

Minutes of the Envision Jefferson 2020 Steering Committee Meeting
January 22, 2004 – 3:30 P. M.
10th Floor, Parish President's Conference Room
Yenni Building, Harahan, LA

Attendees:

Steering Committee Members Present:

Scott Coulombe	Norbert White	Connie Casey
Bruce O'Neil	Shirley Edwards	Donnie Wolfe
Cocie Rathborne	Kerri Becker	Lee Giorgio
Debbie Skremetta	Lynne Parker	Erie Hebert

Jefferson Parish Officials:

Ed Durabb, Director, Planning Department
Terri Wilkinson, Planner III
Joanna Coutu, Planner II
Wanda DeWailly, Steno-Clerk III

University of New Orleans:

Tim Joder, Associate Dean

GCR & Associates, Inc.

Larry Ringel, Project Manager

Burk-Kleinpeter, Inc.

Ed Elam, Associate

Times-Picayune

Sheila Grissett

The meeting began at 3:30 P. M.

Dr. Terri Wilkinson began by saying that in December the Committee was sent the first set of amendments to the Comprehensive Plan that was adopted on August 6, 2003. The amendments were discussed at the Committee's November meeting and there were several corrections that came from that meeting which were made and were outlined in the December letter that went out to the Committee. The amendments also included deletion of duplicative language and minor modifications that were made to some of the Land Use categories. The medium-high density residential district did not coincide with any of the existing zoning districts and is proposed to be deleted. The public/quasi-public/institutional category contains uses that are inconsistent with the existing zoning districts, so modifications are proposed, for example, daycare centers are deleted because they are treated as businesses in the zoning ordinance and not as public/quasi public institutional uses. The third modification was that the zoning ordinance treats hospitals as a distinct, unique use, which is permitted in the medical services zoning district. Hospitals needed to be taken out of the public/quasi-public/institutional category. The best approach was to create a whole new hospital land use category.

Dr. Wilkinson noted that there were also some corresponding map amendments that had to be made to accommodate the text changes, so those were shown on the maps that were

sent to the Committee in December. These changes are now making their way through the public hearing process. The Planning Advisory Board held one public hearing on January 15, 2004. Dr. Wilkinson asked Mr. Durabb if he would like to say a few words about the hearing.

Mr. Durabb replied that the Planning Advisory Board had no problem with any of the things that Dr. Wilkinson had outlined. The only discussion was the role of the Citizen's Advisory Committee vis-à-vis the Planning Advisory Board. The PAB was concerned that a second Planning Advisory Board was going to be created, which would be a bad thing for a lot of reasons. It would slow down the approval process of day-to-day activities. The purpose of the Citizen's Advisory Committee is very much like the Steering Committee, to review new things, to provide ongoing citizen input into new elements, new ordinances, major land use modifications, and not to review zoning and subdivision cases and individual land use petitions. That is the role legally established in the Charter by the Planning Advisory Board. So the advisory committee would be providing ongoing citizen input, necessary because future work will not have the huge committee structure used in Envision Jefferson 2020. Mr. Durabb added that to his delight the Planning Advisory Board expressed an interest in being kept informed along the way. He feels that Envision 2020 is going to be an integral part of the Parish and they want to be kept informed and have input. The Planning Department made a few notations in the body of the proposed ordinance to say that the PAB would be kept informed and have input along the way.

Mr. Cocie Rathborne asked Mr. Durabb if Mr. Mike Bracey could attend the Steering Committee's meetings.

Mr. Durabb replied that it could happen. The Planning Department and PAB left it open as to exactly how that participation was going to occur, with the proviso that the Planning Department could come back to the board, make suggestions, and get suggestions from them on how to do this. Another suggestion that was raised for the purpose of keeping them informed, perhaps another agenda item at the PAB's general meeting where the Planning Department would let them know what was going on. The Planning Department would schedule some presentations by whatever contractors get the work to let the PAB know what is going on. Mr. Durabb said that he felt it would make it a lot easier for them to understand what was being proposed when they finally get to the point of having ordinances and proposals to come back with. There were a few minor language changes to the proposed ordinances to indicate that the Planning Advisory Board would be part of the process. There was one public hearing on the West Bank; the next public hearing is scheduled for next week. Mr. Durabb concluded by saying that if all goes well there, ordinances will be put into summary to effectuate putting the Comprehensive Plan in the Code of Ordinances, establishing the amendment process for the text of the Comprehensive Plan, establishing an amendment process for the land use map which would basically be concurrent with the zoning map, putting consistency language in the zoning and subdivision regulations and a few definitions, establishing a Citizen's Advisory Committee, and requiring a progress report every year and a major overhaul every five years when the whole plan is reviewed to see if we want to go in a different

direction. These are the things that will be brought to the Council in March so that implementation of that portion of the Plan, which is complete, can begin.

