

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE**  
**VILLAGE OF NEW LENOX PLAN COMMISSION**

**Held in the New Lenox Village Hall, 1 Veterans Parkway**

**Tuesday, September 16, 2014 7:00 p.m.**

**#14-09-B**

**CALL TO ORDER**

A regular meeting of the Village of New Lenox Plan Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Mark Muehlnickel.

Chairman Muehlnickel led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

Upon roll call, the following were present: Chairman Mark Muehlnickel, Commissioners Gary Berner, Annette Boyd, John Kuchler, Rob Moss, and Terry Schultz.

The following were absent: Commissioner Joan Byerley.

Mr. Muehlnickel announced there was a quorum present for this meeting.

Also present were Community Development Director Robin Ellis and Secretary Pat Hansen.

**REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF A REGULAR PLAN COMMISSION**  
**MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 2, 2014**

A motion was made by Commissioner Moss and seconded by Commissioner Berner to approve the September 2, 2014 minutes as presented. Voice vote was taken. Motion carried.

**TEXT AMENDMENT TO ZONING ORDINANCE**

**(Public Hearing)**

**Hospital District Signs**

Chairman Muehlnickel asked if proper notice was given for the public hearing, and Community Development Director Robin Ellis replied affirmatively. Mr. Muehlnickel asked for a motion to open the public hearing at 7:02 p.m. A motion was made by Commissioner Boyd and seconded by Commissioner Kuchler to open the public hearing. Voice vote was taken. Motion carried.

Ms. Robin Ellis stated that when the hospital zoning district was created, there were special sign provisions included. She said that included in packet is a copy of the proposed sign, which would add an additional panel for Cadence Health, increasing the sign area by about 37.5 square feet. She said the amendment would increase the maximum sign area for a Type 2 primary tenant identification sign permitted in the Hospital District from 200 square feet to 250 square feet per side.

Mr. Muehlnickel asked if additional square footage is asked for in the future, would the process have to be repeated. Ms. Ellis said with this amendment, it appears they will be maxing out the sign structure. Mr. Kuchler asked if this change will also pertain to the medical buildings in the area. Ms. Ellis replied that this amendment is specific to the hospital zoning district.

A motion was made by Mr. Kuchler and seconded by Mr. Schultz to close the public hearing at 7:06 p.m. A motion was made by Commissioner Boyd and seconded by Mr. Kuchler to recommend to the Village Board approval of a text amendment increasing the maximum sign area for a Type 2 primary tenant identification sign permitted in the Hospital District from 200 square feet to 250 square feet per side.

Upon roll call, the vote was:

AYES: - Commissioners Boyd, Berner, Kuchler, Moss, Schultz, Chairman Muehlnickel

NAYS: - None

Motion carried.

**AMENDMENT TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
**(Public Hearing)**  
**New Lenox Commons Master Plan**

Mr. Muehlnickel asked if proper notice was given for the public hearing, and Ms. Ellis replied affirmatively. Mr. Muehlnickel asked for a motion to open the public hearing at 7:07 p.m. A motion was made by Mr. Berner and seconded by Mr. Schultz to open the public hearing. Voice vote was taken. Motion carried.

Ms. Ellis explained that this is something that was included in the budget a year ago, but required additional time in order to work through the details with the consultants. She explained that the Village invested in a Master Plan for the area in the New Lenox Commons and in doing so, put into place a plan document to be used as a vision as to what this property can be. She stated that the name of the consultant is Ginkgo Planning and Design, an architectural and planning firm from Orland Park, IL. Ms. Ellis advised that one of the first meetings held with the consultants resulted in broadening the scope of the plan because in order to develop the area, the consultant said it becomes necessary to look beyond the borders. She said this includes the Commons

having a presence on Route 30.

Ms. Ellis said the diagram on Page 12 points out the elements of the Master Plan. She said as this is a major undertaking and will be developed into parcels or phases, the consultant has broken it down into segments. Ms. Ellis said the first phase will include the extension of Independence Boulevard from Jewel, connecting with Veterans Parkway. Ms. Ellis pointed out that this will take the extension to the rear of the FIM/Nelson Plaza buildings. Just south of this, she said there will be a very large park with a pond that would provide detention for the area that is being discussed. Ms. Ellis explained that one of the ideas is that this would become a programmed park space, creating a destination to attract people. She said some of the suggestions for this space include a light show and a water feature. With regard to piece #4, she said this is an area that could be developed with restaurants, which leads into Phase 2, which includes restaurants and small specialty retail. Ms. Ellis explained that one of the ideas is that the pond provides an opportunity for outdoor dining with a series of walking paths developed over time. She said this phase, the pond and the park, would most likely be developed by the Village and the Park District, and there have been some preliminary discussions with the land owners. She added that this will probably be implemented over the next year or so. Once this is in place, Ms. Ellis said the thought is that the area would become more attractive and attract people to the restaurants. In order to tie all of this into Route 30, she said the thought is to remove a portion of the former F.I.M. center in order to open up a roadway that would connect to the extension of Independence. She said this not only creates an access corridor, but also a visual from Route 30 to this new open space/pond feature.

Ms. Ellis continued by stating that the diagram on Page 16 shows more detail about the connection to Route 30, and the diagram on Page 17 shows more of the long-term fully redeveloped vision. She explained that according to the plan, Speedway, Burger King, and F.I.M. will be eliminated, leaving Nelson Plaza intact. She said this would result in the creation of a main street into the Commons. Ms. Ellis noted that the phasing may not necessarily occur in the order depicted on the diagram.

