

**MINUTES**  
**WHITLEY COUNTY PLAN COMMISSION**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**

**August 9, 2021**

**6:30 p.m.**

**Whitley County Government Center**  
**Lower Level, Meeting Room A/B**

<b>MEMBERS</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>	<b>STAFF</b>
Michael Bemis	X		Nathan Bilger
Dane Drew	X		Mark Cullnane
Brent Emerick	X		
Theresa Green	X		<b>LEGAL COUNSEL</b>
Thor Hodges	X		Elizabeth Deckard
Kim Kurtz-Seslar	X		
Joe Wolf	X		<b>NONVOTING ADVISOR</b>
Brad Wolfe	X		
Doug Wright	X		

**AUDIENCE MEMBERS**

The audience list of in-person and electronic guests is attached below.

Mr. Bilger asked the Commission to move microphones in front of whoever was speaking at the time so that they could be heard by the in-person audience and those watching the online broadcast.

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Mr. Hodges called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. Cullnane read the roll call with members present and absent listed above.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WORKSHOP**

Mr. Hodges stated that this special meeting was occurring so that the Commission could discuss the current (June 2021) draft of the proposed update to the Comprehensive Plan. He said that this, and possible future meetings, would foster a better understanding of the Plan and reminded everyone that this was a public meeting, but not a public hearing.

Mr. Bilger reviewed the primary topics of discussion for the meeting, including a review of frequently asked questions and discussion of comments and questions from the Commission and members of the public.

Mr. Bilger's discussion of frequently asked questions included a discussion of differences between a comprehensive plan and a zoning ordinance, character type compared to land use classifications, and potential impacts on the Plan in the event that US 30 is converted to a freeway.

Mr. Bilger asked the Commission if it had questions.

Mr. Wolf stated that businesses often locate along highways after improvements have been made. He asked what would happen in the event that US 30 was converted to a freeway and businesses wanted to locate near interchanges. Mr. Bilger provided the example of improvements made to US 31 in and around Kokomo and stated that the city has limited development along this stretch of the highway. He said that the County could consider doing something similar.

Mr. Bilger presented a summary of the comments received during the public hearing period since the Plan was initially considered by the Commission at the special meeting in June. Mr. Hodges and Mr. Bilger stated that the summary of comments would be the starting point for the Commission's discussion. The comment summary was organized with most of the Commission's questions first, and questions from the public later.

Mr. Bilger stated that many people, both Commission members and the public, had commented that parts of the Plan were difficult to understand. Mr. Bilger said that it would be helpful to identify specific parts so that they could be made easier to understand.

Mr. Bilger and the Commission discussed comments about INDOT's potential plans to convert US 30 into a freeway. Mr. Bilger stated that changes to US 30 may require an update to the transportation section of the Plan or to the entire Plan.

[From this point, Mr. Bilger read a comment from the summary and the floor was opened for Commission discussion.]

Mr. Bilger read a comment about the number of comments received concerning Jefferson Township. The Commission discussed the obligation of the Commission to the entire county and the opportunities for growth in parts of Jefferson Township, specifically those that have nearby access to utilities. The Commission discussed Recommendation 1.13, which recommended a housing study be performed. Multiple Commission members stated that a housing study was unnecessary and that the market rather than the government should drive development decisions.

The Commission and Ms. Deckard discussed the procedure for the meeting and whether official action could be taken. Ms. Deckard stated that official action could not be taken concerning the Plan because the meeting did not include a public hearing. Mr. Hodges asked that Recommendation 1.13 be part of discussion at the next public hearing during which the Plan was considered.

Mr. Bilger read a question concerning the Future Character and Land Use Map and its relationship to the municipalities. He stated that the 2011 Plan's map applied only to the unincorporated parts of the County outside the municipalities and extraterritorial jurisdictions. This update included the current extraterritorial jurisdictions in case they were rescinded or modified. The incorporated areas were still excluded though and shown as a gray shade.

Mr. Bilger read a comment about discouraging 1- and 2-lot plats in Conventional Rural. The Commission discussed these concerns, among which was a need to allow splits for family members and what "rural" looked like. They discussed the use of "discourage" compared to "limit" in the character description. After further discussion about the current wording, the Commission stated that it would like to consider a rewording of the three rural character descriptions so as to clarify intent and for more consistency between them.

Mr. Bilger read a comment about priorities of some recommendations. The Commission discussed designating recommendations pertinent to zoning and regulatory authority with the highest priority icon. Ms. Kurtz-Seslar especially felt that any recommendations dealing with

zoning and land use ordinances should be the highest priority. They identified recommendations that could be changed to the highest priority icons.