Ms. Lynne Parker asked if there was any public input at the PAB meeting.

Mr. Durabb said almost none. But in proposing the Comprehensive Plan amendments very similar to zoning, the purpose is not to create a separate review, rather to add another step in the review. We are making sure whatever the Council does that the zoning and the land use map are consistent with each other. This means that either one could change; sometimes the land use map might not reflect something because, simply, it had not been thought of when the land use map was done. If the Council changes the zoning, the land use map needs to reflect the change so that in 5 years the land use map won't be a document that has no relationship to the zoning map. Most of what the PAB considered is housecleaning, in the sense of setting up the administrative procedures on how to get the Plan into the system to begin implementation.

Dr. Wilkinson said that the second thing that the August 6th ordinance authorized us to do is to check for inadvertent errors and omissions and duplications. The Planning Department is methodically going through the Future Land Use Map, and what the Committee received in this month's packet is the first recommendations on corrections to errors and omissions and duplications. Planners started with the commercial districts, using the computerized GIS to compare existing land use to existing zoning and to the future land use category. The planners are running this analysis and they are finding instances where there are inconsistencies within these categories. The Planning Department is proposing changes to the land use map to solve these problems.

Mr. Bruce O'Neil replied that when you are using the new, sophisticated GIS, he was curious to know what happens when the lot lines do not agree with the survey. Mr. O'Neil said that the situation to which he is referring is where lot lines do not agree with the Parish's, a specific situation where residential and commercial abutted. When you have a situation like that, you sometimes have to make a call as to what the zoning is going to be. He wanted to know how that would be handled. He understood that the Planning Director had the right to change the zoning at that point without a hearing.

Mr. Durabb said that was correct. The Board of Zoning Adjustments can also do this.

Mr. O'Neil said basically a zoning change can take place without a public hearing.

Mr. Durabb said that the maximum it can be is 25 feet and he felt the Board of Zoning Adjustments was the same distance. He also felt that some of these issues could be addressed when the zoning map was redone comprehensively. Over the course of time parcels have been resubdivided so that zoning lines do not match the parcels; i.e., a long time ago the Council often rezoned properties by saying 200 feet back from a major street and sometimes those zoning lines diagonally cut parcels in half, in which case it was difficult to determine what you could do. The reason the administrative process was created was to allow the majority of the parcel that was zoned one thing or another to

become the zoning for the whole, locking zoning to the parcel line so you could have a definitive answer as to what you can or cannot do. With the administrative process, however, there is a limit as to how far you can do that.

Dr. Wilkinson said that the Parish is constantly checking and correcting GIS map errors and hopes to have the GIS or computerized version of the zoning map adopted by the Council sometime in the near future as the official zoning map.

Mr. O'Neil asked could that possibly cause parcels to be changed or zoning to be changed?

Mr. Durabb answered that, no, it is supposed to reflect what is already there. What Terri is talking about is when we took a look at the zoning against the existing land use designation that was done when the UNO students went out and coded land use, versus the future land use, sometimes parcels did not match up.

Dr. Wilkinson said one layer was not put exactly on the bottom layer.

Mr. O'Neil replied that a few parcels were missed.

Dr. Wilkinson confirmed this and said that the Planning Department is having to go back and snap mismatched lines into place. Sometimes it meant that something got coded wrong.

Mr. O'Neil said he ran into a situation where a residential piece of property became commercial in a neighborhood zone and without a public hearing the zoning was changed.

Mr. Durabb said that he did not want to get into this here because that involves actually amending the zoning ordinance, which is not what this is about at this point.

Mr. O'Neil said he saw Mr. Durabb's point and he did understand now, although he did not at first.

Dr. Wilkinson said once the Planning Department completes the commercial districts, it would like to move them through the public hearing process, aiming for the February 26th public hearing, and the advertising would start within the next couple of weeks. Furthermore, analysis of the industrial districts is just about finished and planners have started on the residential districts as well. As each batch of errors is compiled, the Planning Department will send them through the public hearing process.

Mr. Donnie Wolfe said that he understood that C-1 would be equivalent to low intensity commercial.

Dr. Wilkinson agreed that was correct.

Mr. Wolfe said he noticed that CPZ was taken off of the maps.

Dr. Wilkinson said that was an overlay, that is not a stand-alone zoning district. It is the underlying zoning that is really critical and shown on the maps depicting the corrections.

Mr. Wolfe said they would still have CPZ.

Dr. Wilkinson said, yes, there would still be CPZ.

Mr. Tim Joder asked if everyone was comfortable with the way the map amendment process was going forward.

Mr. Erie Hebert said he would like Dr. Wilkinson to highlight one map and explain it as an example.

