

TO: The Sycamore Plan Commission

FROM: Bill Nicklas  
City Administrator

DATE: August 7, 2002

RE: August 12, 2002 Plan Commission Meeting

## **I Action Items**

### **A. Consideration of a Petition from Laing Management for a Recommendation With Respect to the Applicability of Paragraph 4.13 of the Sycamore Zoning Ordinance As It May Pertain to the Temporary Staging of Materials and Equipment for H.C. Price Construction Company on Property North of IL Rt. 64 in the Vicinity of Airport Road.**

Paragraph 4.13 of the Sycamore Zoning Ordinance gives the Plan Commission the authority to render a judgment about uses not specifically listed in the zoning district regulations that might be similar to and not more objectionable than those listed. If the Commission believes such specific uses conform to the intent of the district regulations, then they may be permitted without further action.

Mr. Laing has been approached by the contractor that is installing the Guardian pipeline to store construction materials and equipment on the 63-acre parcel he is developing for a planned residential development on the City's east side. As the Commission members may have observed, large earth movers and other machinery along with piping and other appurtenances have been spread over the Laing property for about six months as an approximately ten-acre detention site is installed. The contractor working for Guardian—H.C Price—has been renting parcels at strategic locations along the pipeline right-of-way to temporarily store its piping and equipment and Mr. Laing's property is in such a strategic location in terms of this overland construction project. As the attached map indicates, the company would prefer to store their property on the commercially-zoned area north of Doty & Sons. Although the "C-3" zoning accommodates contractor yards, it does not explicitly permit outside storage of the type anticipated with this request.

The staff believe the temporary storage of piping and some equipment would not be more objectionable than the present storage of materials and equipment on the site. However,

this is a call that should be made by the Plan Commission. City Engineer John Brady contacted both Sam and Tom Doty about this matter. Their concern was with any possible storage of chemicals on the site, since their property is served by a private well.

Plan Commission direction is requested.

## **II Workshop Items**

### **A. Consideration of an Administration Report on the Recent Open Houses Held to Gather Local Opinion on Recent Economic Growth in the City of Sycamore.**

For four consecutive weeks beginning on July 11 and ending on July 31, the City of Sycamore held open houses at each of the four elementary schools to solicit neighborhood opinion on recent economic growth in the City of Sycamore. Generally speaking, the open houses were informal and unstructured, except that questions were put to each group of concerned citizens to prompt comment. Those who attended were asked to identify what they like about Sycamore, what challenges had arisen since the present Comp Plan was approved in May of 2000, and what opportunities existed for compatible future growth and harmonious community development. An unedited or "raw" listing of the comments is attached.

A number of general observations can be drawn from these open houses. Here are some very preliminary findings:

1. As in 2000, all participants noted the "small town feel" of Sycamore as very desirable, and a quality to preserve. The challenge of doing so, as we grow at our community's edges, will be central to our work in the months ahead just as it was three years ago. In 2000, we committed ourselves to building "connections" such as bike paths and greenways between new and existing neighborhoods. The Commission has certainly been very dedicated to this objective. Are there other creative methods which will help us attain this objective?
2. Few residents can say they are acquainted with the present Comp Plan, or have attended Plan Commission or Council meetings regarding land use and development. The ways and means of keeping our residents informed, as well as engaging them in our "visioning" process, is an additional challenge ahead.
3. There was a general concern about whether we will retain "balance" in our economic growth, especially with respect to the retention and expansion of industrial jobs and investment.
4. There was an equal concern about the pace of local residential development. Although the City's statistics on housing starts point to steady and controlled growth in the past five years, the physical landscape has changed remarkably at our corporate boundaries and such obvious new roof tops have raised anxiety about the ability of our schools, parks, and City operations to meet the new demands on public services. Are there fiscal or regulatory "tools" that can steer our residential development at a steady pace in years to come?
5. There remains a strong notion that our composite tax rate is too high. The City of Sycamore's rate is lower than at any time since 1972, but the overall rate including all taxing bodies is about \$8.90 per \$100 EAV, and that is relatively

higher than the rate in other County municipalities. Is it too high for the services delivered? How can the rate be lowered while maintaining constant services?

6. The maintenance of public infrastructure in existing neighborhoods and business areas appears to be lagging, despite recent aggressive efforts by the City Council to tackle such improvements, and long-range plans to do more. What is a reasonable annual capital budget for such improvements, in light of the interest in keeping taxes low?
7. On the positive side, there is a near unanimous feeling that Sycamore's greatest opportunity to meet the economic challenges it faces is its community pride, and a long history of pooling private resources to assist with public objectives.

What's next? Before Labor Day, a request for proposals will be mailed in search of a consultant to assist with the mapping portion of the Comp Plan review. The firm that is selected will also coordinate Sycamore's mapping work with the efforts of the consultant (Land Vision) that has been hired to assist the Regional Planning Commission in its creation of an integrated County plan that incorporates the essential features of all municipal plans. When a consultant is hired by the Council, the Commission agenda will regularly have opportunities in its monthly workshops to reflect on working drafts of both the maps and the text that will ultimately become the updated Comp Plan.