

On Thursday, July 25, 2019, at 7:00 p.m., a regular meeting of the Plan Commission was called to order. Roll Call. Present: Chair Rene Morris, Aurelio Gallardo, Skip McCloud and Steve Munson. Absent: Doug Freed, Dick Linville and Jamie Schwingle.

Also present were: Planner Dustin Wolff with associate Brian Carranza from Mead & Hunt, Building and Zoning Superintendent Amanda Schmidt and Assistant City Clerk Monique Castillo.

Schmidt welcomed Skip McCloud as the new Plan Commissioner. McCloud is filling the vacant seat of Eric Larson.

McCloud introduced himself and his business. He is the owner of McCloud and Associates and recently relocated from Downers Grove, Illinois. He is excited to serve.

McCloud made a motion to approve the minutes of June 20, 2019 as presented. The motion was seconded by Munson. Voting – Ayes: Morris, Gallardo, McCloud and Munson. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Dick Linville entered the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

The Planners from Mead and Hunt led discussion on the Comprehensive Plan Update. They focused on Housing and Public Involvement.

Carranza reviewed four housing elements – background information, housing types, specific area plans and vision statements and led discussion on each element.

- Background Information: the predominant structure of housing in Sterling is single-family detached and is comparable with surrounding municipalities. Carranza noted about one quarter of the housing stock is 80 plus years old. Carranza added insight on housing needs and affordability and explained how this is assessed; by determining the proportion of gross income spent on rental or home ownership costs. He noted only 36.1% of renters in Sterling are cost-burdened, as opposed to the 51.5% in Rock Falls but similar to the 35.2% in Dixon.
- Housing Types: Carranza noted we are a “missing middle housing” community. Meaning we lack the typical duplex, fourplex, bungalow court neighborhoods and other structures of this style; the spectrum between detached single-family homes and mid/high-rise apartment buildings. The Country Lane Apartments and the duplex at the corner of Avenue K and West Fourth Street are prime examples of middle housing.
- Specific Area Plans: Carranza noted the majority of the housing stock is concentrated mostly within the central and downtown area. Carranza suggested options on how to implement plans to distribute the housing stock throughout all of the area so it is not

so centralized. Specifically on the Riverfront and downtown areas. One suggestion, transform buildings that were once utilized for light manufacturing into apartment complexes; such as National or Lawrence Brothers. This notion is currently not allowed in our existing code. Carranza noted there is a lot of land potential for mixed use to accommodate requested needs.

- Vision Statements: Carranza developed seven statements that encompass our vision which include finding a balance between rentals and home ownership, utilizing current funding to encourage upkeep and rehabilitation and supporting diversification.

Planner Wolf gave a brief review of the stakeholder group interviews that were held earlier in the day. Housing and property maintenance were the main concerns of each group. The Realtor group noted there was not enough inventory and what there is, is priced to high. The Hispanic Leaders group believe outreach is important and they want more involvement. They appreciate the survey is available in Spanish. The Millenials/Young Professionals group spearheaded their own ideas and stated housing is detrimental. They would like to see improvement in the riverfront, getting rid of the one-way streets and return the downtown to a slow paced atmosphere as opposed to the high paced thorough fare.

Planner Wolf also noted the on-line survey has had a great response to date. 52% of the responders have resided in Sterling for 10 plus years.

Schmidt noted there will be a meeting next month to continue discussion of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

The next Plan Commission meeting will be August 22, 2019.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Monique Castillo  
Assistant City Clerk