

MINUTES
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
NOVEMBER 15, 2007 – 7:30 PM
EMMA J. HARVAT HALL – CITY HALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Wally Plahutnik, Terry Smith, Ann Freerks, Charlie Eastham, Bob Brooks, Dean Shannon

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Beth Koppes

STAFF PRESENT: Bob Miklo, Doug Ongie

OTHERS PRESENT: Jeanne Archie, Corey Proctor, Denise Wheatley

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL:

Recommended **approval**, by a vote of 6-0 (Koppes absent), CZ07-00003, that Council forward a letter to the Johnson County Board of Adjustment recommending that the application by Alliant Energy for a conditional use permit to allow an electrical utility substation, be approved subject to general compliance with the submitted plans.

CALL TO ORDER:

Freerks called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF ANY ITEM NOT ON THE AGENDA:

There was none.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ITEM:

Consider a motion setting a public hearing for December 6 to amend the Comprehensive Plan to include the 2007 Historic Preservation Plan.

Motion: Eastham made a motion to set a public hearing for December 6. Brooks seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0 (Koppes absent).

CONDITIONAL USE ITEM:

CZ07-00003: Discussion of an application submitted by Alliant Energy to Johnson County for a conditional use permit for an electrical utility substation on a 3.18-acre property located in the fringe area at 4872 340th Street NE.

Miklo introduced Doug Ongie, an Urban and Regional Planning graduate student, who is working as an intern in the Planning Department.

Ongie stated that the applicant, Alliant Energy, wishes to construct an electrical utility substation in the Rose Hollow Substation. He said the substation will include a 195 foot self-supporting tower and a 12 by 15 foot communications building. He said the proposed substation will be located on 340th Street, which is northeast of Iowa City and outside of the Iowa City Growth Area.

Ongie stated that the Johnson County Unified Ordinance allows public utility facilities to be approved in agricultural zones. He added that approved of public utility facilities are subject to any conditions to mitigate harmful effects and promote public health, safety, and general welfare. He stated that the Johnson County Unified Ordinance does not give specific requirements regarding utility substations. Ongie said that staff looked at the Iowa City Zoning Ordinance for guidance. He stated that when public utility substations are located in an Industrial Zone, the Iowa City requires a 200 foot buffer and include landscaping that meets the

S3 requirement. Ongie added that the S3 screening requirement is the highest screening requirement in the Iowa City Zoning Ordinance. Ongie stated that the property to the east of the proposed substation is 200 feet away, which meets the Iowa City buffer requirement. He stated that the landscaping would extend 100 feet to the east of the substation containing a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees. He said the screening would mitigate the visual impact of the substation and the 8 foot security fence. Although neighboring properties will not be able to see the proposed substation from the north; west; or south, landscaping will be included around the entire substation.

Ongie stated that visual impact of the communications tower will be difficult to avoid due to the height. He added that the City Ordinance requires towers in commercial zones to be camouflaged to reduce the visual impact. Ongie stated that Iowa City also looks at the safety of structures located near towers. The proposed tower will be in the northwest corner of the substation, which is 700 feet away from the nearest property to the east. He said staff does not believe there will be a safety hazard.

Ongie stated that although the substation is close to Iowa City, the topography, street network, and I-80 isolate the substation from areas of growth. He said that the long-term plan for Oakdale Boulevard is to connect with Scott Boulevard about ½ mile to the west of the proposed substation. Ongie stated that the substation would be outside of the Iowa City watershed and any potential for growth would have very high infrastructure costs.

Ongie stated that staff recommends that Council forward a letter to the Johnson County Board of Adjustment recommending the conditional use permit be approved subject to general compliance with the submitted plans.

Eastham asked if there is more than one residence to the east. Ongie said there is only one residence east of the substation. Ongie said the substation will be located in a land depression, so the substation would be out of the view from any other neighboring properties.

Eastham asked if it would be necessary to realign any of the existing high voltage transfer lines for the substation. Miklo said the applicant will be able to answer that question.

Eastham asked if the substation would be lighted 24 hours a day. Ongie said the application did not specify the lighting. Miklo said the applicant should be able to answer his question. Eastham asked if there are provisions within the Iowa City Zoning Ordinance that would allow the Commission to suggest a lighting standard. Miklo said lighting is a concern, and if the substation is to be lit, then the Commission could recommend the lighting be downcast so it minimizes light pollution and glare for nearby property owners.

Freerks asked how the tower would be lit. Smith said it would have to meet FAA requirements.

Brooks asked how the tower height relates to the tower near Bristol Drive. Miklo said he isn't sure how tall that tower is, but the proposed tower would be equivalent to an 18 or 19 story building. Shannon said it would be at a comparable height.

