

CITY OF MILTON-FREEWATER
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
June 11, 2009

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order on Thursday, June 11, 2009 in the Albee Room at the City Library at 7:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Myra Sherwin, Carlotta Richardson, Ben Silva, Scott Gilmore, Nathan Lyon and Chair Charlie Good were present. Commissioner Bob White was absent.

Staff Present: City Planner Gina Hartzheim.

Citizens Present: None

The minutes of April 6, 2009 meeting were approved as written.

Citizen Concerns: Nothing to discuss.

The public hearing was then opened on the recommendation of the Proposed Amendment to Goal 9, Economic Development, of the City of Milton-Freewater Comprehensive Plan.

Chair Good read the rules for public hearings. Notice of the hearing was published according to law and there were no written comments received. Gina then gave the staff report. The Economic Element Comprehensive Plan draft would be replacing the current Goal 9 portion of the Comprehensive Plan. This was prepared due in large part to a grant that the City received from the state of Oregon, which allowed us to select a consultant to assist the City with the update. The firm selected was Johnson Gardner from Portland, who has been working on the project over the course of almost a year. They have studied the area and studied a lot of the technical data. Not only have they studied the surrounding Walla Walla Valley, but also the county, the state and also on a national level. Gina summarized some of the executive summary from this economic element that touches in a concise manner exactly what the purpose of the element would be, and that is to determine the City's economic goals, policies, and land needs concerning commercial and industrial development within the city limits and the Urban Growth Boundary that will guide the City through a 20 year planning period. The Economic Element also is intended to satisfy Oregon Administrative Rules as they relate to statewide planning goal 9, and then the steps are listed on how that occurred. One consisted of an economic trends analysis, which not only took in the local and regional information, but state and national information. The consultant looked at the industry and job growth forecast. They also looked at the land need forecast based on the job growth forecast, and also determined what type of parcels or land would be needed in order to satisfy those job growth forecasts. In order to implement the plan there are a number of recommended new policies that would become part of the Comprehensive Plan. These policies are actually something that is going to be guiding the City as we look at different areas and opportunities for growth, and gives the City an opportunity to have a say in what some of these things are. By the adoption of some of these policies it could put us in a position to be able to more actively involved in a situation where

perhaps somebody might be willing to locate here and while we may not have a specific piece of land currently within the City or the UGB it may give us the ability to look a little bit beyond in order to satisfy a specific need by a specific type of development that we want to pursue. Therefore we could create new opportunities by looking at these new policies and goals. The only applicable existing Comprehensive Plan policies would be basically the process for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, which is processed similar to an amendment to the zoning code, which is a Level IV hearing. This means recommendation by the Planning Commission to City Council for adoption. At this point staff very much recommends the Planning Commission recommend adoption of these proposed amendments.

Chair Good said that what he got out of the workshop was that it would allow us to declare our opened mindedness, but also allow us some wiggle room to adjust to the need of the person versus where we stand today. This would give them some individual negotiation tools that we wouldn't normally have if we stayed with our existing Comprehensive Plan Goal 9.

Gina said that this doesn't look at expanding our UGB or exploring the UGB because that would be a Goal 14 issue, which is the goal that relates to UGB expansion. In the analysis that was done there was a determination made that we have enough land to satisfy our needs well past the 20 years because we have such a large area of vacant land within our UGB. The land may not be ideal for a lot of reasons or any particular purpose, but the fact that the land is there and it's 200 some acres we have a surplus. There is some discussion in the document about the types of land that we may want to look at for some conversion from existing zoned land to a new designation. These were just projections that we were possibly deficient in and that we might want to take a look at after this is done. The other next step might be a possibility of looking at an urban reserve, which allows you to look beyond the 20 years. That would allow us to look at the possibility of maybe taking some land north of the existing UGB along Highway 11, or there has been some discussion of going as far west as the Old Highway. Another policy in the documents talks about words such as "encourage", "shall consider" rather than the City "will" or "must". If we want to we can use that language to our advantage. It also mentions blocks of lands being used for commercial developments, such as several parcels that could be designated for future commercial center type development.

Chair Good mentioned that the verbage would also coincide with the county in their long term goals and planning for Highway 11.

Gina said that to some extent it could be considered one of those plans that would sit on the shelf, but once again it's also something that if you don't have this done then you can't take the next steps to go back to say we've already done our homework. It has a lot of information, all the analysis, and since it's been done it could help us down the road with other projects.

Chair Good asked the Commissioners if they had any questions.

Chair Good mentioned that there is some language in there that would allow us, if somebody comes to town, to meet in the middle. He felt it was very clear and allows us and the county to negotiate a little bit better. He said a lot of discussion has been made on how to develop Highway 11.

There being no further comments Chair Good then closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Richardson then made a motion to recommend approval of the Proposed Amendment to Goal 9, Economic Element, of the City of Milton-Freewater Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Sherwin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

A discussion was held on the preliminary flood zones that could be established. The proposed maps would become effective approximately one year from now. Once the maps become effective then a new floodplain ordinance would be required to be adopted. The ordinance is mandatory in order to participate in the flood insurance program. Gina said that the City has been working with a consultant who is a certified flood plain manager. First of all there was an analysis conducted by the consultant that basically studied where the supposed alluvial flooding would occur and found a lot of deficiencies that could have had better information. On that basis, she took the information that they had and has made contact with some FEMA representatives. We have a tentative agreement that has not been put in writing yet, but is expected to be, that FEMA will voluntarily do a remapping of this area without having to go through the appeal process. There are a couple of things that are going to happen, one of them being that we basically will not have any adopted maps for quite some time, which means that we would be working under our current map which says that we have a levee that protects us and we don't need flood insurance at this point. What probably will happen with the re-mapping is that there probably will be some areas that actually will still have some sort of flooding that could occur, and some sort of flood designation may occur on some small areas. It's all going to be exact and it's not going to be an approximate method when you use contours of every 30 feet, which they used. We have maps with contours that go down to 2 feet. It also gives us more time to get the levee fixed. There also has been a recommendation of a group called Oregon Solutions and it is with the governor's office. They make an assessment of an area to determine if that is something that they feel should be an Oregon Solutions project. The person that came out and did the assessment has recommended to the governor that we be an Oregon Solutions project. This does not necessarily give us money to fix our levee, but it gives us some resources where we can get everyone together at the table, and it's amazing how many people really need to be at the table.

Chair Good asked if there was going to be another vote in November. Gina said that she thinks that she has heard that. Chair Good said that people now are a little bit more aware which will probably make them want to vote for the bond. Commissioner Lyon mentioned that there weren't many people who voted on it. Hopefully now that people are a little bit more educated hopefully it will happen.

Comments: Gina mentioned that The Fountain Restaurant has been sold. Chair Good mentioned that Hong's has changed ownership.

Planning Updates: Randy Madsen's zone change passed unanimously at the Council level. There is an application for the July meeting. It is a variance application for a very small porch.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.