

MINUTES
Agenda Review Meeting
Tuesday, December 9, 2014
City – County Building

The sky was grey and the air raw when you push through the revolving doors and into the warming comfort of the City-County Building located on Main Street in Knoxville, Tennessee. It was just past noon on Tuesday, December 9, 2014. You work your way past the prying eyes of security guards and into the Small Conference Room where the Metropolitan Planning Commissioners and others were gathering for the monthly Agenda Review Meeting.

Looking up at the bone-colored dais situated at the western end of the room, you note that Commissioners Jack Sharp, Scott Smith, Elizabeth Eason, Mac Goodwin, Len Johnson, Bart Carey, Rebecca Longmire, Chair of MPC, Art Clancy, III, Jeffery Roth, Jim Wakefield, Laura Cole, Herb Anders and Janice Tocher are all present and accounted for, placidly munching on cheese pizza.

Glancing further, to enjoy the large but handsome oil painting depicting an Historical Recreation of the Founding of Knox County mounted above the dais, you note for the first time that the assembled Commissioners are joined by MPC Executive Director, Mark Donaldson and various other Staff members.

Near the front of the room, you quietly find a seat in a sturdy metal frame upholstered chair, identical to dozens of its brethren that fill the space in military precision rows, just as Mr. Donaldson calls the meeting to order at 12:05 o'clock p.m., and summarily reports on land use activities of the City Council and the County Commission since the last Agenda Review Meeting. You are momentarily distracted as Commissioner Michael Kane treads quietly into the room and on to the dais, joining his colleagues, a slice of pizza clutched safely in his hand.

The meeting finds a comfortable rhythm, as Mr. Donaldson begins his explanation of the Staff recommendation for Item 42 of the December MPC Agenda, seeking amendments to the Amended Budget and Work Plan. As you relax further into your chair, Mr. Donaldson segues seamlessly to an explanation of the Staff recommendation of Agenda Item 43.

The pace of activities quicken. You lean forward to hear an explanation of the Staff recommendation for Agenda Item 5 by MPC Deputy Executive Director Dave Hill, followed by Commissioner's Kane's inquiry as to whether the City Building Officials had vetted the proposal. Upon learning from Mr. Hill that the City was fully on board, you know that the meeting is now up to speed, and progressing nicely through its paces.

The melodious voice of MPC Staff member and part time Hilton Head resident, Dan Kelly, echoes through the chamber as he explains the Staff recommendation for Agenda

Item 12, and confirms to Commissioners that the joint permanent easement will be 40 feet in width and contain 22 feet of paving, and that no accessory buildings would be permitted in the peripheral boundary area.

Your attention is drawn sharply by the contrasting vocal tones of MPC Staff member Michael Brusseau, who in a full baritone voice explains the Staff recommendation for Agenda Item 25, but only after graciously thanking Commissioner Longmire for recognizing him.

From the far northwest corner of the room, beneath the looming oil painting, the voice of Commissioner Clancy rises to pose the question: “whether an adjoining property had enjoyed a similar use determination in the recent past.” Confirmation by Staff that Commissioner Clancy’s memory is strong and that the adjoining transmission shop had indeed benefited from a similar use application in the past matched your memory and confirmed your confidence in MPC Staff. Discussion among the Commissioners continues.

Based upon the explanation by Mr. Brusseau of the Staff recommendation for Agenda Item 33 and the revelation by Mr. Kelly that the applicant for the Item had already turned in a Concept Plan for the property proposing 3.3 units per acre to be considered at the January MPC Meeting, you know that the ensuing discussion would be lively and diverse. You are not disappointed. Commissioners inquire about the number of units, the number of entrances to the subdivision, and the subject matter of various emails received by the Commissioners in recent days, to which Mr. Kelly responds with the authority and competence that you expect.

By review of the contents of the Blue Sheet, and based on the tenor of the room, it appears that the business of the Agenda Review Meeting was at or near an end. But your grasp of the circumstances proves to be slippery, as Tom Brechko of MPC Staff (perhaps stinging from the realization that he had not yet been recognized by the assemblage) bravely announces that Agenda Item 39 would not be on the Consent Agenda due to written objections having been received from the public.

With the unexpected interjection by Mr. Brechko, you are stunned as the rhythm of the meeting re-gathers its strength when Commissioner Goodwin inquires about Agenda Item 32 and reports on the interest of Town Hall East on the need for screening of outdoor storage.

Discussion builds. You relax, cross your legs, and settle back once again into the sturdy upholstered metal frame chair, listening to Mr. Brusseau explain the Staff recommendation for Agenda Item 32 including the reasoning for the preference for the C-6 Zone, in light of the ongoing use of the premises.

The ensuing general discussion among Commissioners and Staff holds your attention. They collegially review the history of the use of the building; the difficulty of fully screening the property due to the existing topography; the inherent difficulties in enforcement of certain terms of the Zoning Ordinance; and other items the discussions of

which were sufficiently garbled that you cannot hear or understand them.

Amidst the hardy exchange, in the dark periphery of your vision, you see local attorney, Arthur Seymour, rise stealthily to a podium located prominently in the center of the room with the obvious intent of addressing the dais. After introducing himself (although well known to Commissioners and Staff, one and all) Mr. Seymour advises the Commission that his client, the applicant in Agenda Item 32, has already submitted a Site Plan to MPC Staff, and that his client has previously enjoyed the benefit of Mr. Seymour's counsel on the requirements of the C-6 Zone.

You are little surprised that these comments lead to further general discussion of the application among Commissioners and Staff about the existing use, the history of the use of the property, parking requirements, and the impact on the community at large.

You are familiar with the property in Agenda Item 32. You have driven past it more than once or twice, and you have witnessed the wares on display. That slight knowledge of the property, however fleeting, is sufficient that you are intrigued when Mr. Seymour reveals that buried within the history of the property was an unintended but *de facto* use as housing for a portion of Knoxville's homeless population. However, your interest wanes quickly when Mr. Seymour wanders into a curious exposition of the parking requirements for Lowes and Home Depots.

Once again you are swept with the feeling that the meeting is winding down with no further business to come before it. You rise from your sturdy, upholstered metal frame chair, and turn into the aisle toward the red-glowing EXIT sign welcoming you to the inhospitable cold of the street.

As the meeting is adjourned you stroll past the Recording Secretary, who sits crumpled in that same ubiquitous sturdy upholstered metal framed chair, weeping softly. You hesitate by his chair more out of curiosity than sympathy only to hear him cry out to no one in particular: : "I am a fool to try to take minutes in the second person, present tense! Never again ... never, never again." Easing to the heavy glass EXIT doors you sneer like Elvis and whisper to yourself, "Yes...yes, indeed, a truly foolish endeavor."

This 9th day of December, 2014.

Recording Secretary