

Planning Commission Regular Meeting

Tuesday March 3, 2025

Chairman Boesiger called the Blair Planning Commission to order at 7:00 P.M. Members present were Darrel Boesiger, Chris Boswell, Melanie Kaeding, Joe Peleska, and Ryan Schroeter. Milt Heinrich, Jim Pounds, Travis Radnor, and Richard Zelensky: Absent. Others present were City Administrator Green, Assistant City Administrator Barrow, and Non-Lawyer Assistant Ferrari.

The Chairman publicly stated to all in attendance that a current copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available for review and indicated the location of such copy posted in the room where the meeting was being held. Notice of the meeting was given in advance thereof by publication in the Enterprise or the Pilot -Tribune as shown by the affidavit of publication filed in the City Clerk's office. Notice of the meeting was simultaneously given to the Planning Commission members, and the agenda is filed in the City Clerk's office. Availability of the agenda was communicated in the advance notice and in the notice to the Planning Commission of this meeting. All proceedings shown hereafter were taken while the convened meeting was open to the attendance of the public.

Agenda Item #1 & 2 – Chairman Boesiger called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. followed by a roll call of members.

Agenda Item #3 – Motion by Ryan Schroeter, second by Chris Boswell to approve the February 3, 2026, minutes as presented. Commission members voted as follows: Darrel Boesiger: Yea, Chris Boswell: Yea, Milt Heinrich: Absent, Melanie Kaeding: Yea, Joe Peleska: Yea, Jim Pounds: Absent, Travis Radnor: Absent, Ryan Schroeter: Yea, Rich Zelensky: Absent Commission members present voted: Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 4. Chairman Boesiger declared the motion carried.

Agenda Item #4 – Chairman Boesiger opens a public hearing to consider receiving public comment on a blight and substandard study for an area located within the extraterritorial jurisdiction and Corporate Limits of the City of Blair, and to consider whether to designate such area as blighted, substandard and in need of redevelopment pursuant to the Community Development Law, Nebraska Revised Statutes, sections 18-2101, et seq. Assistant City Administrator Barrow introduced Jeff Ray, representative for JEO Consulting Group, as the presenter for this project. Mr. Ray stated he will be outlining what goes into a blight study and why we conduct one. I have presented this before, but it is important that everyone, especially the public, understands the purpose and what it means, particularly given the name "Blight and Substandard Determination Study". Mr. Ray stated that under the Nebraska Community Development Law, an area could be designated as blighted and substandard. It is admittedly an unfortunate name for what is a tool used to support economic development. There are two reasons for conducting a blight and substandard determination study. One thing most communities across the state do is to use tax increment financing, TIF, to help revitalize an area. Another reason you might see a blight and substandard determination study is to support a Community Development Block Grant, like a multi-year downtown revitalization project. That is