On Page 18, Ms. Ellis said the consultants noted that the Jewel parking lot exceeds the Village's requirements by more than 200 parking spaces. In this phase, she said one of the ideas is to create more outlots in order to fully develop this underutilized area.

On Page 19, Ms. Ellis spoke about the extension of Independence Boulevard to the movie theaters (Phase 5). She said the diagram opens up the land to the south of Independence Boulevard. Ms. Ellis reported that Phase 6 illustrates the new development parcels, including the redevelopment of the DeGroate Petroleum property. She said Parcel 1, west of Nelson Road, could be a good location for a hotel with a conference or banquet facility, and that there has been some interest shown in this site in the past several years.

Ms. Ellis advised that Phase 7 consists of the land to the north of the Old Plank Road Trail between the trail and the proposed park and restaurants, and because there is minimal visibility from Nelson Road, it is proposed that Phase 7 could become residential and office in nature, or

perhaps a mix. She said the consultants felt that the frontage on Nelson Road, and the immediate frontage around the Commons are the more prominent pieces, and that residential development could help generate the population needed to support the commercial development.

Ms. Ellis explained that Phase 8 includes the redevelopment of the Ace Hardware, picking up the elements of the Route 30 Plan that was approved last year. She said Phase 9 looks more at the greenways, building on a greater trail system around the new park and pond, a trail along Nelson Road, and something along the north side of Route 30. Ms. Ellis said the ultimate vision is shown on Page 9 of the plan. She said this illustrates how all of the pieces can come together. Ms. Ellis said the intent is to formally adopt this amendment to the Comprehensive Plan so that as developers come forward, there is a formal, guiding document in place.

Mr. Muehlnickel asked how the Village convinces property owners of fully occupied spaces to redevelop a parcel. Ms. Ellis explained that as the area builds out, there is less vacant land, the existing buildings have outlived their usefulness, and there comes a time when it is more economically and financially feasible to sell off and start over. She said it appears that the Village Board has come to realize that if they really want some of this to happen, a more active approach must be taken. Ms. Ellis noted that the Village currently has under contract the Pit Stop, House of Hughes, dry cleaners, and the B. P. Amoco. From a financial standpoint, she said the Village could create a tax increment financing district, and/or a business improvement district.

Ms. Ellis was asked what the vision is for this area, and she responded by stating the Village is looking at retail development. When asked if the Village prefers “big box” or little shops, she explained that something similar to Frankfort’s downtown area would be preferable, but the vision is to try to create a destination for people to come to New Lenox.

Mr. Schultz stated that the area that includes Walmart, Aldi, Ross, the Salvation Army, etc. is becoming known as the “riffraff” mall. Mr. Muehlnickel noted that the amendment to the Comprehensive Plan is addressing property that is located not far from Interstate 80. He went on to say the Commons is beautiful, and that he can picture high-end restaurants, as well as higher-end stores in this area. Mr. Muehlnickel went on to say that something similar to the development at 143<sup>rd</sup> Street and LaGrange Road in Orland Park would be an attractive addition. He added that it should be easy to attract high quality, national retailers to this location due to its proximity to the interstate.

Mr. Schultz commented that the proposed high-end apartments near the train station are a bad idea, as they will just add to the riffraff. Ms. Ellis noted that the “riffraff” will be paying at least \$1,500.00 per month rent. Mr. Schultz explained that it may not be the case at the beginning, but that the condition of the rental units could change in 15 years. Ms. Ellis said that risk can be run with anything, and that there are probably some existing single-family subdivisions that the Village Board would not want to approve if brought before them at this time.

Mr. Berner said there is very little identification or visibility from Interstate 80, and the result is very little draw from Interstate 80 to New Lenox. Ms. Ellis advised that I.D.O.T. will be redoing the I-80/Route 30 interchange in the next two years. She noted that the Village is asking for upgraded landscaping as well as gateway signage. Mr. Schultz said that would be a perfect spot for a high-end hotel with a convention center, and it would be visible from the interstate.

There was discussion of what some felt was inadequate signage on Nelson Road directing people to the movie theater. Ms. Ellis explained that one of the things the Village Board talked about at a strategic planning session this spring was to brand the community so the Village will have its own identity.

Mr. Muehlnickel said the area being discussed becomes the destination portion of the community, and it bothers him that the French Market is held on the south side of the Village Hall due to location restraints. He said he understands the reason it is located in this location, but hopes that one of the proposed parking areas is large enough to accommodate not only the French Market, but other special events as well.

With regard to this area, Mr. Berner asked if “big box” stores are being discouraged, and Ms. Ellis replied affirmatively.

Mr. Muehlnickel asked for a motion to close the public hearing. A motion was made by Commissioner Kuchler and seconded by Commissioner Boyd to close the public hearing. Voice vote was taken. Motion carried. The public hearing was closed at 7:38 p.m.

A motion was made by Commissioner Moss and seconded by Commissioner Schultz to recommend to the Village Board approval of the Master Plan as an addendum to the Village’s Comprehensive Plan.

Upon roll call, the vote was:

AYES: - Commissioners Berner, Boyd, Kuchler, Moss, Schultz,  
Commissioner Muehlnickel

NAYS: - None.

Motion carried.

**OLD BUSINESS**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Ellis advised that at this time, there are no agenda items for the October meetings.

Mr. Schultz asked if the Village has the legal right to say no to anyone wanting to develop in the Village. Ms. Ellis responded by stating the Village has placed building size restrictions in the zoning districts.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Muehlnickel asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Commissioner Boyd and seconded by Mr. Kuchler to adjourn. Voice vote was taken. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Patricia A. Hansen  
Senior Administrative Assistant