Public discussion was opened.

Denise Wheatley said she is representing the applicant and will answer any questions or concerns the Commission might have. She added that there are many subject matter experts from Alliant Energy are available, as well.

Wheatley said as far as the substation being lit, there will be one security light and it will be downcast. Wheatley said because the tower is under 200 feet, it does not require additional lighting.

Eastham asked if the security lighting will be maintained 24 hours a day. Corey Proctor, the substation team leader for Alliant Energy, said the security light comes on at dusk and turns off in the morning. Eastham asked if the light would be downcast. Proctor said Alliant Energy adheres to Dark-Sky recommendations, so all of the lights have the proper downcast shielding using a flat refractor. Eastham asked if there could be a conditional requirement that the substation would agree to meet Iowa City's light pollution standards. Miklo

said it sounds like the plan would currently meet the Iowa City requirements because the City Code is based on the Dark-Sky requirements. Freerks said it might be something to pass on to Council. Smith asked if there would be one light fixture. Proctor said there would be one security light and there would also be emergency lights for maintenance.

Smith said there was a question by Eastham about transmission line modifications and asked if Proctor could address the issue. Proctor said because the substation will be placed in a land depression, two structures will have to be modified. He added that one pole will be removed and two poles will be added.

Smith asked if the substation will be a single transformer installation. Proctor said it is currently designed to have a single transformer, but there will be room for a second transformer.

Eastham asked if there is a rationale for the height of the communications tower. Jeanne Archie, employee of Alliant Energy, said the reason for the height of the communications tower is because the microwave dishes must be in the line of sight of other communication towers. She said it is less than 200 feet, so no additional lighting will be necessary.

Freerks asked if the amount of screening at the proposed substation is the typical for Alliant Energy substation. Wheatley said the high level of screening came from another conditional use permit request to Johnson County in 2002. She said the neighbors to the east were concerned about the visual impact of a substation. She added that the screening is above and beyond any screening Alliant Energy has done with a substation.

Public discussion was closed.

Motion: Smith made a motion to approve CZ07-00003. Shannon seconded the motion.

Freerks said an approval would be a recommendation for Council to forward a letter to the Johnson County Board of Adjustment to allow the conditional use permit.

Freerks said she is happy to hear lighting will be kept to a minimum.

The motion carried on a vote of 6-0 (Koppes absent).

DISCUSSION OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN:

Miklo said every March the City Council prepares a budget for the following year that also includes a Capital Improvements Plan, which is a 5-year budget. He said typically the Commission has been concerned about street construction, water and sewer lines, park construction, and streetscape projects. Miklo added that these types of projects affect future growth, providing service to existing growth, or quality of life. He said staff is currently in the process of looking over the 5-year program and moving projects around on the priority list. He said the City Manager has asked that all departments give a top 10 to 12 list of projects that should be in the 5-year budget.

Miklo said he would like to point out the Sycamore Street improvements. He said the street improvements would go from about Burns Avenue to the city limits. He said this is a priority of staff and is currently in the plan for 2009. He said this has been a priority in the past for the Planning and Zoning Commission. Eastham asked if the extension of Sycamore would intersect with the planned McCollister Boulevard. Miklo said it would intersect with Sycamore just south of the current city limits. He said the connection of McCollister Boulevard and Sycamore Street wouldn't happen for a number of years, and improvements of Sycamore Street to McCollister Boulevard would be a separate project.

Eastham asked about the function of McCollister Boulevard. Miklo said McCollister would serve as a ring road around the entire city.

Eastham said if the Sycamore Street program would be approved; there would be no connection between Sycamore Street and McCollister Boulevard. Miklo said a major project like McCollister Boulevard must be done in pieces. Miklo said that the Sycamore Street improvements are necessary because of current development occurring around Sycamore Street.

Miklo said some other projects under consideration are traffic safety issues on Mormon Trek Boulevard and Melrose Avenue, Burlington Street around the new university recreation center, and around the proposed Hieronymus Square. Brooks asked if there is a commitment by the University to help fund street improvements around the new university recreation center. Miklo said there are negotiations going on between the City and the University. Brooks asked if the Burlington Street improvements would be part of the next fiscal year. Miklo said fiscal year 2010 would be more likely because it would be around the time Hieronymus Square and the recreation center would be completed.

Smith asked if there is a ranking for the 10 or 11 listed projects. Miklo said no, but the list does suggest which projects should be funded earlier in the 5-year Capital Improvements Program. He said the Sycamore Street improvements have been scheduled for fiscal year 2009, and there has been some question if the project could be bumped back for other improvement projects. He said staff has advised the City Manager that the timing of the project should stay where it is. Brooks added that development has been tied to the Sycamore Street improvements; he believes the project should be advanced. Eastham asked if there would be adequate funding for the Sycamore Street and Burlington Street improvements in the same fiscal year. Miklo said it depends how other projects get moved around.

