

**MINUTES OF THE
MIAMI COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION
February 27, 2024**

**MIAMI COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
COMMISSION CHAMBERS
201 SOUTH PEARL STREET
PAOLA, KANSAS 66071**

ATTENDANCE

CHAIR:	Kelli Broers
VICE-CHAIR:	absent
PLANNING COMMISSION	John Menefee, Joe Flake, Phil Elliott, Randy Kitchen, and Joshua Brown (joined at 6:44)
ABSENT MEMBERS:	Topher Philgreen, Bret Manchester
EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS:	None present
PLANNING DIRECTOR:	Kenneth Cook
ASST. PLANNING DIRECTOR:	Jennifer Koehn
PLANNER:	absent
PC SECRETARY:	Casey d'Augereau
COUNTY COUNSELOR:	Not present
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	Not present
COUNTY COMMISSION:	None Present
COUNTY CLERK:	None Present
PRESS:	None Present

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CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Kelli Broers called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Roll Call was taken with six (6) members present, making a quorum.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DISCUSSION

Broers opened the discussion for the Comprehensive Plan discussion 6:04 p.m.

Koehn noted she has broken the Next Comprehensive Plan down by Sections to cover in the Planning Commission meetings. Koehn would like to cover each Section one at a time and make note of the necessary changes.

Koehn asked if there needed to be any changes to the Acknowledgements.

It was agreed by the Planning Commission that the Acknowledgements needs to include all persons that worked on the Next Comprehensive Plan and should include the years of service with dates for each person.

Koehn opened a discussion on Section 1, Page 1 suggesting changes to show "Since 202" and minor verbiage corrections.

Koehn suggested showing the Interlocal Agreements Dissolutions in Section 1, Page 3 in the timeline as they were significant planning events in the county.

Elliott questioned if they were really Interlocal Agreements and believes they were called something else, asking for verification of what they were called. Elliot noted they were 2-miles around each city and each city had management and the county had nothing. Elliott believes this is why the agreements dissolved.

Koehn stated in the Comprehensive Plan they were referred to as Growth Areas but also referred to as Interlocal Agreements.

Cook stated they will research this. Cook believes the reason for the term Interlocal Agreements is because the county had a physical agreement with the cities.

Broers inquired to the years of the agreements.

Cook stated 1996-2011.

Broers asked for a way to serve both goals. She believes they should be called what they actually were titled. That was meaningless to the majority of the people and Growth Area helps signal what is being talked about.

Koehn suggested deleting or altering the following highlighted statement from the Comprehensive Plan:
"As seen in Figure 1.1, it is evident that planning... Although there are many things to list, the underlying

issue has been population growth that led to sprawl. With the ever-advancing highway system that makes Miami County a refuge from more populous counties in the Kansas City metropolitan area, the abundance of land and open space became a focus for developers.”

Suggested alternate text to be: “As seen in Figure 1.1, it is evident ... *has experienced issues that are common in rural communities and counties located near large metro areas. Its nearness and convenient access to the Metro area have positioned Miami County as a sanctuary from the denser populations of neighboring counties in the region. Consequently, the abundance of land and open space has captured the attention of developers, driving their focus towards this area.*

Elliott asked what the goal of this content in whole is.

Koehn stated the goal of this is giving the background of Miami County. This information is the “*As seen in Figure 1.1*” which follows the timeline.

Broers believes if it is appearing in the graphic (timeline) there should be context to go with it.

Koehn agreed and noted there was questions as to if it should be in the graphic, but it was important moments in Miami County’s history of planning success or failures.

Elliott referred to the alternative verbiage above starting with “*Since the adoption of the 2004 comprehensive plan*” and suggested keeping that verbiage but get rid of the sentence “*While this change may have shifted the landscape, it also presents an opportunity for innovation and collaboration in managing growth.*”.

Menefee agreed with Elliott and stated it is a wasted sentence as it doesn’t add any substance to the paragraph.

Koehn referred to “*2. Who does Miami County want to be? The only sustainable path forward is one that has community buy-in.*” and stated she doesn’t like the wording.

The Planning Commissioners agreed to delete the sentence “*The only sustainable path forward is one that has community buy-in.*” and it should read “***2. By asking the question of who the county wants to be, recommendations for the future can be created.***”

Koehn stated in Section 1, Page 4, showing the Plan Boundary map stating need to add the portion of the cities that are annexed in.

Elliott asked that the date of the map be clearly identified on the map.

Koehn stated in Section 1, Page 7, Development Review, in the past meetings it was suggested to delete the last sentence “*In many locations, availability of infrastructure and services is required before a property can be approved for development.*”.

