

**Windham Village Planning
Meeting 1: SUMMARY
July 18, 2022**

Meeting held from 6 p.m. to approximately 8:15 p.m. at Renee's Roadhouse, 1747 Black Diamond Rd SW.

ATTENDEES

More than 30 members of the community as well as County officials and staff, including County Supervisors Rod Sullivan and Pat Heiden; and Planning, Development and Sustainability staff: Josh Busard, Director; Nathan Mueller, Assistant Director; Joseph Wilensky, Assistant Planner; and Maya Simon, Assistant Planner.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF VILLAGE PLANNING

Assistant Director Mueller welcomed everyone and introduced County supervisors and staff.

Supervisors Sullivan and Heiden shared the goals of village planning from the Board of Supervisors' perspective.

Mueller reviewed the village planning process steps, including how meetings were being publicized. He explained that the intent is to develop a village plan to guide future development, preservation, and conservation efforts in the village. The plan helps the Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) and Board of Supervisors (BOS) in decision-making. Mueller noted examples of what development and subdivision mean on a smaller village scale as opposed to larger developments.

Mueller outlined key aspects of a typical village plan, including setting a community vision statement; identifying goals for quality of life, infrastructure, services, and other community priorities; and how a village plan works in conjunction with the Johnson County 2018 Comprehensive Plan. Mueller also shared what a village boundary is and the purpose behind creating one for Windham. He briefly described the County's Comprehensive Plan and how it supports the need for village plans.

Since 2008, the eight other villages in Johnson County have completed village plans. Examples of village plans that have been used to guide development requests were provided. Mueller shared an example of a past development proposal in Morse and how its village plan informed BOS review and consideration of this proposal, which was denied.

Mueller gave more detail on the significance of village boundaries. The boundary defines the area that is guided by the village plan. The establishment of a boundary *does not* force any property owners to rezone their land or change the use of their land. Any proposed land use changes must still be initiated by the property owner and development requests will continue to go through the public hearing process. A village plan does not trigger large-scale development, nor does it incorporate a new town. Furthermore, the presence of a village boundary does not change property tax classifications.

- An attendee asked about a positive example of how a village plan was used to benefit the community.

Mueller responded by outlining how a development proposal in the village of Morse was contrary to its established village plan and was denied by the Supervisors, with the plan specifically noted as a reason for the proposal's denial.

Mueller also noted the ongoing development in Frytown that was supported by both the existing village plan and public support shared at a BOS public hearing.

- An attendee asked whether the Morse example involved community feedback at the BOS hearing

Mueller responded that it did, in addition to the Supervisors' consulting the established plan.

- An attendee asked if the Village Plan could be changed in the future.

Mueller noted that the plans could be redrafted, mostly likely due to a request by community members.

Next, background about Windham Village was provided, including historic development, existing land use mixes, and population growth of Hardin Township; existing infrastructure and amenities, including emergency services and street maintenance responsibilities; and information about Old Man's Creek floodplain and watershed.

Mueller introduced a group brainstorming activity focused on strengths and challenges in order to learn what the community likes about Windham and what might be changed. Based on the strengths and challenges, a vision statement will be created. Attendees then generated the following lists:

STRENGTHS

- We're in the country but close to town
 - The more rural aspect and character of Windham compared to Iowa City was appreciated
- Small farming community
 - Tight-knit community, everyone knows each other
- Lots of people who have been born and raised here
 - Stability, deep roots, good direction
- County life and relative quiet, excepting noise from traffic and 4th of July fireworks
- A central meeting spot like Renee's
- Carp Days festival
 - 40+ years running
 - Is both a reunion for local residents and, in the evenings, an attractor for visitors
- The density along Black Diamond Road makes sense, where the smaller lots provide that more concentrated feeling in the "downtown"
- Great place for children to grow up; a nice and quiet setting
- Good school district
- Local church close by that can be used for public meetings

CHALLENGES

- Lack of emergency services (a question about reduced ambulance availability was answered)
- Lots of bicyclists, who may require expanded shoulders on the roadway to improve safety
 - Who will pay for this?
 - Would this impact people's ability to develop their land that would be adjacent to this ROW?
- Lots of speeders through the village core, and the slow down signs don't do much
- Lots of semi-truck traffic
 - Some freight, some animal or crop
 - Lots of heavy traffic on gravel roads that damages the roads
- Lack of commercial services like a gas station/convenience store to serve area residents.

After collecting the group's input about Windham's strengths and challenges, Mueller then opened up the conversation about developing a vision statement and goals for the plan. He noted that staff will wordsmith the groups' input into a vision statement, which can be reviewed and modified at the next meeting. Sample goals from other village plans were provided for context, and attendees contributed their suggestions towards a community vision (summarized below).

COMMUNITY VISION INPUT

- The village should stay the same, but perhaps have slower growth compared to Frytown or Cosgrove; similar growth rates in Windham to what exists now.
- Safety is paramount.
- Agricultural way of life is valued.

- There should not be much commercial growth, or if there is keep it smaller so as to not have a convenience store/gas station right in the middle of the strip
 - How does the plan protect us from bigger growth? Does this plan lock in zoning and land use?
 - No further commercial growth or development services.
 - Perhaps another garage or service location and/or small grocery store or another bar that would serve village and area residents could be appropriate.

Next, participants were asked to help contribute ideas for goal statements within the categories of Quality of Life, Growth Opportunities, and Infrastructure and Services, resulting in the following general ideas:

GOAL STATEMENT IDEAS

- Quality of Life
 - Keep single-family development the preferred style.
 - Target a density that matches the existing structure of the village.
- Growth
 - Not interested in large growth opportunities.
 - Like things to remain small, but some managed, limited growth may be acceptable if it matches the character of the area.
- Infrastructure and Services
 - Slow traffic down and improve the quality of the road(s) – Black Diamond
 - Still a concern about the impact that widening the roadway would have on adjacent land owners
 - Maintenance of the existing system, and concern that more growth leads to more maintenance need.
 - Challenge of multiple road users and speed concerns

Attendees asked further questions about how the BOS would use the village plan when considering development proposals and why a plan is needed to manage/discourage development in the area.

Mueller clarified that the plan would potentially enable area residents within the boundary to have more options and flexibility regarding how their land could be developed, if they choose to do so. Village plans help provide direction to the planning staff, the PZC, and the BOS when development is proposed within a village’s boundary, such as in previous examples when the BOS has followed the guidance of the village plan. In the absence of a village plan, property owners would have fewer options in terms of how they could change their land uses, and there would be a lack of guidance towards future preservation and development efforts for the community.

BOUNDARY DISCUSSION

An in-depth boundary discussion was planned for the second community meeting. However, with additional time remaining, Mueller provided an example a potential village boundary to generate some initial feedback and to prompt discussion. The example boundary was comprised of 215 acres and extended approximately a 1/4 to 1/2 of a mile from the existing village core to the east and west, and about 1/8 to 1/4 of a mile north and south on both sides of Black Diamond Road. Several attendees felt this potential boundary was too large, others said they wanted to think about it, and one person stated that any boundary larger than this could turn Windham into something like Tiffin or Solon. The boundary discussion was slated to be continued at the next meeting.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Busard stated that staff will use the ideas collected from the evening to draft potential goals and a vision statement. A second meeting will be held to review the draft goals, vision statement, and boundary. Additional opportunities for public input will be available during the PZC hearing and the BOS hearing. Attendees were thanked again for their time and input.