not on the table here, and we did not study that area, but it is a common reason these studies are done. The process begins with declaring an area blighted and substandard, which is what we are here to consider tonight. The next step would follow a similar public process, including a public hearing, Planning Commission review, and City Council approval. At that stage, a redevelopment plan would be created, or a specific project could be brought forward with a detailed development plan. That plan would include an economic analysis, including what is known as a 'but-for' clause—meaning that but for the use of Tax Increment Financing, the project would not be financially feasible. If those findings are supported, the city would then be able to implement Tax Increment Financing to help move the project forward. Mr. Ray stated the following criteria need to be met to be considered for the Blighted characteristics: 1) Substantial number of deteriorating structures, 2) Unsanitary / unsafe conditions, 3) Deterioration of site or other improvements, 4) Stable or decreasing population over the last three US censuses, 5) Average age of structures is over 40 years old, 6) Economic or social liability detrimental to health, safety and welfare, 7) Diversity of ownership, 8) Improper subdivision or obsolete platting, 9) One-half of unimproved property is over 40 years old, 10) High density of population and overcrowding, and, 11) Tax/special assessment delinquency greater than fair value of land. Then the following criteria for Substandard characteristics are: 1) Dilapidation, deterioration, age or obsolescence, 2) Dangerous conditions to life or property due to fire or other causes, 3) Inadequate provisions for ventilation, light, air, open spaces, or sanitation, 4) Defective or unusual condition of title, 5) Underemployment that equals 120% state or national average, and, 6) Per capita income less than city wide average. Mr. Ray stated the Study Area is 107 acres or 2.6% of the Corporate Limits and, if approved, the total area designated for redevelopment would be equal to 27% of the City's Corporate Limits. Mr. Ray stated that cities of the First Class are limited to 35% of their corporate limit area. For the Analysis and Findings, 36% of the structures were rated as deteriorating or dilapidated. We also evaluated transportation infrastructure, which includes not only streets and sidewalks, but the broader system that supports the movement of people, goods, and services. This also extends to how water is conveyed through the area, including streets, gutters, and the stormwater system that drains into storm sewers. Overall, the streets in this area were rated as fair. However, a key deficiency is the lack of a subterranean storm sewer system, which limits proper stormwater conveyance in an urban setting. In addition, the absence of sidewalks creates potential safety concerns for pedestrians. We also identified other contributing factors, including areas where debris piles were observed. These can create fire hazards as well as conditions that may attract rodents and other vermin, which can pose public health risks. Another factor is the age of some structures in the area. Buildings constructed prior to 1978 may have a higher likelihood of containing lead-based paint, since that was the year, it was banned. Older structures may also contain asbestos, particularly in very old or deteriorating buildings. Additional concerns include overgrown vegetation such as trees and brush, as well as poor drainage and sight conditions in certain areas. Low-lying depressions, sometimes referred to as 'bird baths,' can collect standing water, particularly where truck traffic crosses unimproved surfaces. These conditions, along with stagnant water in ditches, can create mosquito breeding areas that may contribute to disease transmission. Finally, it is important to note that the area is located within a designated floodplain, which further contributes to drainage and water management challenges. Mr. Ray concluded with our recommendation to declare the area blighted and substandard, with 8 of the 12 blighted characteristics identified and 3 of the 4 substandard characteristics present, for a total of 11 of the 16 possible indicators. It is important to note that there is no specific numerical

threshold required by statute. I have worked in communities where as few as four characteristics were identified, yet the area was still determined to meet the criteria for blight and substandard conditions under state law. In other communities, the number may be much higher—13, 14, or 15 characteristics. Typically, however, most studies I work on fall in the range of about 10 to 12 indicators. There were no other comments from the floor or in writing. Chairman Boesiger closed the public hearing. Motion by Melanie Kaeding, second by Chris Boswell to recommend approval of the Blight and Substandard Study as presented. Commission members voted as follows: Darrel Boesiger: Yea, Chris Boswell: Yea, Milt Heinrich: Absent, Melanie Kaeding: Yea, Joe Peleska: Yea, Jim Pounds: Absent, Travis Radnor: Absent, Ryan Schroeter: Yea, Rich Zelensky: Absent. Commission members present voted: Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 4. Chairman Boesiger declared the motion carried.

