

City of Grand Ledge
Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes from Meeting Held on
Thursday, September 8, 2011

Chairman Mike Stevens called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Attendance: Mike Stevens, Ann Lawrence, Bill Kane, Bob Doty, Steve Baribeau, Jamie Malecki, Ron Graber and Steve Willobee. Also present: Zoning Administrator Sue Stachowiak and Assistant City Administrator Ameer King. Absent: Todd Gute and Council Member Jon Bonofiglio.

Pledge of Allegiance – Mr. Willobee led those present in the pledge of allegiance.

Mr. Stevens called for a moment of silence in remembrance of 9/11.

Approval of the Agenda - Mr. Doty made a motion, seconded by Mr. Baribeau to approve the agenda as printed. Motion carried.

Approval of the Minutes - Mr. Doty made a motion, seconded by Ms. Lawrence to approve the minutes from the regular meeting held on August 4, 2011. Ms. Lawrence seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Notice of Agenda Items Conflicts - None

Business from the Floor - None

New Business

1. Discussion regarding Non-Motorized Pathway Plan

Larry LaHaie, Public Service Director, stated that the City has a third Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) grant for a non-motorized pathway along S. M-100. The pathway will be 10 feet wide and will link the M-43 pathway with the riverwalk. Construction is expected to begin in the Spring and there are several ways of accomplishing the link.

Mike Dyer, Fitzgerald Henne & Associates, stated that the pathway plan has not been designed yet and they are looking for input from the Planning Commission as to how the pathway should link the M-43 pathway to the riverwalk. The pathway will have to cross M-100 at some point whether it is on the east or west side of the street. One option would be to put the pathway on the west side of the street and then cross Jefferson Street at Franklin. Another option would be for the pathway to cross from west to east at Edwards Street. While this would be a good option, as long as there is a pedestrian crossing signal, it would require that the pathway cross Willow Highway at the intersection.

Mr. Stevens said that the best idea would be to go through the ravine.

Planning Commission Minutes
September 8, 2011
Page 2

Mr. LaHaie said that some of it will depend on what happens with the boat launch at Jaycee Park. He said that the benefits of putting the pathway on the east side of the road is that there is a 50 foot right-of-way to work with and there is already a pathway at Quality Dairy. Furthermore, there would be no major tree removal and no conflicts with utilities. The down side of putting the pathway on the east side of M-100 is that the pathway would have to cross Willow Highway which is not a good situation. In addition, the crossing at M-43 would be quite long.

Mr. Willobee said that motorists do not respect crosswalks.

Mr. Doty said that the city should look into signing the crosswalks.

Ms. Lawrence said that she is a walker and most intersections are uncomfortable places to cross.

Mr. Dyer said that he could ask a signal engineer if there is a way of stopping traffic altogether at the M-43/M-100 intersection when pedestrians are crossing.

Mr. Kane said that the west side of Clinton Street seems to work best.

Mr. Dyer said that there are sign and utility pole problems by McDonalds. He also said that there are trees that would have to be removed along the west side of M-100 and there would be some grade changes to deal with when crossing at Franklin Street.

Mr. Stevens asked about mid-block crossings.

Mr. Dyer said that mid-block crossing can be more dangerous than intersection crossings.

Mr. Graber said that crossing at Edwards Street seems to be a good idea.

Mr. Stevens said that he likes the idea of crossing from west to east at Edwards Street as well.

Mr. Willobee said that we need to make more of an effort to make Grand Ledge a walkable community and if motorists do not stop for the walkways, they need to be cited.

The Planning Commission agreed that a crossing at Edwards Street would be the safest place to cross M-100.

Mr. Kane asked if the city could get a waiver to reduce the width of the pathway from 10 feet to 8 feet.

Mr. Dyer said that the city probably could get a waiver but it really would not really solve any of the problems.

Mr. LaHaie said that the money is there and the city has until July of next year to get it obligated. However, the city wants to get the project in as early as possible so that there can be an April bid letting.

2. Zoning Ordinance Review, Section 220-57, Parking Requirements

Ms. Stachowiak said that she made the changes that were discussed at the last meeting:

1. Keep the parking requirement for Libraries, Museums and Post Offices at 1 space for each 150 square feet of usable floor area.
2. For multiple family residential uses: Delete "3 for each dwelling unit containing 3 bedrooms" and change 2-bedrooms to 2 OR MORE bedrooms.
3. Change hardware store requirements from 1 for each 300 square feet of usable floor area to one for each 500 square feet of usable floor area.

She also said that she changed the parking requirement for fast food restaurants back to the way it was since the current standards appears to be reasonable and consistent with what other communities require.

Ms. Stachowiak said that she prepared a list of existing businesses to compare how much parking was required versus how much they actually installed. In almost every case, more parking was provided than what was required. For small sites such as Tim Horton's the additional parking was not significant and may actually be necessary. However, in the case of Meijers, the additional parking over and above what was required was very significant and there are parking spaces in that lot that no one has every utilized.

Mr. Stevens stated that in the case of large buildings, 125 percent of the allowable parking could be substantial.

The Commission agreed that the ordinance should not allow any additional parking over and above what is required by ordinance unless otherwise approved by the Commission. The applicant would have to demonstrate, during site plan review, that the additional parking is necessary for the business.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that she prepared standards for bicycle parking as well. She said that she felt that the requirements that Lansing is proposing were a little to restrictive so she modified them to fit in more with what would be reasonable and practical for Grand Ledge. Ms. Stachowiak said that the bicycle parking spaces would have to be shown on the site plan.

The Commission agreed to hold a public hearing on these amendments and begin work on the landscaping section of the ordinance at the next meeting.

3. City Hall Building Discussion

Ms. Stachowiak stated that the City Attorney has determined that the Planning Commission does not need to provide a recommendation on the purchase of Greenwood School since it is not new construction. She said that the City Council may still chose to send it to the Commission despite it not being required.

Mr. Kane said that he does not agree with the City Attorney's opinion and this matter should come before the Planning Commission whether it is required or not. The other Planning Commissioners agreed.

Zoning Administrator's Report

Ms. Stachowiak said that she will follow up on the banner sign violations in the downtown.

Zoning Board of Appeals Representative's Report

Mr. Graber said that the ZBA approved a variance for a larger garage than what is permitted by ordinance at 905 W. Main Street. He said that it was a very unusual situation that did warrant approval of a variance. Mr. Graber said that he informed the ZBA that the Commission is in the process of updating the ordinance.

Mayor's Comments - Mayor Smith was not present.

Council Representative's Report - Councilman Bonofiglio was not present.

Comments from Commissioners

Mr. Baribeau said that the riverwalk is a great asset to the city and he really enjoys seeing people out walking and using the parks.

Several Planning Commissioners welcomed Mr. Willobee to the Commission. He said that he is pleased to be serving on the Board.

Ms. Lawrence said that she participated in the bridge walk on Labor Day and she would like to compliment John Greenslit, Eaton County Parks Director on organizing the event and coming up with innovative ideas.

Mr. Doty asked Ms. Stachowiak to look into whether the trees that were supposed to be preserved at Tim Horton's were cut down.

Chairman's Report

Mr. Stevens welcomed Mr. Willobee to the Commission.

Adjournment

Ms. Malekci made a motion, seconded by Ms. Lawrence to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m. Motion carried.

Submitted By:

Susan Stachowiak
Recording Secretary

Ann Lawrence, Secretary
Planning Commissioner