

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING OF COUNCIL
of the Town of Whitecourt**
held on Monday, November 25, 2024 at the Forest Interpretive Centre

Present: Mayor Pickard; Deputy Mayor McAree; Councillors Baker, Chauvet, Lanctot, Lapointe, and Schlosser; Chief Administrative Officer Smyl; and Recording Secretary Grimstad-Davidson.

Call to Order: The Meeting was called to order at 4:00pm; Mayor Pickard presiding.

Appointment of Chair: 24-372 Moved by Councillor Schlosser

That Mayor Pickard be appointed as Chair of the Public Hearing.

- CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Address from the Chair: The Chair reviewed procedures for the public to address Council. The Chair asked to hear from the Planning & Development Department. The Director introduced the Planner and also noted that Darren Young from ISL was in attendance, representing the applicant.

The Planner advised that the application involves two bylaws; the first to rescind the Downtown South Area Structure Plan; and the second bylaw to change the zoning for a portion of NE 26-59-12-W5 from C-1 Core Commercial - Downtown and R-4 High Density Residential to UD-F Future Urban Development. The Planner noted that approximately 50% of the area covered under the Area Structure Plan (ASP) has been developed. Coupled with changing market conditions, the applicant has indicated that the current ASP is no longer feasible for the remainder of the property in light of challenges to development, including drainage issues, high water tables and substantial stripping and fill needed for construction. The Planner noted that if the ASP were to be rescinded, the Municipal Development Plan would guide development in the area, which would allow for Mixed Use Commercial. With regard to roadways, the Planner noted that the proposed roads are registered road allowances, and that removing a road allowance is a separate process that would require its own Public Hearing. Timing and requirements to construct the remaining roadways would be determined by any new development in the area, as required, or by Council through the development agreement with the Downtown South Developer.

The applicant's proposal to amend the Land Use Bylaw zoning for the vacant parcel south of 47 Avenue to UD-F would result in a neutral zoning on the property to reserve it for future development. This parcel would require rezoning before it can be developed.

The Planner advised that the proposed amendments were circulated to all property owners within the area, stakeholders, and utility companies. No concerns were expressed by stakeholders or utility companies; or from others notified. Notification was posted to the Town website, and advertised in the local paper on November 13 and 20, 2024. The Municipal Planning Commission reviewed the proposal on November 14, 2024 and forwarded support to Council, noting that the proposed bylaws do not appear to be detrimental to the community and that the area would follow the Municipal Development Plan vision for future development if the bylaws were passed. Administration conducted two meetings with delegates of Sobey's. They expressed concerns relating to construction of the remaining roadways and the ability to develop their property as envisioned under the ASP. They stated that if the ASP was rescinded they would need to revisit their business plan to ensure feasibility. The Planner noted that two people attended the open house held immediately prior to the Public Hearing.

Darren Young of ISL Engineering Services Ltd., representing the applicant, noted that rescinding the ASP would provide more flexibility for development of the vacant parcel. He stated that rescinding the ASP would reduce red tape and triple the development rights for all property owners in the area.

In response to a question, the Director noted that road development is currently part of the ASP and if the ASP is rescinded, road development would be development driven.

Chair Pickard asked if there was anyone who wished to speak in favour of proposed Bylaw No. 1581 – Rescind Bylaw 1421 – Downtown South Area Structure Plan.

No one responded to the Chair’s invitation.

Chair Pickard asked if there was anyone who wished to speak in opposition of proposed Bylaw No. 1581 – Rescind Bylaw 1421 – Downtown South Area Structure Plan.

Om Joshi, of WSP Canada Inc., representing Sobeys, one of the property owners in the ASP area, stated that they would like to see the ASP remain in place, to provide for a clear framework for business investment, noting that changes to the ASP could negatively impact future development of the property. He stated that the ASP provides predictability for business regarding key infrastructure items and future development on adjoining parcels. He suggested that the ASP be preserved and the parcel proposed for rezoning be declared a special study area, and requested that this proposal be referred back to the Planning Department for further review.

Jasmine Frolick, also representing Sobeys, registered to attend and speak virtually at the Hearing. She expressed concerns that if the ASP is repealed, the obligations and responsibilities of road construction may result in the property becoming commercially unviable. Sobeys purchased the property 10 years ago and anticipates that development will be financially viable within the next few years. This would consist of a grocery store and two commercial retail units. Ideally, Sobeys would like to provide access from all three roadways surrounding the property to separate delivery trucks from customer traffic. Comment was made regarding Sobeys’ purchase agreement with the Downtown South developer to cost share 50% of the construction of 47 Street, with the developer solely responsible for the construction of 47 Avenue. Ms. Frolick expressed disappointment that the ASP was proposed to be rescinded, and noted that rescinding an ASP was uncommon in her experience.

Chair Pickard asked if there was anyone who wished to speak that was affected by proposed Bylaw No. 1581 – Rescind Bylaw 1421 – Downtown South Area Structure Plan.

No one responded to the Chair’s invitation.

Chair Pickard asked if there was anyone who wished to speak in favour of proposed Bylaw No. 1577-2.

No one responded to the Chair’s invitation.

Chair Pickard asked if there was anyone who wished to speak in opposition of proposed Bylaw No. 1577-2.

Om Joshi indicated that Sobeys was not opposed to the rezoning.

Bylaw No. 1581 –
Rescind Bylaw
1421 – Downtown
South Area
Structure Plan:

Bylaw No. 1577-2 –
Rezoning NE 26-59-
12-W5 from C-1
Core Commercial
and R-4 High
Density Residential
to UD-F Future
Urban
Development:

Chair Pickard asked if there was anyone who wished to speak that was affected by proposed Bylaw No. 1577-2.

No one responded to the Chair's invitation.

Adjournment:

24-373 Moved by Councillor Schlosser

That the Public Hearing be adjourned. Time: 4:39pm.

- CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Redacted per S. 17 of FOIPP

Mayor

Redacted per S. 17 of FOIPP

Chief Administrative Officer