Goldich and Michael Fitz, and Community Engagement Officer Robin Schepper also attended. Sarah Katherman prepared the minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

MASTER PLAN UPDATE WORKSESSION

Ms. Winser presented the draft update to the Routt County Master Plan, which had been provided to the participants in advance. She stated that the goals for the meeting were to determine if there were any glaring omissions or problems with the draft; to confirm that the draft, with some adjustments made in response to comments from this meeting, was ready to be released to the public for comment; and to review and approve a schedule for adoption of the plan. Ms. Winser reviewed the organization and elements of the plan and noted that the Implementation Matrix, which includes the policies and related action items for implementation would be reviewed by the Executive Team (County Commissioner Melton, Chairman Warnke, County Manager Harrington and Ms. Winser) to prioritize the actions, and determine the responsible party and a reasonable timeframe for each action to be completed. The Matrix will then be reviewed by Planning Commission and the Board. Ms. Winser discussed the timeline for upcoming work sessions, the public comment period and hearings. She said that the target is for an adoption hearing in late August. Ms. Winser asked participants to email her with comments regarding specific items in the plan, but to bring up any issues that they felt needed to be discussed with the group now. She confirmed that the next draft would include a glossary of definitions and acronyms.

Chairman Warnke stated that he liked the draft, the layout and the features of the draft plan. He said that he had already submitted his specific comments to Ms. Winser. He asked the Board and Planning Commission to respond to Ms. Winser's questions.

County Commissioner Melton stated that overall she was happy with the draft and was excited to be at this point in the process. County Commissioner Corrigan offered that putting the document together and working out the details was

foremost the work of Planning Commission, staff and the consulting team and that he had faith in them to do the job. County Commissioner Redmond stated that he is looking forward to reviewing the Implementation Matrix, as the actions are really the meat of the document that will guide what gets done. He noted that many actions to implement the plan will require collaboration with various partners and agencies. He expressed his approval with the general direction provided in the plan. Ms. Winser acknowledged that collaboration would be key to implementation, and that following the review by the Executive Team, and then the Board and Planning Commission, the draft Implementation Matrix would be circulated among relevant agencies, jurisdictions and public land managers. She added that after the plan is adopted meetings would be held with partners to discuss the approved action items.

County Commissioner Melton noted that the Transportation and Mobility element was lacking any in-depth discussion or maps of the County Road system. She recommended adding information about the roads, along with policies to address the future development of the road system.

Commissioner Miller said that she would email specific comments, but that overall she liked the plan and felt that with a few tweaks it was ready to be released to the public. She noted the discussion of the 35-acre subdivisions in the draft plan and offered that the state law allowing such subdivisions without review should be cited specifically.

Commissioner Kelly agreed with County Commissioner Melton that more attention needs to be given to the roads. He cited the need for passing lanes on US 40 and Hwy 131 and offered that the County needs to do everything in its power to improve the road system. Commissioner Kelly added that constructing wider shoulders would improve County road safety. He also offered that more creative use of 35-acre parcels for agriculture should be encouraged.

Commissioner Benjamin stated that some of the graphics made the text very difficult to read. He also suggested that the GIS system should be mentioned as a resource for those wanting more in-depth information. Regarding the discussion of the economy, Commissioner Benjamin noted that the smaller school districts are very dependent on income from coal extraction and will need new sources of funding in the transition away from coal. He offered that the impact on the schools should be addressed in the plan. He said he would submit his additional comments via email, but that with a few edits the plan was in good shape.

Commissioner DeFrancia stated that the draft was thorough, well presented and very close to ready to go to public. He stated his interest in the Historic and Cultural Resources element. He said that while the issue is addressed well in the actions, the policies could be stronger. He discussed the “term” of the plan and offered that rather than a comprehensive update, the plan should be revisited and amended as necessary in light of developments and changes every five years.

Ms. Winser agreed, and stated that the Implementation Matrix would be very useful for those periodic check-ins.

Commissioner Norris stated his agreement with the previous comments, noting that the plan strikes a good balance of coverage between the towns and the rural areas and addresses the whole County.

Commissioner Benjamin stated that he had heard comments from agricultural operators that many larger ranches of 500 - 1000 acres are increasingly being used more as hobby ranches and less for agricultural production. He encouraged staff to work on defining what should be considered as agriculture.

County Commissioner Melton noted the work that would be needed to revise the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations in response to the new plan, and asked about the budget and timeline for this process. Ms. Winser stated that she would include this in her budget request and stated that an RFP would be put out in the fall for a consultant to assist with the revision of the regulations, with the project scheduled to begin early in 2023.

Following review and discussion, there was consensus that the schedule of meetings leading up to a hearing to adopt the Master Plan in late August was reasonable.

ADMINISTRATOR 'S REPORT

Ms. Winser stated that there would be a Planning Commission hearing on July 7th and that it is likely that there will meetings on the regularly scheduled dates through the remainder of the summer. She recommended that Master Plan work sessions be scheduled for off-Thursdays.

Ms. Winser announced that after 42 years at the County, Ms. Brookshire was retiring. A farewell event is to be held next Thursday.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.