

MINUTES of the Vernal City PLANNING COMMISSION

Vernal City Council Chambers - 374 East Main Street, Vernal, Utah

January 3, 2023

5:15 pm

Members Present: Stephen Lytle, Troy Allred, Corey Foley, Kimball Glazier, Brian Eades

Members Excused: Brandon Parker

Alternates Present: Ryan Pugh, Randel Mills

Alternates Excused:

Staff Present: Gabby Blackburn, Assistant City Manager; Matthew Tate, Building Official; and Gay Lee Jeffs, Administrative Secretary.

WELCOME AND DESIGNATION OF CHAIR AND MEMBERS: Vice Chair Stephen Lytle welcomed everyone present to the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION TO CONSIDER AMENDING THE VERNAL CITY GENERAL PLAN – APPENDIX E, MODERATE INCOME HOUSING & FUTURE LAND USE MAP – GABBY BLACKBURN

Gabby Blackburn introduced herself to the Commission as the new Assistant City Manager and new Planning Director. Ms. Blackburn will be replacing Allen Parker who will be going to work for Evolve Utah in March 2023, but will still be a Vernal City employee until January 14, 2023. Ms. Blackburn explained that the section the City is looking at for the General Plan changes, from Commercial and Industrial to Residential, has had interest in by developers. Ms. Blackburn stated that Vernal City encourages annexation if it benefits the City and is orderly and thought out. Ms. Blackburn showed an expansion area map that could possibly be annexed into Vernal City. Ms. Blackburn stated that the area that has previously been slated as industrial and commercial in the General Plan has some interest in it to become moderate to high density residential.

Allen Parker explained that the entire east side of the town is changing with industrial moving out and a lot of highway frontage that is underutilized and a lot of open land that is unutilized it would make a lot of sense for the Planning Commission to come up with a vision for the East side of town as far as land use goes to forward onto City Council for discussion.

Kimball Glazier asked if anyone in particular was asking for this change. Quinn Bennion, City Manager, answered that there have been inquiries. Corey Foley asked if the previously suggested plan would go up to 500 North. Ms. Blackburn answered that the plan shown would not. Mr. Parker stated that the initial suggestion was to change up to 300 North. Randel Mills pointed out

Vernal City Planning Commission Minutes
January 3, 2023

that it would depend on what would be built there to access it from 500 North. A current Future Land Use map was shown with what the zoning could be like in the future for Vernal City. Ms. Blackburn noted that the map could be changed to what the Planning Commission thought Vernal City should look like instead of what the current Future Land Use map shows. Mr. Foley recounted the conversation from the last Planning Commission meeting and the concerns about chemicals in the ground, noise, industrial buildings across the street and other comments and what was discussed at that meeting. Mr. Parker informed the Commission members that the map they were looking at is called the Future Land Use map. Ms. Blackburn explained that the map is an outline for what the community can grow in to. The map shows transition areas basically saying that the other uses could grow into those areas. Now years down the line it could grow into something else. With the housing crises it could be more advantageous to have more residential areas than industrial. Mr. Parker reiterated that changing the map does not change any of the zones. This is not a rezone. Changing the map just changes what the City Council can consider to be rezoned. Troy Allred mentioned that it makes it easier for a rezone. Mr. Foley voiced concern about the water and sewer lines in that area being at near capacity and that there would be some costs associated with those water and sewer lines. Ms. Blackburn stated that those lines are supposedly slated for upgrades. There is no exact timeline but it could possibly be within the next two (2) years. Randel Mills asked what cost the City could incur with this project. Mr. Bennion responded that he has been in Vernal just over five (5) years and this kind of change is even new to him as Vernal City has not changed the Future Land Use during his time as Vernal City Manager; and there has never been this much interest in this size of a development before. If the area is to develop as commercial, industrial or residential, the City will put most of burden back onto the developer such as street infrastructure, sidewalks, their water and sewer lines, etc. The big discussion will be how the water and sewer will impact the transmission lines outside the streets. When the streets are dedicated and turned over to the City, built to City standards, then the City would provide the normal public services. Mr. Mills asked if the City might have to add another employee to help handle those services. Mr. Bennion stated that is up to the City Council, City Manager, and Public Works Director to worry about having enough employees and equipment to manage City services. Mr. Bennion suggested that the Planning Commission's focus should be on, is this the appropriate use, is this the appropriate area, where does the City want the Industrial zone, what about growth, what about Commercial areas. The City Council can worry about how to pay for it. Property and sales tax will help pay for City services. Mr. Mills asked if the property taxes would offset the budget. Mr. Bennion replied that the property tax in Vernal City is extremely low, but most of the budget would come from sales tax. Mr. Parker noted that the higher the density the better it offsets the budget because there is more value in the individual structure and less infrastructure the City would have to maintain. Matt Tate explained that it is a domino effect; rooftops bring a need for businesses, which bring more sales tax. You cannot have businesses thrive if there are not enough rooftops. Ms. Blackburn said that there is an advantage to keeping the area small because there would not be the option of spreading out and having more linear feet of pipe the public would have to upkeep. The cheapest form of development is to take agricultural land and just build out single family, but they would not be able to do that if City does not give the space. Ryan Pugh asked if a developer was considering taking all industrial and just knocking it over, so to speak. Mr. Allred explained that it would just be the undeveloped land. Ms. Blackburn

