

ROUTT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

FINAL MINUTES

July 18, 2019

The regular meeting of the Routt County Planning Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. with the following members present: Chairman Steve Warnke and Commissioners Troy Brookshire, Brian Kelly, Bill Norris and Geoff Petis. Commissioners John Merrill, Peter Flint, Andrew Benjamin, Greg Jaeger and Roberta Marshall were absent. County Commissioner Beth Melton, Planning Director Chad Phillips, Assistant Planning Director Kristy Winser and staff planners Chris Brookshire, Alan Goldich and Tegan Anderson also attended. Other staff members in attendance included County Manager Tom Sullivan, Deputy County Manager Dan Weinheimer, and Environmental Health Director Scott Cowman. Board of Adjustment members in attendance were Don Prowant, Gerard Albers and Rohail Abid. Sarah Katherman recorded the meeting and prepared the minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

MINUTES - June 6, 2019

Commissioner Kelly moved approve the minutes of the Routt County Planning Commission meeting held on the above stated date, as written. Commissioner Petis seconded the motion. **The motion carried , 5 - 0.**

MINUTES - June 20 2019

Commissioner Kelly moved approve the minutes of the Routt County Planning Commission meeting held on the above stated date, as written. Commissioner Petis seconded the motion. **The motion carried, 5 - 0.**

MASTER PLAN UPDATE RESOURCE PRESENTATION - DOLA

Chairman Warnke reviewed the previous discussions of the Master Plan update process at Planning Commission meetings in January, March (joint meeting with the Board of County Commissioners), April and June. He stated that at each of these meetings, Planning Commission had affirmed that the underlying theme and vision of the existing Routt County Master Plan remains intact. Chairman Warnke stated that a Master Plan Update Steering Committee had been formed and has met three times to date. The Steering Committee consists of County Commissioner Beth Melton, County Manager Tom Sullivan, Deputy County Manager Dan Weinheimer, Planning Director Chad Phillips, and Planning Commissioners Steve Warnke and Troy Brookshire. Chairman Warnke stated that representatives of the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) were in attendance to offer assistance and discuss the resources available to Routt County for the update process. Copies of the presentation were distributed and are available electronically.

Demographics

Ms. Cindy DeGroen, the state demographer, presented data regarding recent population growth of the state, noting that while Colorado continues to grow, the rate of growth is slowing and the vast majority of the growth is occurring on the Front Range. She reviewed how Routt County's recent population growth compares to other counties in the state and to the state as a whole. She also reviewed growth trends of different geographical areas within Routt County, noting that 48.4% of Routt County's growth since 2000 has been in Steamboat Springs and 41.8% has been in the unincorporated areas of the County. Ms. DeGroen separated the components of the growth into natural growth (births minus deaths) and net migration. She reviewed the relative migration to different counties in the state, noting again that the largest increase of migration growth is to the Front Range. She also discussed the age distribution and stressed that the population of Colorado and of Routt County in particular is aging for a combination of reasons.

Ms. DeGroen reviewed the formula used to forecast future population, and discussed the close relationship between job growth and net migration. She discussed the variables that can influence projections and affect accuracy. In Routt County the total number of jobs has just recently exceeded the number of jobs reached prior to the great recession. Ms. DeGroen reviewed the distribution of jobs in Routt County by industry and wage range. She noted that 40% of employees working in Routt County live outside the County. This number includes commuters and remote workers. In her discussion of the aging population, Ms. DeGroen stated that the population in the 75-84 age group is projected to increase 65% and the population in the over 84 age group is projected to increase by 48% by 2025. The next faster growing age group over that same time period (at 24%) is expected to be the 16-24 year olds.

In summary, Ms. DeGroen stated that all the demographic elements discussed: population, jobs, age, migration and labor force are connected. She stated that the increasing age of the population will have an impact on the labor force, the industrial mix, housing, service demand, tax base, etc.

Commissioner Kelly noted that Ms. DeGroen had mentioned the availability of water as a constraint on growth, and stated that the same thing was being discussed in the 1970s. Ms. DeGroen agreed, and stated that three counties in Colorado are now at full capacity due to water. She noted, however, that water conservation per capita has increased and that the current projection of an additional 3 million people in Colorado by 2050 can be accommodated by the current water supply.

