

Dan Rosensweig named to City Planning Commission
written by Newspark Team | March 10, 2008



Soccer coach and English professor Dan Rosensweig will become the newest member of the

Charlottesville Planning Commission

after Bill Lucy steps down this week. City Council made the appointment at its meeting on March 3, 2008, selecting from seven applicants.

Rosensweig is currently employed by the Soccer Organization of Charlottesville-Albemarle (SOCA) and the University of Virginia's Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies Program.

Rosensweig has been a City resident since 1991, having moved here shortly after receiving an M.A. in English at Georgetown University. Rosensweig received his Ph.D. in English from UVa in 1999. Since then, he's written a book on urban planning called

Retro Ballparks: Instant History, Baseball and the New American City

. He's also a graduate of the Neighborhood Leadership Initiative run by the City's Department of Neighborhood Development Services.

In an interview with Charlottesville Tomorrow, he said he'll be leaving his job at SOCA in July to study the production of alternative fuels, spend more time teaching, and to begin a new book. Most importantly, he wants to free up more time to serve as a Planning Commissioner.

"The Planning Commission requires a lot of time, and one of the things I'm most interested in is being accessible," Rosensweig said. The new commissioner said he studied several models of redevelopment while researching his first book.

"The common thread among all of them that were successful and sustainable was that the neighborhood was involved from the very beginning," he said. In particular, Rosensweig singled out the

Dudley Street Initiative

in south Boston as an example of how neighborhood involvement can strengthen redevelopment efforts.

"It's one of these great models that happened by accident. It is an urban enclave near Boston rife with urban America ills. Crime, suburban flight, lack of funding of schools. It got so bad the municipality let the street do their own thing," Rosensweig said. That meant the neighborhood itself got control of land use decisions, and the idea of the "commons" permeated the discussion. Rosensweig says the effort took a while, but neighborhood involvement in creating public space was key to the success of Dudley Street.

In Charlottesville, Rosensweig points to the coming redevelopment of the Westhaven and Martha Jefferson neighborhoods as examples of where citizen involvement will be crucial to the process.

"I know what gets most people excited [about Martha Jefferson] is the opportunity to create the Holy Grail of downtown - a grocery store - as well affordable housing for older residents," Rosensweig said.

He currently lives in the neighborhood, and says the City has a great opportunity to augment downtown.

As a Commissioner, Rosensweig says he feels a strong allegiance to the City's

Comprehensive Plan

, and calls it "a great aspirational document." He contributed to its creation in 2001 by participating in neighborhood meetings. At the time he was a resident of the Belmont neighborhood, but now lives near Martha Jefferson Hospital.

"If Charlottesville is able to evolve according to principles of the plan we'll be in a better place in two decades than now," Rosensweig said.

Rosensweig's first official meeting will be a

March 18 joint meeting of the City and Albemarle County Planning Commissions

. The topic will be sewer infrastructure in both communities, and the Commissions will hear from Tom Frederick of the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority, Gary Fern of the Albemarle County Service Authority and Lauren Hildebrand, Utilities Director for the City of Charlottesville.

Sean Tubbs