

ROUTT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 18, 2021

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, Billy Mitzelfeld, Greg Jaeger, Andrew Benjamin, Roberta Marshall, Linda Miller, Peter Flint and Bill Norris. Planning Director Winser also attended. Sarah Katherman prepared the minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

MINUTES - January 21, 2021

MOTION

Commissioner Norris moved to approve the minutes cited above, as presented. Commissioner Kelly seconded the motion. **The motion carried 9 - 0, with the Chair voting yes.**

ROUTT COUNTY MASTER PLAN UPDATE WORKSHOP

Ms. Winser reviewed the progress that had been made in the update progress through Phases 1 & 2. She said that the next steps are to discuss the elements of the existing plan that need to be addressed and to formulate the RFP for a consultant.

Ms. Winser reviewed the core values and philosophies stated in Chapter 1 of the existing Master Plan, which is focused around the goal of preserving the western rural character of Routt County. The primary tool used to accomplish this goal is the policy of directing growth to designated growth centers. She reviewed how the Master Plan guides decisions by Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners, is made binding by Section 3.4.A, and is implemented through the Subdivision and Zoning Regulations. Ms. Winser noted that Planning Commission had previously identified transportation and the protection of the wildlife as priorities for the update. It had also been determined that the Plan needs to be modernized and that mapping, demographics, etc. need to be brought up to date. In addition there are issues, such as climate change and historical preservation that are not addressed in the existing plan, but should be included in the update.

Ms. Winser reviewed the positive (many) and negative (few) outcomes of the policy of directing growth to the designated growth centers. She noted that one consequence has been the amount of development on 35-acre parcels in unincorporated Routt County. She noted that 35-acre subdivision is exempt from County regulations. Ms. Winser discussed lot consolidations in Steamboat Lak

and Stagecoach and the West of Steamboat Springs Area Plan (WSSACP). Ms. Winser noted that the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) and the City Council have agreed to update the Steamboat Springs Area Community Plan (SSACP) following the Master Plan update and are considering combining the WSSACP and SSACP into a single document.

Ms. Winser stated that in addition to the Master Plan and the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, the availability of water, existing conservation easements, public lands, various hazards and critical wildlife areas all are constraints on where growth occurs. She said that staff is working to develop overlay mapping to enable discussions to focus on the areas of the County where development is possible.

Ms. Winser discussed the importance of developing transportation solutions. In response to a question from Commissioner Jaeger who noted that the City is developing transportation master plan, Ms. Winser stated that several independent groups are working on topic-specific plans. The transportation plan is one of them. The groups working on these plans should be included in the list of stakeholders driving the plan update. She offered that the consultant will be able to assist with how best to incorporate and reference these plans in the Master Plan.

There was a discussion of trails systems and how they can be part of the solution to transportation issues within and between growth centers. Ms. Winser described some ideas that have surfaced for trails.

Commissioner Miller offered that the Master Plan should be much more specific in its goals, and needs to approach actual needs with realistic action plans. All agreed.

Commissioner Kelly noted that affordable housing has been cited in the County's planning documents since 1999. He offered that in order to make progress toward that goal, development in the West of Steamboat area is critical. Ms. Winser stated that the lack of affordable housing is a County issue as well as a City issue, and added that other important topics including transportation and connectivity can also be addressed through development in the area covered by the WSSACP.

Commissioner Brookshire offered that there should be a discussion of the use of County Roads as bike trails, in particular for large events. He noted the increased intensity of use on the County Road system for recreation. Ms. Winser offered that this issue straddles the topics of transportation and recreation/tourism.

Ms. Winser asked if the designated growth centers are sufficient to accommodate future growth. She noted the benefits of lot consolidations in Steamboat Lake and Stagecoach. She suggested that while Phippsburg and Milner could provide affordable housing options, and have some central services, growth in these

areas does exacerbate transportation problems. Also in reference to affordable housing, she reviewed the changes that had been made to the secondary dwelling unit regulations and the confirmation that short-term rentals will not be allowed in the County.