Koehn moved on to the Vision Narrative (Section 2, Page 10). Koehn stated she took the comments from the workshops public and public open house to the question “*What do you love about Miami County and where do you see us in twenty (20) years.*” and dropped the responses into AI and requested a Vision Narrative based on the information provided. Koehn passed out the AI version of the Vision Narrative to the Planning Commissioners. It read:

“In the heart of Miami County lies a vision of rural living, where country life blends with thoughtful growth and care for our land. Amid vast expanses of farmland and quaint towns, we honor our

agricultural roots while building a vibrant community for future generations.

Imagine rolling fields stretching into the distance, where farming and nature coexist, preserving our resources for the years ahead. Here, the pace of life is relaxed, free from the noise and bustle of the city. Under clear, starry skies, residents enjoy the peace and tranquility of rural living.

Despite our rural character, Miami County is well-connected, with planned infrastructure keeping us linked to nearby cities like Kansas City. Our towns are welcoming, with local businesses thriving and residents valuing the unique charm of our region.

Education is a priority, with excellent schools providing opportunities for our youth. Families appreciate the safety and sense of community that define life in Miami County.

As we look ahead, we're committed to preserving our rural identity while embracing responsible development. Together, we're creating a place where small-town charm meets sustainable growth, offering endless possibilities for those who call Miami County home. Welcome to our community, where the beauty of the countryside meets the warmth of small-town living."

The Planning Commissioners asked for the second paragraph to be deleted *"Imagine rolling fields stretching into the distance, where farming and nature coexist, preserving our resources for the years ahead. Here, the pace of life is relaxed, free from the noise and bustle of the city. Under clear, starry skies, residents enjoy the peace and tranquility of rural living."*

Elliott stated in the third paragraph suggested changing the verbiage of the following sentence *"Despite our rural character, Miami County is well-connected, with planned infrastructure keeping us linked to nearby cities like Kansas City."* to something like *"linked to Kansas City Metropolitan area"*, not sure of exact wording but believes it needs to change Kansas City.

Kitchen suggested ending the sentence at *"infrastructure"*.

Koehn noted having Kansas City or Kansas City Metropolitan area shows the struggles Miami County has due to the close proximity of the Kansas City area.

Cook stated when reviewing Conditional Use Permits (CUP) or other types of zoning cases Staff looks through the Comprehensive Plan as a reference.

Elliott stated when cases, such as the K-68 corridor expansion, comes before the Planning Commission having a narrative it can be used as a guide to help justify why the Planning Commission is making a decision.

Menefee stated they talk about protecting the Rural Character and that starts with the Vision Narrative.

Broers noted the Golden Criteria is not the only thing taken into consideration when considering applications, the Comprehensive Plan is in that mix and being able to refer to something that defines what the county's values are is beneficial.

Cook noted in the Golden Criteria is compliance with the Comprehensive Plan.

Broers asked if Rural Character was plugged into AI as a comment for the Narrative Vision.

Koehn stated she plugged in what the public comments were.

Broers stated the Narrative Vision AI came up with is aligned with Rural Character.

Koehn stated she will tweak the Narrative Vision presented per the Planning Commissioners comments.

Koehn moved onto Section 2, Page 11, Guiding Principles, noting that the language needs to be reworded

to better reflect the weight of importance Rural Character has to Miami County.

Broers asked if there is a plan to drop the examples of noise and light pollution.

Koehn stated she will add noise and light pollution.

Kitchen stated he doesn't like tree lined roads. Kitchen used a road near his home as an example, when there is an ice storm there is approximately a half-mile of road that the tree limbs hang down in the road and he has to take a front loader down the road hitting the tree limbs to break the ice off to lighten the tree limbs and they go back in place.

Broers suggested tree-lined roads with appropriate setbacks.

Elliott asked where did tree-lined roads come from.

Koehn stated several Commissioners had mentioned it as well as searches on what people consider to be Rural Character.

Elliott stated if it wasn't something on the community survey he would like to understand why it is there. Elliott noted if there isn't an actual reason for it, he doesn't like it and would like it.

Koehn stated he is not the only one that doesn't like "*tree-lined roads*" and will find something else to put there.

Cook stated he had a discussion with the County Commissioners about this and it is a characteristic of Rural Character that people might like. Cook stated another Rural Character is a corn field planted up to the road right-of-way instead of trees.

Menefee noted that tree-lined roads and woodlands are basically the same thing.

Cook noted part of the Zoning Regulations for commercial/industrial site plans parking lots requires a 15-foot setback with a grass space planted with trees or shrubs.

Menefee agrees with the trees or shrubs screening for commercial/industrial but doesn't believe tree-lined roads is necessary on a rural property between houses.

Broers suggested changing it to naturally landscaped roads. Broers asked for tree-lined roads be strike from the list of examples and add noise and light pollution.

