

MINUTES

Lowell Planning and Zoning Board
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, November 6, 2023, 6:00 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Scott Wilson, called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Planning Board members present: Troy Roberts Sr., Norris Lamb, and Heather Seay. David Jennings was absent. Staff members present: Joe Gates, Planning Director, Stormwater Administrator Jamie Watkins, and Cheryl Ramsey, City Clerk. Amy Bowen was the officer on duty. Members of the public were in attendance.

II. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM –it was determined a quorum was reached.

III. CHANGES TO AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA – No changes.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - led by Scott Wilson

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE OCTOBER 3, 2023, MEETING.

A motion was made by Board Member Lamb to approve the previous minutes, seconded by Board Member Roberts. The vote was unanimously in favor.

VI. OLD BUSINESS – None

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. **Presentation – City of Lowell Downtown Master Plan presented by Demetri Baches from Metrocology.** Mr. Gates showed the renderings for the Master Plan to board members. Mr. Baches then did his presentation via Zoom. After the presentation there was a brief discussion. Board Member Roberts said it was a lot to take in and requested the presentation slides. Mr. Gates said he will provide via email. Mr. Gates told the board that the same presentation was given to the LCC (Lowell Community Committee), and the plan for staff is to present it to City Council for their approval and adoption of the conceptual plan for downtown. Meetings have been held with staff, DOT, and property owners in the downtown area in getting people to use their imagination of what could happen in our downtown area. Chairman Wilson mentioned the new roads concept of the presentation and how the idea has always been to get the large trucks out of the downtown area.

Board Member Lamb asked what are the phases for this type of project? Mr. Baches said there would be a combination of things that would happen

simultaneously. It's hard to pick a spot and say this is where we will start, etc. The big-ticket items would be to get the pilot project going, or showing what Main St could look like, with DOT as well as the 3rd St ideas. The biggest thing to do is to get the downtown property owners involved so they understand what is going on that will benefit them. Then you could begin developing projects like building City Hall which could set the tone for the rest of the vision.

With no further questions, Board Member Seay made a motion to move this forward to City Council, seconded by Board Member Roberts. The vote was unanimously approved.

- B. Application for Appointment to Lowell Planning and Zoning Board – Applicant Natasha Shuford.** Mr. Gates stated this is for information purposes only to let the board know what was coming up for vote with City Council. He stated the rules and procedures say you can have up to seven members [on the Planning Board]. We received the application for Ms. Shuford, and it will be going forward to council next week [November 14, 2023]. Board Member Seay said she spoke to someone else who was interested in being on the Planning Board and they stated they never heard anything back. The City Clerk stated she had been seeing items in her email going straight to her spam folder but will check tomorrow for any that may have slipped her review and get in contact the interested applicant. Mr. Gates added that this is an open meeting and she or anyone is welcome to come see what the Planning Board does.
- C. EPA Multipurpose Grant for 1602 N. Main St – Introduction to Grant Funding.** Staff is seeking support of the board as it applies for grant funding through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Community Wide Brownfield Assessment Grant to continue cleanup and revitalization of the proposed Riverside Park. Mr. Gates said staff are always looking for grant money and this is an opportunity from the EPA for a multipurpose grant. He directed members to the agenda packet for the purpose of the funding. He said this is for the old chemical plant. He stated that there have been approved grants for several million dollars to aid with getting stuff down and moving things along. We believe our project would be eligible for these funds. The grant can be up to \$1 million dollars and staff is seeking the boards' approval to apply for the grant. We have missed the deadline for the current cycle but will come back to the board in a couple months when the new cycle comes back around and after proper preparation (studies and narratives written by staff) for support. He wanted to mention it now to get it on the board's radar.

Chairman Wilson asked if we have to pay it back? Mr. Gates said no. Chairman Wilson said it is an amazing opportunity for us to apply. He asked how many millions of grants have we been awarded, like \$19 million per Candy [Funderburk of City Council]? Mr. Gates did not know the exact amount but agreed the city has been awarded a substantial amount of money in grant funds over the last few

years. He thinks Gaston County has received the most money in grant funds in the State this budget year.

With no other questions, Board Member Lamb made a motion to move forward in seeking this grant, seconded by Board Member Seay. The vote was unanimously approved.

- D. **Planning Department Updates** – Information only. Mr. Gates gave the board updates on what he has been up to in the last month. See agenda packet for updates.

VIII. ADJOURN

With no other discussion, a motion was made to adjourn by Board Member Seay, seconded by Board Member Roberts. The vote was unanimously in favor. Adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

AFFIRM:

Chair, Scott Wilson

Cheryl Ramsey, City Clerk