

Cheney seeking residents to get involved in city's future development

Initiative to form committees to deal with specific comprehensive plan topics

By DAVID TELLER

Staff Reporter

The city of Cheney is asking its residents for help.

Community development director Brian Jennings is setting the stage for broad public participation by launching "Choices for Cheney," which is a citizen committee to provide comment and direction on the long-range comprehensive plan rewrite.

To assist with the effort, Cheney's Community Development Department is launching a number of committees to address specific topics of the comp plan.

According to a Community Development Department news release, the Cheney City Council, at a recent meeting, emphasized that the rewrite of the comp plan must not be a "do over" of previous efforts or studies. The release also said the thinking on this plan is that it must be innovative, sensible, and attainable during the next 20 years. It must have broad citizen input on its creation.

Jennings said each group will consist of seven to nine residents and all members will be expected to attend approximately one monthly meeting for the extent of the project, approximately 12 months. In addition, the members will help expand the discussion throughout the community by talking with others about what "choices" their specific groups are addressing. For that reason, Jennings said it's critical that the topic groups represent Cheney's business, civic, institutional, and natural well-being.

Topic groups will be established for each one of the comp plan chapters and will hopefully represent a wide variety of community interests and ideas. Jennings said that topic committees would be established for the following areas of the comp plan: Transportation, housing, land use, economic development, technology, utilities, public services, culture/arts and natural assets/sustainability.

"The idea is that (the comp plan) will help guide decision making in the future," Jennings said.

He cautions this is not the same as what the Cheney Planning Commission is doing with the comp plan, which is critiquing and reviewing the existing plan in terms of completeness and clarity. What Jennings said the public would do is provide direction on the actual comp plan rewrite in coordination with the consultant the city hired.

When finished, the comp plan will establish a set of goals and polices to direct the city's decisions on growth and development issues. The plan echoes citizens' desires, values, and an accurate picture of the community's desired future.

"The topic groups are essential to the development of the city's plan," City Administrator Arlene Fisher said in the news release. "This is one of those significant occasions where the public needs to let its voice be heard and the topic groups will be a great way to accomplish that."

Studio Cascade, the consultant hired to help author the plan, will work closely with the topic groups, relying on each group for guidance and for stimulating public interest in the plan.

"In our work, we have found that active citizen committees are key to writing successful plans," Bill Grimes, Studio Cascades' principal, said in the news release. "Topic groups develop an intimate understanding of what goes into the planning process, and they also help boost citizen participation. Plus, with their knowledge developed in putting the plan together, committee members often help lead city progress after plans are adopted."

Anyone interested in being considered for appointment, or nominating an individual to a topic group, please contact Brian Jennings, community development director, at 498-9240 or e-mail a letter of interest to bjennings@cityofcheney.org by no later than May 13.

David Teller can be reached at dteller@cheneyfreepress.com