Vernal City Planning Commission Minutes
January 3, 2023

noted that the City could make the change and any interested parties might end up changing their mind. Whatever the change may be, it will affect the land no matter who owns it. If the Planning Commission thinks this is a good area for industrial, then keep it industrial, regardless of personal interest or development factors. The staff has looked at the area and found that there is a need for residential and this might be a good area and maybe move industrial somewhere else. Mr. Foley commented that there is a fine balance of industrial and residential. Mr. Allred pointed out that there needs to be some kind of buffer zone off of Main Street and there is not a buffer zone if it is right up against the road. Mr. Glazier asked if the majority of Vernal City high density residential was in the Silver Pines area. He was informed that it was. Mr. Glazier asked if the City felt like there was a need for more high density residential or has there been enough already designated as high density residential. Ms. Blackburn showed the areas on the map within the City currently designated as high density residential. Mr. Foley commented that in those areas there is a need; every place in town is full. The State Legislature has had concerns about enough housing. Mr. Glazier reported that the building industry is moving to high density residential housing. Mr. Tate agreed and added that it makes it a cheaper per square foot price for the buyer and that is what a lot of people can afford. Stephen Lytle mentioned that he prefers high density residential because it does not take up as much agricultural land. Mr. Pugh asked what kind of buffer would be put between Industrial and Residential zones. Would it produce enough money for a park or something that looks nice and could it be maintained. Mr. Allred explained that a buffer is a transition from something like a Commercial zone into a higher density Residential zone. Mr. Glazier informed that he was a member of the Planning Commission the last time the General Plan was addressed and changed. He stated that the Planning Commission at that time really tried to designate good buffer zones. Mr. Glazier asked if the City wants industrial to go away. Mr. Allred answered that there are existing businesses there and so there must be some Industrial zone in that area. Ms. Blackburn explained that the area around those businesses could be zoned differently. Mr. Foley suggested putting some conditions on that area such as a six (6) foot sight obscuring fence. Mr. Foley talked about having Commercial, light Industrial or Industrial across the front going down Main Street, then higher density Residential as a buffer then an area up in the corner for Residential. Ms. Blackburn showed an area that is in the County and that the County was interested in zoning Residential. The area would need to be annexed into the City. Mr. Pugh asked what is required to annex the property into the City. Ms. Blackburn explained that the Planning Commission is an advisory board to the City Council. Mr. Bennion stated that the City has done very few annexations. There has not been an annexation in the last five (5) years since Mr. Bennion has been the City Manager nor in the last sixteen (16) years since Mr. Parker was the Assistant City Manager. Historic annexation patterns of Uintah County are very unique. Uintah County has a very high unincorporated annexation population. Annexation is how Cities grow and develop property. Ms. Blackburn reminded the Commission that they were trying to decide if there needed to be a change in the General Plan's Future Land Use map. Mr. Glazier voiced concern about eliminating the Industrial zone in the City. Mr. Parker stated that the Commission should probably look at more than just one area and maybe expand the Industrial zone. There was discussion on where the Industrial zone should be in Vernal City and if there would be enough Industrial zones for business owners. Mr. Glazier asked if Industrial zoned property brings in much property tax. Mr. Bennion explained that Industrial zoned property brings in a small

Vernal City Planning Commission Minutes
January 3, 2023

percentage of property tax. There was a discussion on where and what kind of a buffer there should be between the zones. There was more discussion on the need for repair of some water and sewer lines and how Ashley Valley Water and Vernal City have a joint line. There were some concerns about the infrastructure needs of water and sewer. Mr. Eades wondered about a time frame for infrastructure with new development. Mr. Parker explained that the new development infrastructure must be completed before the land is able to be recorded. Ms. Blackburn showed the map with the new changes the Commission would like to make to the General Plan Future Land Use map. Mr. Parker commented that he would not want to buffer Residential with Industrial, maybe buffer with a Mixed Use zone or a Commercial zone. Mr. Parker informed the Commission that according to the City Code and Federal or State law that the City must have an Industrial zone. Ms. Blackburn made some updates to the changes made to the General Plan Future Land Use map. There was discussion about the land around the airport and what the Commission would like to see develop in that area. Mr. Parker stated that he and Commissioner Parker wanted to make sure the Commission are making the right changes and getting the highest and best use out of the changes that might be made. Mr. Parker reminded the Commission that they do not have to rezone areas just because the Future Land Use map says it could become a different zone unless it meets the desires of the Planning Commission and the City Council. Mr. Bennion expressed his appreciation of all the work the Planning Commission does for the City.

Stephen Lytle adjourned the meeting.

Stephen Lytle, Planning Commission Vice Chair