Dr. Wilkinson said she would be glad to explain Page 1, Map 1 of the East Bank changes. The existing zoning is GO-2, which is a general office zoning district. The future land use code on the map that was adopted shows it as low medium residential. It is an accounting office. Planners checked the actual land use, so clearly there is an inconsistency. It is an area that we do not propose to change over the next 20 years, so the Planning Department is proposing that Light Intensity Commercial be the appropriate future land use designation for that lot. It is adjacent to an area that is already designated as Light Intensity Commercial.

Ms. Lynne Parker asked if she could be a devil's advocate, as it seemed to her that the civic league and other civic groups are really interested in not having commercial intrusion into neighborhoods.

Mr. Durabb interjected that when we considered existing land use, we knew what was there and probably would not change. The biggest changes, of course, will occur in the vacant areas. In this particular case it is zoned light commercial, or GO-2, and used as an accounting office. For whatever reason it was missed. The Future Land Use Map said medium density residential, which is not what's there. So, in order to correct that to reflect what is there, we are looking at things that were not listed correctly as a use and that was zoned for that use, but the coding was done incorrectly. Because the coding was done wrong, then that carried forth into the future land use map.

Mr. Durabb stated that to reiterate Dr. Wilkinson's point, the Planning Department did not take non-conforming uses and say that future land use should accommodate them because the uses were there; instead, we looked at both the existing use and the zoning. Both of them had to be appropriate. In this case, the use was accounting and the zoning was GO-2.

Ms. Parker then said what about a caterer who was operating in an R-1.

Dr. Wilkinson said that because it is residentially zoned it is nonconforming, and that they are paying attention to the existing land use versus the existing zoning and seeing what is already non-conforming.

Ms. Parker asked if this then became a spot zone?

Mr. Joder said that what we have is a caterer operating out of a residential facility.

Dr. Wilkinson said that in a case like this, even though it is a small area and ideally you like to have your future land use plotted on a larger scale, there is a consistency requirement being proposed to the Council next month.

Mr. Wolfe said he was having trouble discerning some of the maps. He mentioned that on Lot 50 there was a zoning variance sign filed. He said that the accounting firm was operating out of a residential building. Dorignac's has a building that is residential and they are using it as a warehouse. The caterer is working out of a residential building.

Ms. Kerri Becker said that the caterer was surrounded by commercial, so when the caterer moves or sells, will the area be made residential?

Dr. Wilkinson replied that it is maintained as non-conforming, so if he goes out of business and the property is gone for one year, it loses its legal non-conforming status. If someone comes in after that, they have to comply with the zoning, which is residential. As long as he stays in business consistently, without interruption for more than a year, a nonconforming use can stay there forever.

Dr. Wilkinson also brought up that some of the committee members were having trouble distinguishing the colors that were adopted on the Future Land Use Map. The Planning Department considered different colors and looked at the American Planning Association's recommendation. There are standard colors that planners use for land use. Staying within those guidelines, the Planning Department has proposed some changes to the colors, trying to enhance the distinctions between them, which Dr. Wilkinson pointed out on handouts that she distributed to committee members. After some discussion on the new colors, committee members agreed that they are an improvement over the ones adopted with the Plan and should replace them.

Mr. Tim Joder said that the second part of Item 4 on the agenda is one for which the committee already had an update—the public hearing for the ordinances needed for initial Plan implementation. Regarding the other part of Item 4, the Council acted favorably upon two resolutions which authorized cooperative endeavor agreements totaling \$508,000 to begin work in 2004 on Plan implementation. One resolution authorized about \$277,000 to the Regional Planning Commission and the second to the University of New Orleans Foundation for about \$230,000, both to enable these two organizations to engage parties on the Parish's behalf to pursue that agenda of initiatives that this committee discussed at a previous meeting and which it agreed were collective priorities. The only initiative where there is not a specific set aside for funds in that \$508,000 is the

economic development element. Mr. Joder noted that we are working with JEDCO in an effort to identify how we can proceed on that element using a different source of funds. We don't have a definitive answer on where we stand, but hopefully that process will go forward in the next few months and we will be able to announce we are embarking on that as well.

Mr. Joder said that there are basically six items that are embodied in these two cooperative endeavor agreements. One is the housing element, another is the major thoroughfare plan, one allows Mr. Joder to continue working with the Steering Committee and the Planning Department, another addresses the subdivision regulations and starting a unified development code, another involves a lot size study, and the final one provides for work on the GIS and map revisions.

Mr. Lee Giorgio said that JEDCO was looking into helping with the economic development element and there was some potential funding there. He asked if we had heard anymore on the status of this?