This led to a discussion of Recommendation 5.7. It was suggested that it could be reworded to not limit support of events to those that are “well-located.”

Mr. Bilger read a comment about appropriateness of Mixed Rural being designated near Loon Lake and New Lake. The Commission discussed how these were designated around Loon Lake and New Lake as Mixed Rural, but not around Goose Lake, despite sewer being available there as well. Mr. Bilger stated that this was intended to show that anywhere sewer was, there could be development pressure, so not including Goose Lake was an oversight. The Commission thought the Future Character and Land Use Map could be edited to place Mixed Rural around Goose Lake.

Mr. Bilger read a comment about the implementation of the Plan. The Commission discussed issues with implementation of the current Plan and whether an implementation plan and reporting and accountability system should be included in the updated Plan. Mr. Bilger reminded the Commission that not all recommendations found in the updated Plan are the responsibility of the Plan Commission or local government. He stated that Implementation Committees are sometimes used in some Plan, and one could be formed at the Commission’s discretion, even without a specific recommendation. The Commission and Mr. Bilger discussed the accountability built into the updated Plan and the Commission’s work. They discussed the possibility of performing timely reviews of progress and accomplishments related to the recommendations and the production of reporting summaries to support implementation and responsibility.

Mr. Bilger read a comment about an assessment of the Commission and Planning Department’s capacity, expertise, and access to resources to fulfill the recommendations of the Plan. The Commission suggested that the Planning Department and County Commissioners should conduct such an assessment.

Mr. Bilger and the Commission discussed communication of the updated Plan to organizations and individuals outside local government and whether such communication should be reactive or proactive.

Mr. Bilger read a comment concerning impartiality and bias of Steering Committee members. The Commission discussed biases and need for impartiality of members. The Commission discussed timely preparation and presentation of Steering Committee, Task Force, and Commission meeting minutes. Ms. Green suggested the possibility of adopting an ordinance requiring that all minutes be posted online within a defined period after a meeting. There was discussion about possibly establishing a new Steering Committee for the Plan. Mr. Hodges stated that he felt that sending this Plan back to a Steering Committee was not appropriate since the Commission should be taking ownership of the Plan at this point. However, the Commission did suggest that any future Committees should be set up differently.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Having no further business, Mr. Hodges declared the meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

**GUEST LIST**

- 1. Joe Sheets.....3035 W. 700 North, Columbia City
- 2. Joe & Sarah Lopez.....5300 N. 250 West, Columbia City
- 3. Tom Western.....5321 W. 600 North, Columbia City
- 4. Dave Johnson.....2736 N. 675 East, Churubusco
- 5. Todd Hinen.....4450 N. State Road 9, Columbia City
- 6. Trisha Hinen.....4450 N. State Road 9, Columbia City
- 7. Priscilla Schuman.....5860 W. US 30, Columbia City
- 8. Todd Nichols.....5653 N. 350 East, Columbia City
- 9. Linda Hoffman.....8120 S. Westfield Trail, Columbia City
- 10. John Enrietto.....8151 S. 700 East, Columbia City
- 11. Kelley Sheiss.....8179 N. 650 West, Larwill
- 12. Alayne Johnson.....6906 E. 150 North, Columbia City
- 13. Mark Johnson.....6906 E. 150 North, Columbia City
- 14. Tim Kumfer.....857 N. Emancipation Court, Columbia City
- 15. Brad & Rhiannon Cormany.....3269 N. 350 West, Columbia City
- 16. John Meister.....5995 S. Woodstrail Drive-57, Columbia City
- 17. Jeff Ott.....8171 S. 350 West, South Whitley
- 18. Nicki Venable.....253 W. 150 North, Columbia City
- 19. Brian Johnson.....7725 E. 800 South-92, Fort Wayne
- 20. Sonya Emerick.....5865 E. State Road 14, Columbia City
- 21. Kevan Biggs.....9689 N. Miami Lane, Roanoke
- 22. Kim Arnold.....6649 W. 100 North, Larwill
- 23. Jon Gotz.....370 E. River Bluff Drive, Columbia City
- 24. Emily Studebaker.....5147 W. 200 South, Columbia City
- 25. Pam Ousley.....3602 S. 900 East, Pierceton

**GUEST LIST-ELECTRONIC**

- 26. Rebecca Joniskan.....[No address given]
- 27. Robert Krouse.....[No address given]
- 28. Angela Sheets.....3035 W. 700 North, Columbia City