

## **July 14, 2014, Mount Vernon, Iowa, Comprehensive Plan minutes**

**Present:** Chad Sands, Matt Siders, Guy Booth, Bill Niemi (City Council liaison), Jay Johnson, Dick Peterson, Sonia Redmond, Dee Ann Rexroat, Dean Borg, Trude Elliott, and Truman Jordan.

In the next 2-3 months we will critique each of the subcommittee reports. Chad will then edit them into one voice and pull info from the 1995 report. Committees should point out what should be pulled from the '95 report on their area. We covered two reports and there was a suggestion to meet every other week to get through the reports. If we can get a majority of the group we will discuss Infrastructure and Quality of Life in two weeks on Monday, July 28. At the regularly scheduled Aug. 11 meeting we will cover the remaining two -- Public Facilities and Land Use. In September and October we can review the overall draft.

Some responses to the report: There are duplications, a slimness in some that needs to be fleshed out, and an overall present-day snapshot that's not visionary. There will need to be an introductory section, there are demographics to add that were provided early in the process last fall. It is not a professional approach, which Chad and ECICOG can provide.

**Economic Development report:** Group struggled with the broadness of this topic. There are disparate groups and stakeholders that have pieces - CDG/Business Improvement Committee, the city, developers, and Cornell.

What does the community really want to be? Now we are a boutique business area and bedroom community. It depends upon attraction of consumers, not the least of which is Cornell College and the local area. The committee did not want to be presumptuous and determine who we want to be. They recommend a long-term partnership with a professional economic-development group, and specifically recommend the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance. They came to meet with representatives in MV and this committee determined we are not ready due to a lack of vision. They currently do market Mount Vernon as an asset when they market the area. Although not written in the report, the committee recommends that the leader held accountable for the potential \$80,000/year plan should be the professional city administrator, which would be a major addition to the position. It was also discussed that the CDG should be closely involved and have a large role. Chad recommended that this leadership scenario should be added to the report. He also recommended an organizational flow chart regarding how the CR Econ Alliance, the city, and the CDG would work together, and not to pinpoint a hard cost but percentages of cost.

A question emerged about vision. There is no mention of local CSAs, farmer's markets, or business incubator. Chad said the 1995 plan gave a vision -- maintaining small-town historical character, uptown shops -- and we want to continue that. One of the '95 goals was a business park but nothing was ever done to accomplish that. As we start economic development we don't want to be too specific about goals; we need to invest every year. A large-scale comp plan needs to be general in nature.

**Housing report:** Trude covered the goals, policies and strategies. We need to establish where the future growth areas are. We want to grow from inside out (not from outside in). Committee members liked idea of a Housing Commission. The 1995 plan also recommended this but without a procedure to do so. We need a plan. We need to recommend there be a budget and tools to encourage development of certain kinds - similar to the Historic Preservation Commission, set up by the city with only about \$6,500/year. Idea was floated to centralize the various commissions through CDG. That would change the CDG's mission and scope.

Since there are only 5 open lots in the traditional part of town, a better goal than building on those would be to focus on rehabbing in those neighborhoods.

Did the committee consider the option of inter-generational and integrated living? Some seniors don't want to go to senior housing. Yes, they did but may need to be addressed by the Housing Commission. They will add that reference.