Agenda Item #5 – Chairman Boesiger opens a public hearing to consider a Rezone application submitted by the City of Blair, 218 S 16th St, Blair, for Lots 19, 20 & 21, Block 56, in the City of Blair, Washington County, Nebraska, together with that part of vacated street right-of-way of Grant Street (1526 & 1516 Grant Street and the empty lot on the northwest corner of Grant and 15th Street), rezoning the lots from RMH – Multi-Family Residential High Density District to CCB - Central Business District. Assistant City Administrator Barrow stated the zoning district is currently RMH - Multi-family Residential High Density. The request is for a change to the CCB - Central Business District. The Future Land-Use Map designates commercial use. If you recall, last year we purchased that property to provide additional office space, and we converted the home into office use. That is the purpose behind this request. Typically, as a city or unit of government, we would not necessarily be required to go through this step, but we are choosing to do so to remain consistent and compliant with our own zoning regulations. Currently, the property is zoned RMH-Multi-Family Residential. We are requesting rezoning to CCB-Central Business District, and the Future Land Use Map already designates the area as commercial. Two of the three lots are owned by the city. One is a parking lot, the other is the Community Development building, and the third lot is owned by Washington County Bank. This zoning change would allow for office space. We did reach out to Washington County Bank about the zoning change, and they had no objection to this. Jennifer Reyzlik, 141 E Baronage Drive, spoke against the rezone due to the need for more housing. I encourage you to allow residents of Blair the opportunity to develop that land into housing. Commission member Boesiger questions whether, with the new zoning, there is a housing opportunity. Assistant City Administrator Barrow stated this would be allowed with a conditional use permit. There were no other comments from the floor or in writing. Chairman Boesiger closed the public hearing. Motion by Melanie Kaeding, second by Joe Peleska to recommend approval of the Rezone application submitted by the City of Blair, rezoning the lots from RMH - Multi-Family Residential High-Density District to CCB - Central Business District. Commission members voted as follows: Darrel Boesiger: Yea, Chris Boswell: Yea, Milt Heinrich: Absent, Melanie Kaeding: Yea, Joe Peleska: Yea, Jim Pounds: Absent, Travis Radnor: Absent, Ryan Schroeter: Yea, Rich Zelensky: Absent. Commission members present voted: Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 4. Chairman Boesiger declared the motion carried.

Agenda Item #6 – Chairman Boesiger opens a public hearing to consider a Rezoning Application submitted by the City of Blair, 218 S. 16th Street, Blair, Nebraska, for Tax Lots 197, 199 & 200, Section 13, Township 18 North, Range 11, all East of the 6th P.M., Washington County, Nebraska, (10024, 10070 and the contiguous outbuildings on 10196, all on County Road

P35), rezoning all lots from AG – Agricultural District to TA – Transitional Agriculture District. Assistant City Administrator Barrow stated the zoning district is currently AGG - General Agricultural District. The request is for a change to the AGG -Transitional Agricultural District. The Future Land-Use Map designates residential use. Under agricultural zoning, there is a wider range of permitted uses, including more intensive agricultural activities. Transitional agricultural uses may also apply in some cases. In this situation, existing homeowners and property owners would be able to continue their current use without any changes. They would remain fully compliant with existing zoning regulations, and we would not be requiring or compelling them to alter what they are currently doing. That includes existing single-family residential uses, as well as permitted activities such as keeping animals. Everything currently occurring on those properties would be allowed to continue as it is. Commission member Schroeter questioned whether the tax base would change. Assistant City Administrator Barrow stated there would be none. There were no other comments from the floor or in writing. Chairman Boesiger closed the public hearing. Motion by Melanie Kaeding, second by Chris Boswell to recommend approval of the Rezoning Application submitted by the City of Blair, rezoning all lots from AG - Agricultural District to TA - Transitional Agriculture District. Commission members voted as follows: Darrel Boesiger: Yea, Chris Boswell: Yea, Milt Heinrich: Absent, Melanie Kaeding: Yea, Joe Peleska: Yea, Jim Pounds: Absent, Travis Radnor: Absent, Ryan Schroeter: Yea, Rich Zelensky: Absent. Commission members present voted: Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 4. Chairman Boesiger declared the motion carried.

Agenda Item #7– Report from staff. Nothing to report.

Agenda Item #8 – Motion by Melanie Kaeding, second by Ryan Schroeter to adjourn the meeting 7:41. Commission members voted as follows: Darrel Boesiger: Yea, Chris Boswell: Yea, Milt Heinrich: Absent, Melanie Kaeding: Yea, Joe Peleska: Yea, Jim Pounds: Absent, Travis Radnor: Absent, Ryan Schroeter: Yea, Rich Zelensky: Absent. Commission members present voted: Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Absent: 4. Chairman Boesiger declared the motion carried.

Shelly Jones, Secretary