

Minutes of the City of Ashland Plan Commission

A meeting of the Plan Commission was called to order on **Tuesday, February 6th, 2018** at 6:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

PRESENT: Mayor Lewis, David Mettille, Ernie Bliss, Mike Amman, Katie Gellatly, Charmaine Swan
EXCUSED: John Beirl
STAFF: April Kroner, Megan McBride
OTHERS:

MEETING AGENDA ORDER

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Mayor Lewis called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

2) Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the Agenda by David Mettille. Seconded by Ernie Bliss. Passed unanimously.

3) Consent Agenda

Motion to approve minutes from January 16th by Mike Amman. Seconded by Katie Gellatly. Passed unanimously.

4) Public Comment

Norm Engstrom, who worked on developing the bike plan, spoke in favor of the overall plan. He emphasized that there is currently no safe way to get to the hospital along Beaser Avenue as the road narrows considerably near the high school.

Dave Ullman, who also helped to develop the bike plan, voiced his support for the overall plan. He recognized that prioritization will need to occur as the entire plan cannot be implemented all at once. He recommended that 11th Street be prioritized as it is a primary corridor to the schools and is also quite wide so traffic tends to drive quite quickly on this road. Therefore, the addition of bike lanes here would be relatively easy and would also help to slow traffic.

Pete Olson, who also assisted with development of the bike plan, voiced his support for the plan and commended the Northland student Aidan Johan who created it.

5) Action Items

- a) Public Hearing and Consideration to Amend the Conditional Use Permit to allow an emergency residential facility at 301 Ellis Avenue, zoned City Center (CC). Applicant: New Day Shelter (Northwoods Women Inc.)

Motion to go into Public Hearing by David Mettille. Seconded by Charmaine Swan. Passed unanimously.

Megan McBride went through the criteria of approval from the staff report and explained the recommended amended conditions of approval.

Mike Amman asked what type of fencing would be used for the play area.

Megan McBride explained that it would be a board-on-board fence with a natural wood finish.

Motion to go out of Public Hearing by David Mettille. Seconded by Katie Gellatly. Passed unanimously.

Motion to approve amendment to the Conditional Use Permit by David Mettille. Seconded by Ernie Bliss. Passed unanimously.

6) Discussion Items

a. Update and discussion on implementation of the city's bike plan

Megan McBride provided the update that grant funding has been applied for to include bike lanes as part of the Sanborn Avenue reconstruction project.

Charmaine Swan asked what costs are involved in adding bike lanes.

Megan McBride explained that in some cases it would just require paint for striping or signage, but the grant funding for the Sanborn Ave project would be to assist with costs of widening the shoulder of the road to better accommodate the addition of bike lanes. She explained that there are other grant opportunities available that she and the sustainability intern will be pursuing.

Mike Amman suggested that people who helped create the bike plan be consulted to identify the "low-hanging fruit" items that would be relatively inexpensive and easy to implement.

Katie Gellatly recommended that 11th Street be evaluated to determine if it is currently wide enough to stripe bike lanes.

Charmaine Swan said that she supports getting bike lanes on 11th Street as this is a primary route for many children to get to school. She also emphasized how unsafe it can be to bike on Main Street currently and suggested that addressing this also be prioritized.

David Mettille agreed that making biking safe on Main Street is important, but will not be a low-hanging fruit item to implement as it will take additional planning and likely need to be part of a larger coordinated effort to make our Main Street more pedestrian-friendly. He expressed support for prioritizing 11th Street as it is a main corridor in the city, particularly for children to get to school.

Charmaine Swan pointed out that the only existing bike lane in Ashland is along Binsfield Road, but since there are no lanes on Ellis or Beaser there is no connection.

Mayor Lewis suggested that Ellis Avenue could be good to focus on as it is wide, a major corridor, and would provide this connection to Binsfield.

Katie Gellatly suggested that Ellis, Maple, and 11th Street be evaluated to determine the feasibility of prioritizing them.

Norm Engstrom explained that Maple Lane was evaluated as part of the bike plan, but is quite narrow and was recently resurfaced so additional consideration will be needed to determine how to provide safe biking opportunities.

Mayor Lewis asked for clarification regarding the difference between a bike boulevard and a bike lane.

Dave Ullman explained that bike lanes are designated using a solid stripe, whereas bike boulevards are typically a shared road between cars and bikes marked using signage or sharrows.

Pete Olson explained that bike boulevards are relatively easy to implement. He highlighted that a place where this could have a significant impact would be along Junction Road to create a full loop including the corridor and waterfront trail. He did point out that there were discussions of providing a paved connector where the 5th Street corridor meets Junction Road as there is not currently a connection that does not require bicyclists to ride on gravel.

Mayor Lewis suggested that grant funding could be sought for a paved connector.

Charmaine Swan said she would especially like to see safe routes to school prioritized in implementation.

Mike Amman brought up the “pinch point” along Beaser Avenue where it narrows as another location that will require additional planning and possibly grant funding to address.

Mayor Lewis suggested that bike traffic could be diverted onto the sidewalk in the location where the road narrows on Beaser.

Dave Ullman explained that it is often dangerous to have bicyclists merge in and out of traffic in this way as cars tend to be less aware of bicyclists as they re-enter the road. He suggested that removing the boulevard and installing a bike lane would be the easiest solution.

Katie Gellatly suggested that Megan work with Aidan to develop a prioritized list with action steps of implementation opportunities that takes into account the Plan Commission’s discussion as well as cost and difficulty of each item.

Charmaine Swan asked if work is being done to provide more bike racks in town.

Megan McBride explained that the high school’s welding program is currently developing designs and will be partnering with the city to create bike racks that will be placed in the downtown in spring of 2018.

Charmaine Swan suggested that having some covered bike rack options would also be helpful.

Katie Gellatly said that there may be cost sharing opportunities with downtown business owners who would like bike racks near their store.

7) Announcements / reports / comments / questions

Ernie Bliss requested that a discussion take place at the next Plan Commission meeting regarding the role of the Plan Commission in city decision-making and how current approval processes could be streamlined in the future.

8) Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Ernie Bliss. Seconded by David Mettille. Passed unanimously.
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The meeting was adjourned at 7:15p.m. Minutes by Megan McBride.