Chairman Warnke asked whether official projections of growth are influenced by local policy. Ms. DeGroen stated that they can be, if policies and regulations are in place that will impact growth patterns. She cited examples of some locales that do not allow growth in certain areas, or others that do not have sufficient water to support growth.

Commissioner Kelly asked if the current trends in different counties have been going on continuously, or if there have been changes in certain areas over time. Ms. DeGroen said that while most have stayed the same (growing areas continue to grow), some counties have switched. She cited Weld County, which is quite young, has a low cost of living and is growing rapidly, as one example.

Mr. Rohail Abid asked if changes in energy sources have an impact of growth trends. Ms. DeGroen said that changes in the energy industries have influenced jobs, which influences population.

Comprehensive Planning

At Chairman Warnke's request, Ms. Andy Hill of the DOLA Community Development Office offered a brief review of the steps to creating a Comprehensive Plan. She then returned to the beginning of her presentation. She enumerated the Planning Resources that DOLA can provide to communities as they develop/update their Plans. She asked Mr. Phillips what had prompted Routt County to create a Master Plan in the first place. Mr. Phillips discussed the proposal to develop a new ski area in the vicinity and a growing concern with the loss of open spaces. Ms. Hill suggested that prior to undertaking a Plan update, it is important to understand why it is being done. She noted that most Master Plans are Comprehensive Plans, in that they include much more than land use (transportation, housing, wildlife, etc.). She said that most are advisory in nature, but are used to drive the adoption of regulations designed to implement the vision laid out in the Plan. Other tools used to implement the Plan include, but are not limited to, zoning, building codes, intergovernmental agreements, incentive programs, etc. Ms. Hill reviewed the list of typical Plan elements, noting that the only one that is required by law is recreation and tourism. She also reviewed the minimum notice and adoption requirements and the statutory guidance regarding master plans.

Ms. Hill discussed the inter-connected nature of various issues such as land use, transportation, water and other elements that are often included in Comprehensive Plans, noting that development patterns have wide reaching impacts on everything from wildlife habitat to access to daycare and energy use. She also discussed how other long range plans, such as water conservation plans and hazard mitigation plans must work with the Comprehensive Plan and its sub-area plans.

Ms. Hill reviewed the trends, key issues and best practices in planning, stressing the importance of ensuring that the Comprehensive Plan is useful in guiding the regular processing of land use applications. She stated newer Plans often address the aging demographic, public health and livability; potential hazards and mechanisms for adapting to climate change; protecting and ensuring the water supply; affordable housing; economic diversification and social equity. Ms. Hill stated that Comp Plans should include vision statements, clear policies and specific strategies. She emphasized that the more specific the Plan is, the more

useful it will be. She offered that the Plan should be very clear about the role of the County in implementation. It should also include action plans that hold specific parties accountable.

Ms. Hill reviewed a variety of recently completed Comprehensive Plans from around the state and the region, noting differences in style, formatting, metrics and tone. She then discussed the importance of public engagement and reviewed the strategies and techniques that different communities have used to get people involved in the Comprehensive Planning process. She stressed the need to take the process to the people and not rely on the small number of people that will attend public hearings. Ms. Hill also revisited the steps involved in creating a Comp Plan and discussed best practices of working with consultants. She recommended gathering data first and taking the time to identify the challenges, issues, opportunities and threats to the community that Comp Plan should address prior to engaging a consultant.

Commissioner Kelly asked how often a County like Routt should be revising its Master Plan. Ms. Hill suggested that the Plan should be reviewed every five years or so to evaluate if an update is warranted. She said that if the Plan contains a work plan, it is useful to check it periodically to assess what has been accomplished and to redefine the action plan, if necessary. Mr. Phillips noted that the existing Master Plan does not contain demographic data and does not include a Future Land Use Map, so it lacks some elements that often get out of date quickly.

In response to a question regarding the use of surveys, Ms. Hill suggested that they can be useful, particularly as early outreach to provide guidance on the update, but warned that good surveys are difficult to design.

Commissioner Brookshire expressed concern that even with robust outreach, the Plan could be based on the responses and input of a very small percentage of the total community. There was further discussion of effective strategies for outreach, including getting students involved. Mr. Rick Garcia, Executive Director of DOLA, offered that Planning Commission needs to lead the process and can act as a conduit for feedback. He added that putting some controversial topics out there will increase participation. He stated that ultimately it is the County Commissioners that will enact the measures that implement the Plan's policies. County Manager Tom Sullivan noted that the future plan should consider some potential big changes to the community, such as the future of coal production in the area and the future of the power plant.