Koehn stated she made some changes to sample graph of Figure 2.1 as well as some verbiage and asked if the Planning Commissioners are ok with the changes.

Elliott asked if the connected county changed in this draft compared to the draft the consultant presented.

Koehn stated this was pulled from the draft provided by the consultant in April 2022.

Elliott stated he knows the trails are somewhere in this area and he doesn't want to miss them.

Cook stated this is from the original draft provided by the consultant the trails is farther in the Comprehensive Plan.

Joshua Brown joined the meeting at 6:44 p.m.

Koehn moved to Section 3 and referred to the Goals and Policies. Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) and Land First is mentioned in this Section, the two (2) are different but have some similar goals based on sustainability, preservation, the ecosystem, and things of that nature. Koehn doesn't believe LESA is a feasible plan for Miami County regardless if it does or does not align with the county's values.

Koehn noted Miami County doesn't have the resources to make LESA work.

Cook stated when he looked into LESA it utilizes a grading tool on GIS mapping and Miami County doesn't currently have the tool of GIS for this.

Broers asked if LESA could be used without GIS.

Cook stated as he viewed the videos of the Comprehensive Plan workshop the Planning Commission was asking what does LESA mean and at those meetings doesn't believe there were any real answers so he researched it to see what would be required. This is the first time Staff has brought an overview of LESA to the Planning Commission. As Staff looked into it discovered it would be difficult for Planning & Zoning to implement with the resources we currently have available.

Elliott asked to interject and stated he believes LESA came from a consultant who is disconnected with the reality of a planning department of this size.

Menefee stated when the Planning Commission first saw the Comprehensive Plan it was believed that the consultant used a cookie cutter mold, and a lot of counties are doing it, but it doesn't fit Miami County.

Broers recapped that Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) is here for information but it's not an option for Miami County.

Staff agreed.

Elliott asked (using a hypothetical example) if a large solar company wants to come in and put a large solar farm somewhere in the county and Miami County uses the Land First plan, what components of Land First would assist Staff in drafting something to restrict it to limited spaces or help identify where it would fit.

Koehn stated she believes LESA needs taken out of the Comprehensive Plan and that Land First is a better plan for Miami County in some ways but believes it is a buzz word and the current Comprehensive Plan addresses a lot of the things it talks about.

Elliott asked if there will be anything Miami County will be losing or risking by using Land First.

Koehn stated if the decision is to go with one of the two plans it should be Land First but doesn't believe it is a perfect fit.

Cook stated in discussing Rural Character he believes some of those things would be addressing issues with larger projects that would have a larger impact to the character of the neighborhood.

Elliott stated when the Planning Commission and Board of County Commission makes a decision that ends up in District Court the Commissioners need to be able to defend their decision. Elliott wants to make they are not in a non-defendable position. Elliott noted he doesn't know if that means being simplicity or being more in depth.

Koehn agreed with Elliott and believes keeping it at a high level gives more flexibility to build into the Comprehensive Plan.

Elliott asked if Land First is really needed or can the Comprehensive Plan just bullet point the things they want in the Comprehensive Plan. Elliott is concerned that if the Comprehensive Plan lists the Land First plan it is open to interpretation and doesn't want someone to interpret it differently than the Staff and the Planning Commission.

Broers asked if there is a copy of the original draft available for comparison.

Cook showed it on the overhead projector.

Broers asked where Land First shows up in the Comprehensive Plan.

Menefee asked where LESA shows up in the Comprehensive Plan.

Koehn stated Land First shows up in Section 5 and LESA shows up in Section 3.

Menefee asked if they should get the advice of legal counsel.

Elliott asked for example if listing some of the characteristics of Land First gains anything by putting the words "Land First" in there. Elliott believes that is why Broers as asking is this an established planning method giving us some protection or guidance.

Kitchen stated maybe the Planning Commission is the ones to set the guidelines.

Cook stated Staff had some of these same conversations as to adopt either of these plans or just use characteristics listed in these plans and if the words "Land First" are adopted make sure the characteristics fits Miami County's goals.

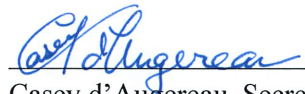
Elliott stated his personal recommendation would be to not use the key word(s) unless it is an established word that has a universal definition otherwise it will create more confusion.

Menefee agrees with Elliott and would like to get rid of both and make a list of characteristics that fit the goals of Miami County.

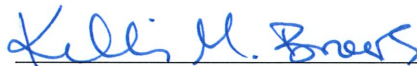
Koehn stated that completes Sections 1-3.

Study Session was adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Approved this 2nd day of April, 2024.



Casey d'Augereau, Secretary



Kelli Broers, Chair / Topher Philgreen, Vice-Chair

Minutes written by Casey d'Augereau