

OFFICIAL MINUTES
Carroll County Planning and Zoning Commission
Pathways to Carroll's Future Landscape
Work Session

August 18, 2009

Location: County Office Building, Room 003

Members Present: David L. Brauning, Chairman
Dennis Wertz, Vice Chair
Melvin E. Baile, Jr.
Wayne Schuster
Charles M. Chadwick
Alec Yeo
Robert B. Slade, Alternate

Members Absent: Julia Walsh Gouge, Ex-Officio

The meeting opened at 2:00 p.m. Mr. Brauning welcomed everyone to the work session. He noted that there would be no public comments. He apologized to the public for the cancellation of the last work session; there was a staff health issue.

Mr. Steve Horn, Director, Department of Planning, introduced Larry Twele, Director, Department of Economic Development, and Ted Zaleski, Director, Department of Management and Budget.

Mr. Twele reviewed a presentation detailing: where the County is now in terms of industrial/commercial tax base, the undue burden on the residential tax base, environmental constraints that make large parcels less usable, EDLENS finding that demand far exceeds supply, etc.

Mr. Zaleski emphasized that he was not taking a position for or against the rezonings, but discussing the implications of withdrawing the rezonings. He noted that the County must make a choice to change the revenue mix. Mr. Zaleski explained that the County is currently very dependent on the residential tax base and the housing market. He noted that increasing the County's business tax base adds balance to the revenue mix.

Mr. Twele stated it would take over 900 acres of business to increase the assessable base by three percent. The County is trying to prepare now for the future. He noted that companies looking to locate in Carroll ask three questions: "how much is the rent? where are we going to park? where are we going to eat?" Mr. Twele suggested that floating zones allow for businesses to happen, but with a level of uncertainty for residents and business. He noted that developing land is risky enough without additional processes. Mr. Twele suggested that the zoning needs to be on the ground. He further suggested that the Commission think of employment zoning the same way the County views agriculture preservation. We need to preserve and plan for employment growth or there won't be a place for it for future generations.

Mr. Yeo questioned how much the County needs to increase the business zone.

Mr. Twele indicated the County is at just under 10 percent and the goal is 15 percent.

Mr. Brauning questioned how much land in the County is currently zoned industrial/commercial.

Mr. Twele stated there are 8,200 acres.

Mr. Brauning questioned how many of those acres are used as they are zoned.

Mr. Twele indicated 1,600 acres are used for industrial and 1,300 acres are used for commercial development, including the towns.

Mr. Yeo questioned what Mr. Twele would have changed if the County had used his expertise instead of hiring a consultant to do EDLENS.

Mr. Twele indicated the study identified parcels throughout the County but there are environmental constraints. He noted staff would like to have Springfield to work with, but the State owns it. Based on discussions with the Governor's staff, this administration is not inclined to surplus it for development. Mr. Twele explained that businesses want to locate where there is adequate transportation access, like Dorsey Crossroads and I-70.

Mr. Wertz suggested that employment growth be focused to existing commercial corridors.

Mr. Twele noted that redevelopment requires owners to reinvest in their properties.

Mr. Yeo suggested that money that would be spent on infrastructure for new development be redirected into redeveloping rundown areas.

Mr. Schuster suggested the County needs to strengthen the zoning regulations because there is an abundance of retail in industrially zoned areas.

Mr. Wertz suggested additional proposed zoning classifications with office zones that don't allow retail except as an ancillary use.

The Commission and staff discussed the effects of the present economy on residential and commercial/industrial development; the number of additional residential houses predicted; the income tax rate; short, medium, and long term goals for economic development; redevelopment of existing vacant commercial/industrial areas; etc.

Mr. Ralph Robertson, Agricultural Land Preservation Program Manager, and Mr. Jeff Everett, Preservation Specialist, discussed the new leveraged IPA program being used to purchase easements. They reminded the Commission of the goal of 100,000 acres of permanently preserved land and noted that currently 55,000 acres are under easement. They discussed with the Commission how the Pathways Plan would affect the value of farms applying to the program and the additional costs of farms due to their Conservation zoning.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned.

Secretary

Approved