Ms. Winser asked Planning Commission to go through and consider the set of questions included in the summary document. These questions will be the basis for more focused discussions. She urged Planning Commission members to email or call her if they ideas or comments.

Commissioner Marshall suggested that inviting someone from the City who is familiar the negotiations for development under the WSSACP to discuss the pitfalls and bottlenecks of that plan. Ms. Winser acknowledged the problems caused by the lack annexations, but added that the failure of several proposed developments in the area have been due to things well out of the purview of the WSSACP. A Plan cannot create development but can be the driver to identify the challenges, as well as a tool for solutions.

Regarding climate change, which came up often in the community survey, Kristy stated that a Climate Action Plan is in the works. She offered that this, as well as other plans, such as the Hazard Mitigation Plan, would be excellent resources and should be referenced in the Master Plan. She said that Historic Routt County is also very interested in participating the update process.

Ms. Winser stated that of the action items listed in the existing plan, only 12 had not been accomplished, including several dealing with oil & gas and with gravel extraction. She noted that applications for these types of operations are generally handled on a case-by-case basis. Ms. Winser went through the list in the summary document of the more technical elements of the plan that need to be updated. She stressed that the Master Plan does not need to be complicated, and should be readily accessible to anyone. She also offered that the primary growth management tool does not need to be altered.

Ms. Winser reviewed the proposed update timeline, with the next steps being a joint meeting with the BCC, establishing the scope of the update and developing the RFP for the consultant. She stated that Planning Commission would be involved in the consultant selection process. In response to a question from Chairman Warnke, Ms. Winser confirmed that the next round of community outreach would be focused on very specific topics.

Public Comment

Mr. Jay Gallagher noted that the Routt Recreation Roundtable plan would not be finalized until the wildlife study was completed in 2022. He stated his agreement with referencing the other plans that had been discussed.

Commissioner Miller asked about the involvement of the school districts. Ms. Winser said that all school districts are on the master list of stakeholders that are

notified of meetings related to the Master Plan. She said that they would be further engaged as the process moves forward.

Commissioner Flint stated that because so many issues involve the City, it would be important to work with representatives from the City, and for the Master Plan to address how future coordination should occur. Ms. Winser agreed and reviewed her discussions with City Planning Director Rebecca Bessey.

Mr. Peter Patten commended the existing plan, and offered that it does not need a major overhaul. He urged the County to focus the update on the main issues that have been identified and not allow the process to get out of control. Ms. Winser suggested developing a matrix of the issues of concern to help the process stay on target. She also stated that Planning Commission, not the consultant, would be driving the update process.

There was a discussion of the gravel matrix. Commissioner Benjamin offered the matrix could be incorporated into or referenced by the Master Plan. Commissioner Kelly offered adding gravel resources to the mapping.

There was further discussion of the focused community outreach, to be organized around specific topics and questions. Commissioner Miller suggested that each topic should include a reiteration of the main goal of preserving the western rural character of Routt County that was confirmed through the initial public outreach. Ms. Winser offered that the consultant would be able to help with keeping the outreach discussions focused. There was consensus to move forward with scheduling a joint meeting with the BCC. Ms. Winser stated that the main elements of the RFP have been established and only need confirmation through the joint meeting.

Chairman Warnke cited the need to reconcile the preservation of rural character with the need for affordable housing, as mentioned in the summary document. He suggested that this might not be possible. Ms. Winser noted the large amount of development in unincorporated Routt County and offered that mapping would help to illustrate where this has occurred. There was a discussion of 35-acre development and rural sprawl. Commissioner Brookshire said it would be useful to know how much of the growth was in Stagecoach and Steamboat Lake and how much was on 35-acre parcels. There was discussion of ways to incentivize land conservation and the preservation of large parcels, open space and agriculture.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Ms. Winser reviewed the upcoming agendas. She announced that Ronee would be retiring on May 1st. She added that the Planning Technician position had been approved, as had the use of SafeBuild for interim help with building permit reviews.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.