Miklo said that staff is looking for feedback from the Commission that is a general list of project priorities over the next 5 years.

Brooks said he sees a large amount of pedestrian traffic along South Riverside Drive. He asked if there is a plan for some type of a pedestrian connection in that location. Miklo said there is not and believes the Commission should put it on their list if they think it is a priority. He added that a trail along Highway 1 should be added due to recent large scale developments like The Lodge.

Smith asked about the proposed bridge over the railroad track on 1st Avenue. Miklo said that project is on the list and could possibly obtain federal funding. He added that if federal funding does not come through, then the project would have to be from the local level.

Smith asked when the Commission's input would be needed. Miklo said the input could be taken at the next meeting and won't be submitted to Council until after January 1, 2008.

Brooks said the University is looking at renovating buildings around the Linn Street Pedestrian Corridor. He said the University and the City need to continue talking to make sure there is a financial commitment by the University and that the project goes through. Miklo said staff has that as a priority because residents and business owners said that area could act as an economic development tool for that neighborhood. He added that it would link the area to downtown.

Brooks asked Miklo to explain the property for Near Southside multi-use/commercial/workforce housing/parking facility. Miklo said that would be a parking ramp similar to the Court Street Transportation Center. He said that staff believes this project should proceed because of development interest in the area.

Eastham asked if program includes a northeast fire station. Miklo said it is in and unfunded year. Freerks said it is not an issue of construction costs, but it more an issue of staffing.

Brooks asked if there were any additional street improvement plans that could be listed. Miklo said staff has been looking at 420th Street because the current Industrial Park has been mostly built out. He said there would need to be a sewer line, storm water management, and a greenbelt in the area north of 420th Street to separate the industrial and residential uses.

Freerks said that there was money put away for infill on sidewalks. She asked how that is done. Miklo said that is in the budget and done on an annual basis. He said sidewalk safety issues are taken care of first and

then the network is extended each year. Eastham asked if the Central Planning District was part of the sidewalk infill. Miklo said the Central Planning District is well served by sidewalks. Eastham said he thought that was an issue in the public input part of the Central Planning District. Miklo said there are a few spots on Rochester Avenue.

Shannon asked about the status of Foster Road between Dubuque Street and Prairie Du Chien Road. Miklo said it would be a collector street and would be built when the area is developed.

Eastham suggested putting a Geographic Information System on the funding list. He said a GIS capability substantially increases a community's ability to do land use planning in a variety of ways. Smith asked if there could be a partnering opportunity between the City and the County for a GIS system. Miklo said there is.

Smith said each Commissioner should come back to the next meeting with a top 10 list and see how they match.

CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES:

Motion: Brooks made a motion to approve the October 18, 2007 meeting minutes as typed. Smith seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0 (Koppes absent).

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. Plahutnik seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0 (Koppes absent).

Minutes submitted by Doug Ongie

**Iowa City Planning & Zoning Commission
Attendance Record
2007**

FORMAL MEETING

Name	Term Expires	1/18	2/01	2/15	3/01	3/15	4/05	4/19	5/03	5/17	6/07	6/21	7/12	7/19	8/2	8/16	9/20	10/04	10/18	11/15
B. Brooks	05/10	X	X	X	X	X	O/E	X	X	X	X	O/E	O/E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
C. Eastham	05/11	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O/E	X	X	X	X	X
A. Freerks	05/08	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O/E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
E. Koppes	05/12	X	X	O/E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O/E
W. Plahutnik	05/10	X	X	O/E	X	X	X	X	X	X	O/E	X	O/E	O/E	X	X	X	X	X	X
D. Shannon	05/08	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
T. Smith	05/11	X	X	X	X	O/E	X	X	X	X	X	O/E	X	X	X	O/E	X	X	X	X

INFORMAL MEETING

Name	Term Expires	1/29	2/26	4/16	4/30	6/18	7/9	7/16	7/31	10/01				
B. Brooks	05/10	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
C. Eastham	05/11	X	X	O/E	X	X	X	X	X	X				
A. Freerks	05/08	X	X	X	X	O/E	X	X	X	X				
E. Koppes	05/12	X	O/E	X	X	X	O/E	X	X	O/E				
W Plahutnik	05/10	X	X	X	X	X	O/E	O/E	O/E	O/E				
D. Shannon	05/08	O/E	X	X	X	X	X	O/E	X	X				
T. Smith	05/11	X	X	X	X	X	O/E	X	O/E	X				

Key:

X = Present

O = Absent

O/E = Absent/Excused