Mr. Joder said, yes, that was what he was referring to when he said that we are looking at an alternative source of funds. At this point we are not prepared to say that it is a done deal.

Dr. Wilkinson replied that Jefferson Edge is reaching a point where it needs to be updated and it has the substantial component of an economic development element so the two projects can perhaps be meshed together.

Mr. Giorgio said that he is on the Edge Committee and Mr. Cocie Rathborne noted the importance of informing the people who contribute to Jefferson Edge and including them. Mr. Giorgio replied that he had been at an Edge meeting where it was brought up and there was some discussion.

Mr. Durabb said that the ordinance package going to the Council included the establishment of the Citizen's Advisory Committee, and that basically is the committee that follows this one. He stated that he is starting to see some appointments to that committee and he was happy to see that some of the same faces will still be here. The Council has 14 appointments, two per district, and the Parish President has seven. It has been his feeling that this committee has put in a lot of time and the more continuity we have of people who have been here since day one, the easier it may be to build on what we have already. So he would suggest that anyone interested talk to his or her Councilman or the Parish President about staying through to fruition.

Dr. Wilkinson said the purpose of the next meeting is to continue to report on the analysis of the Future Land Use Map, particularly review of industrial and residential areas.

Mr. Joder said that another subject that we will want to discuss at upcoming meetings is precisely what will be done in 2004 planning work, which will involve detailed scoping with consultants.

Ms. Wilkinson asked Mr. Rathborne if they should try to reschedule Mr. Bridger for a presentation on light rail alternatives. Mr. Joder replied that he would be seeing Mr. Bridger on February 6th and that he would be happy to talk to him about his schedule.

Mr. Rathborne said that the committee should try to set up a tentative date in March for the next Steering Committee meeting and that may help to firm up a time line for Mr. Bridger's schedule. After some discussion, the committee set Thursday, March 4, 2004 for the next meeting, at 3:30 P. M. at the Select Properties Building on Airline Drive.

Mr. Erie Hebert said that having served on various committees for the Parish, it would be nice for this committee to be recognized for its service with a certificate for their services. Ms. Kerri Becker said that she had received recognition in the mail from Councilman Muniz.

Dr. Wilkinson said that at the previous Council's last meeting Councilman Muniz started the ball rolling when he passed a resolution thanking his appointees, and all of the other Councilmen joined in to thank all of their appointees. Dr. Wilkinson said that she would look into getting this recognition sent to everyone.

Mr. Giorgio asked if it would be beneficial for the committee to consider, as the committee did when they were introducing the ordinance adopting the Plan to the previous Council, an educational process for the current Councilmembers and their aides. Mr. Giorgio said that on several occasions at meetings and at social events with the new Councilmembers they all had a great interest, and the response has been very positive, but some of them said that they are not familiar with what is going on and what they are committing to. They have an interest to learn more and he thought that through the Steering Committee and the Planning Department they might set up a slide show for the Council to bring them up to date as to how it started, where we are now, and what is the responsibility for the future.

Mr. Durabb said that full color copies of the Comprehensive Plan had been printed to explain to the Councilmembers as a precursor to doing something like Mr. Giorgio just expressed. He said that he was planning on explaining the Plan and implementing ordinances on a one to one basis, but he thought it would be better if it also came from the Steering Committee.

Dr. Wilkinson said they had put together a slide show for the Planning Advisory Board, which briefly described the history and what they are proposing now. Some adjustments could be made for the Council.

Mr. Rathborne said that this would be a separate meeting to accommodate them.

Mr. Joder said that they could have anything that is not a quorum, so three or less.

Ms. Parker said she had one last question on the new map colors. She felt that the committee did not need a new set of maps until they were finished going over the rest of the review. Once all of the corrections were finished, the committee should get a new set of maps with the new colors.

Dr. Wilkinson agreed that they would wait and get through all the corrections and then institute the new color scheme. She would then send each committee member a new set of maps.

Mr. Scott Coulombe pointed out that the minutes of the last meeting should be approved. Mr. O'Neil said he had not received his copy of the minutes in the mail and he would like this to be deferred to the next meeting.

Dr. Wilkinson said Mr. Bruce Layburn, who could not attend this meeting, e-mailed her and asked if the Planning Department could e-mail the packets to him and other committee members instead of regular mail. Dr. Wilkinson said that she e-mailed Mr. Layburn that they had considered this option, but the color maps take up a lot of memory in the computer and are difficult to send electronically. Plus, some committee members don't have email, necessitating regular mail anyway. The committee agreed to stay with regular mail.

Mr. Coulombe moved to defer approval of the minutes to the next meeting. Ms. Edwards seconded the motion, and the committee agreed to defer approval of the minutes to the March 4, 2004 meeting.

At 4:30 P.M. the committee adjourned the meeting.