Mr. Gerard Albers noted the ongoing work on the Yampa Basin Implementation Plan and suggested that this plan could be tied in closely with the Master Plan. Environmental Health Director Scott Cowman agreed, and stated that there are a variety of other groups with pertinent plans and studies that could be incorporated into the update process. Commissioner Kelly offered that water and affordable

housing are two very important issues that could serve as hooks to get people involved.

Noting the light attendance, Chairman Warnke asked staff to ensure that the slide presentations from this meeting are made available to all Planning Commission members. He also asked staff to send out a notice to Planning Commission asking everyone to re-read the existing Master Plan and put together a list of what is missing that they want to see in the update in preparation for a workshop. County Commissioner Melton advised Planning Commission to consider the bigger issues of vision, strategy and tools, and not limit its focus to specific topics within the Plan. She warned against assuming the end point of the Plan before the process starts. Commissioner Brookshire suggested that the Board of County Commissioners should also weigh in on the shortcomings and/or vision of the Plan to ensure all are moving in the same direction. Commissioner Warnke noted that Planning Commission deals with the Plan on a daily basis, which provides a very different perspective than the public has of the Plan. He offered that the public would also provide a very different sort of input. County Commissioner Melton noted the educational piece of public outreach.

Deputy County Manager Dan Weinheimer recommended that staff develop a framework for moving forward with the process through which the update will be done. He noted that the application for DOLA assistance is due on August 1st. In response to a question from Ms. Winser, Ms. Hill confirmed that Routt County has the material needed to satisfy DOLA's requirements.

In response to a question from Chairman Warnke, Ms. DeGroen stated that seasonal workers are not taken into account in the official demographic data.

Commissioner Norris discussed his outreach efforts at CMC and suggested that the students as well as the faculty and staff would be a good resource.

LEGAL AND PROCEDURAL TRAINING

Mr. Phillips stated that the County Attorney was unavailable to conduct the annual legal training. He suggested that rather than trying to reschedule a joint meeting, it might be preferable to schedule individual training sessions.

Mr. Phillips reviewed how the staff reports are organized. He noted that staff comments are included that address the pertinent policies and regulations cited in Planning Commission packets. Only the applicable regulations are included in the Board of Adjustment packets. The staff reports also contain a staff recommendation on variance requests presented to the BOA, whereas the only applications presented to the PC that include staff recommendations are LPS applications.

Mr. Phillips reviewed the elements included in staff reports. He noted that the basic findings of fact provided to the BOA are always the same, as they refer back to the statutory requirements for granting a variance. Each of these findings,

however, must be supported by evidence of how the particular application meets the specific requirement.

Mr. Phillips reviewed conditions of approval, noting that PC staff reports usually include general conditions that are based on templates that address standard requirements. Staff reports usually also contain suggested site specific conditions particular to the application. Mr. Phillips stated that the goal of the staff report is to provide all the information that is needed for the body to make a properly supported decision. He stated that complete applications often include lengthy reports and technical studies that are not included in the printed version of the staff report. The complete applications are always available online. Mr. Phillips urged Planning Commission and the Board of Adjustment to tell staff if they have ideas on how staff reports could be improved.

Mr. Phillips reviewed the essentials of Robert's Rules of Order and discussed motion making in particular. He stated that once a motion has been made and seconded, it belongs to the body - not the motion maker - and any amendment must be approved by the body as a whole, either by unanimous consent or by vote.

Chairman asked about the practice of requesting the rationale for dissenting votes. Mr. Phillips offered that while it is not required, it helps to create a complete record of the proceedings and is important to the Board of County Commissioners. He cited examples in which the Board has been significantly influenced by the reasoning for a dissenting vote.

There was a discussion of why call-in participation is not allowed at PC or BOA meetings. Mr. Phillips offered that the visual presentations discussed by applicants and staff are frequently crucial to a decision.

Planning Commission discussed the proper way for a motion to be withdrawn. It was agreed that once the motion has been seconded, it belongs to the motion maker and can only be withdrawn with the consent of the full body.

There was no administrator's report.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50