



CITY OF BLACKFOOT
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
157 N Broadway Street, Blackfoot
October 18, 2023

Committee Members in attendance: Jack Hough, Jim Schnittgen, Debbie Barlow
Committee Members absent: Peter H. Stewart, Jan McLaughlin, and prospective member Charlie Kotter
City Staff in attendance: Mayor Marc Carroll

Debbie Barlow Called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

Jack Hough made a motion to approve the October 4, 2023 meeting minutes and James Schnittgetn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Debbie Barlow turned the time over to Mayor Marc Carroll to discuss the future of Blackfoot City

Mayor Carroll started the meeting by emphasizing that we do not have a crystal ball to know what the future holds. Back in 2018 there was not a lot of development happening, but the owner of Premier Technologies challenged him to know why Blackfoot isn't building more homes. There was a deficit of homes, and nowhere for workers to live. The Mayor dug deeper and learned that "It sucks to build in Blackfoot city".

Mayor Carroll met with several contractors who indicated that the process to build in Blackfoot was not clear and that we lacked clear engineering standards for developers. It took 8 months and the help of HLE engineering to develop standard specifications for things like curbs, sidewalks, road standards, street lights, etc.

We currently have approximately 400 housing units under construction. In 2019, we had 12 under construction. There are also more businesses coming in, including Legacy Point with 16-17 acres with a hotel, recreation center, park, and splash pad.

A contract has been signed with Keller for \$85,000-\$86,000 to develop a plan to revitalize the downtown from Judicial to Francis including the Potato Museum. They are going to put together a basic plan for downtown revitalization to use to request a \$500,000 revitalization grant.

We just spent \$100,000 rebuilding sidewalks and making sidewalk ramps more ADA compliant.

As ARPA funds become available, they are being used to install storm infiltrators in different communities.

There is housing development happening, but the Mayor is also worried about communities being started but not finished. Coopers Cove was started, but in 2009, the housing crash stalled development.

Honeybrook development is selling units as fast as they are being built. The starting price was \$185,000 but people started offering \$210,000. About half have sold as owner-occupied units and about half are being rented for \$1300-\$1400.

Blackfoot is unique. We cannot compare ourselves to similarly-sized communities like Ammon and Chubbuck because we don't have the commercial base that they do. Commercial saves residents from taxes. In Blackfoot, the property taxes are disproportionately paid by residents because we don't have a strong commercial base.

Jack Hough said that the choices of where people can work is appealing in Blackfoot. If we have a less-expensive housing area we will be more affordable. Mayor Carroll said that he has been told that middle-class housing is higher-priced in Blackfoot than it is in Pocatello and Idaho Falls. We don't have the volume of development to give the lower costs. James responded that that is due in part to building being more efficient when more homes are being built. He added that Blackfoot is nice because we can live here and work in Idaho Falls and make more money there. Our problem is primarily commercial and he wondered how we can get better commercial opportunities.

Mayor Carroll said that in the 1970s Blackfoot had a lot of retail store options, but Walmart's arrival in 1992 drove a lot of them out of business. He is concerned because 30% of residents don't want any growth at all. It is mostly older people who feel this way, but some younger people do as well. Jack added that we can grow and still have a small-town feel.

Mayor Carroll said that as far as the comprehensive plan is concerned, we need to be set up for orderly growth and have plans for growth.

Jack added that the plan needs to be flexible enough to allow growth, but it needs specificity to guide that growth. The growth needs to be controlled and the plan needs to give guidance on infrastructure. He is hoping we can get input from the school district to know if the plan for growth there is proactive or reactive. Growth is good if it is controlled and if we work with the county on growth measures such as development and annexation.

Mayor Carroll was doubtful that we would see much commercial growth, but he is planning to move forward with annexation plans again in a few months. Blackfoot was part of the Regional Economic Development project a few years ago. It was costing \$10,000 per year, but we weren't seeing much benefit. The few businesses that came in went to Idaho Falls instead of Blackfoot.

One company in particular was located in Blackfoot and was manufacturing biodegradable plastics. They ultimately left Blackfoot in favor of reduced energy costs in Idaho Falls. Blackfoot can't incentivize businesses to come here. Counties can incentivize businesses, but cities cannot. Technically the Planning and Zoning Administrator is the community development director, but she lacks both time and expertise to excel in Community Development. Looking forward, the bridge replacement project is likely going to be closer to 2027 instead of the hoped-for 2025.

Jack indicated that he would like to see more services like homeless shelters and teen centers, but James wondered if a teen center would be used. There was a private teen-center open for a few months, but it closed recently.

Jack Hough made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:35. James Schnittgen seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.