

EAST AURORA PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING

November 3, 2009

6:30 PM

Present: Dan Castle, Chairman
Laura Mehl
Stacy Oar
Don Wynes
Alternate Bud Babcock

ABSENT: Carol Smith
Lowell Dewey
Randy West

Also Present:
Deputy Clerk, Sue Wolff

Code Enforcement Officer, William Kramer

Others Present:
Mayor Clark Crook, Trustees Weberg, & Kasprzak

Informal Meeting to Discuss the West End of the Village

Chairman, Dan Castle opened the informal meeting at 6:30 PM by discussing several areas of concern.

Dan thought it would be a good idea to meet tonight to discuss the West End of Main Street in the Village with regards to the following concerns. Dan went on to explain that the reconstruction of Main Street is in its final stages, and the reconstruction included modifications made to the Grey Street and Buffalo Rd. intersections. Dan also feels that with the vacancy of several sites at the EA shopping Plaza on Grey Street (Jubilee, Ames and the EA Goodyear soon), the owner of the Plaza will probably be looking at a significant expansion. Also, the former Pizza Hut is now vacant and the possible changes there, as well as the possible changes at the Plaza could affect the West End of the Village significantly. Dan also mentioned that there is a two thirds increase in enrollment at Parkdale School and taking into consideration these changes/new development, the traffic pattern and or flow will definitely change. Dan would like to ask GBNRTC to conduct a "new and updated" traffic count for this area to see whether the traffic flow and counts have changed.

Dan feels it would be a good idea to be able to encourage or discourage commercial/retail development in the community but also said that the Planning Commission must be very clear and not limit development from coming into the Village but streamline the procedure, with guidelines similar to those guidelines set forth in the Mid-Main District. Dan also mentioned one way to achieve those goals would be to work hand in hand with the Design Guidelines Committee, the Village Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Town Planning Commission to define the type of development the community would like and streamline the process. Don Wynes who is a member on the Design Guidelines Committee said that once the design guidelines are defined, they would be willing to work closely with the Planning Commission.

Dan Castle as well as the rest of the members of the Planning Commission thought it would be a good idea to look at areas for Senior Housing. Trustee Libby Weberg mentioned that she has read several articles and heard of other municipalities that have turned vacant shopping plazas into Senior Housing units. This is not something that can be done overnight she said, but having senior housing in the heart of the Village where

seniors would be able to walk to everything would be a wonderful asset. All the PC members were in agreement that it would be nice to see development for senior housing as well as having a department store located in the Village that would keep trade within the Village.

Thoughts of land uses, and possibly an overlay of Main Street, were also discussed among the members that evening.

Mayor Clark Crook said that he & Trustee Libby Weberg hosted a meeting with Bob Korby who wrote the design guidelines for Hamburg. When Bob was shown the area at Hamburg & Oakwood and was asked what suggestions he would make to fix the congestion, Bob replied by saying "what congestion". Bob said that unless drivers are experiencing several light changes there is no congestion and typically slow moving traffic is what every community wants, as this will add to your business. As drivers move slower they are able to look and see the shops, and are more inclined to stop and shop. Mayor Crook went on to explain that when he spoke with Bob he mentioned that there was a proposed Mini Mart going on the corner and that the developer had authorized additional land for a wider turning lane, which would help with the added congestion at the corner. Mr. Korby felt that this would not be a benefit but more of a problem as it would now be harder for pedestrians walking. The third point that Bob made was that the more retail business in the area the better. Just because there are several Mini Marts, not all the residents will walk to the same location because of the distance involved and by giving more choices to the people, makes the community more walk-able.

Member Stacy Oar questioned who determines the timing on a street light such as Oakwood/Hamburg. Dan Castle replied that since the State governs Hamburg Street, the timing would also be determined by the State. Dan went on to explain that the street light on that corner should if it isn't already be changing according to peak traffic times. It should be set differently to reflect the busier/slower traffic times during the day, if not that would be something that should be looked at.

Trustee Allan Kasprzak thought that now with the reconstruction almost complete, maybe Main Street would be more marketable, and new businesses would be enticed to come into the area.

Dan Castle discussed the one-way traffic on Boies Alley and how it had come about when the new Tops Market was built at the Plaza. Dan said that at that particular time the street was narrowed and made a one way from Hamburg to Grey Street. Also when traffic leaves the main plaza entrance and if making a left turn must then go to Douglas and wait for a light there before continuing on Grey St. to Knox or make a right turn on Douglas Lane. Maybe putting Boies Alley back to two lanes and narrowing Douglas Lane would have been a better idea. Code Enforcement Officer, Bill Kramer said that at the time of the Main St. reconstruction, there were thoughts of taking Oakwood Ave. and running it straight across to Grey Street, moving Douglas Lane over to match up with Oakwood Ave. but the cost of purchasing the land to make this possible was too great.

Laura Mehl questioned what the reasoning was for all the vacant stores at the plaza. Other members of the Planning Commission felt that the sizes of the vacant stores at the plaza were probably unattractive to larger department stores. Don Wynes felt that maybe the village needed to encourage more unique or individual owned stores.

Alternate Bud Babcock discussed how in the past the Planning Commission had discussed the comprehensive plan. The following are a few ideas that the PC had with regards to the comprehensive review.

- 1.) The Theater District parking areas. These areas included behind the theater, down by Wilson Farms on Riley St. and the parking lot behind Vidlers, making success for the business area there.
- 2.) Subdivisions on the East end of Village.
- 3.) Mid Main District

Now what we need to look at is the West End/Willink area in the same manner.

- 1.) Keep the economic viable on the West End.
- 2.) Keep the historical elements of the community. Don't be like Williamsville and turn our Main St. into a four lane highway. Keep historical significance there.
- 3.) Residential elements, such as residential subdivisions/senior housing.

Also since the West End of Main St. is so close to the Town limits and with very limited space available in the Village for future large development maybe we should think about working closely with the Town Planning Board to make sure any future development is not going to cause additional traffic problems within the Village and the development within the Town is in good taste for the Village. Dan Castle felt that many good points were made here tonight and would like to see more discussion made with the PC in the months to follow. He also mentioned that he will talk to GBNRTC to discuss a traffic study, but with winter coming, it may not be until April that a study could be completed. Also look into some zoning districts and get some public input also a good idea.

Mayor Clark Crook said he would check into what grants would be available for the traffic study and Trustee Libby Weberg would ask Betty Chetney with UB to see if class students would want to help with a study. CEO Bill Kramer said he would mention to the Town Planning Commission about having a joint meeting.

This informal meeting closed approximately 8:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanne M. Wolff
Planning Commission Secretary