

City of Grand Ledge
Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes from Meeting Held on
Thursday, December 1, 2011

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

Attendance: Mike Stevens, Ann Lawrence, Bob Doty, Bill Kane, Ron Graber, Steve Willobee, Todd Gute (left at 7:30), Jamie Malecki, and City Council Representative Jon Bonofiglio Also present: Zoning Administrator Sue Stachowiak. Absent: Steve Baribeau

Pledge of Allegiance - Ms. Malecki led those present in the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of the Agenda - Mr. Doty requested to add Adams Outdoor Billboard and City Hall Project Update under New Business. Mr. Kane made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Ms. Lawrence seconded the motion. Motion carried 8 - 0.

Approval of the Minutes - Mr. Kane made a motion to approve the minutes from the regular meeting held on November 3, 2011. Mr. Willobee seconded the motion. Motion carried 8 - 0.

Notice of Agenda Items Conflicts -

Business from the Floor -

New Business

Non-Motorized Pathway Plan.

Mr. Dyer stated that there are a few options for the location of the non-motorized pathway plan on south M-100. One option is to cross M-100 at M-43, continuing along the east side of M-100, crossing Willow Hwy., and down the ravine. Another option is keeping the pathway on the west side of M-100 with a mid-block crossing on Jefferson Street to the ravine. The third option is to cross M-100 on the south side of Edwards Street. This option requires crossing at Willow Highway.

Mr. Dyer said that one of the challenges is that there is very little room in front of Dr. Ball's Office on the east side of M-100. Another challenge is that while it is safe to cross M-100 at M-43, it is intimidating because of the traffic at the intersection. Mr. Dyer said that given the current geometrics of the Willow/Jefferson intersection, it is not a safe crossing. He said that some changes to the intersection would be required to make it a safe route and that would become part of the overall project. More specifically, he said that narrowing the intersection while still providing 3 lanes should solve most of the safety concerns. Mr. Dyer showed the Planning Commission a sketch of the proposed intersection design.

Mr. Gute said that the proposed intersection changes would improve the intersection regardless of the bike paths.

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Mr. Dyer said that the cap on the grant is \$275,000 and the rest of the cost would be the responsibility of the city. He recommended that the pathway cross M-100 on the south side of Edwards Street and improving the Willow/Jefferson intersection as depicted on the sketch.

Mr. Kane said that a lot of people will probably continue along the west side of M-100 because it is the most direct route.

Mr. Willobee made a motion, seconded by Mr. Doty to support the route recommended by Mr. Dyer (Pathway crossing on the south side of the Edwards Street, improvements to the Willow/Jefferson intersection, to the ravine on Jefferson Street). On a voice vote (8-0), the motion carried unanimously.

Street Lighting

Mr. Stevens stated that it would be a shame not to address street lighting along Jefferson and Clinton Street as part of the MDOT reconstruction project. He said that if the lights themselves cannot be installed, the conduits should at least be put in so that the lights can be installed at a later date with minimal disruption to the street. He also stated that the trees that have been removed along Jefferson should be replaced.

Mr. Kane said that ideally, the light in the downtown should be installed on M-100 from M-43 to a block or two on Jefferson Street beyond bridge Street.

Mr. Mulder stated that this was discussed at the last DDA meeting.

Mr. LaHaie said that he would be surprised if MDOT would go along with this plan since they are making the city pay the difference to put in an 8" storm drain as opposed to a 6" storm drain. He said that the Garden Club has been looking for places to install memorial trees.

Mr. Kane made a motion, seconded by Mr. Graber to encourage the Garden Club to plant trees along Jefferson Street and to install conduits from M-43 to at least 2 blocks past Bridge Street for future street lights consistent with the downtown lights. On a voice vote (7-0), the motion carried unanimously.

TCRPC Greening Mid-Michigan and Urban Service Management Study Resolutions.

Mr. Kane stated that there are two separate resolutions. The first one involves supporting the Greening Mid-Michigan initiative. He said that this resolution simply states that the city is committed to protecting its green infrastructure system. Mr. Kane said that he does not have any concerns about the resolution as it will not cost the city anything.

Mr. Kane made a motion, seconded by Mr. Willobee to support the Greening Mid-Michigan resolution provided by TCRPC. On a voice vote (7-0), the motion carried unanimously.

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Mr. Kane stated that the second resolution (Urban Service Management) needs more review as it seems to be just more government intrusion into our community. He said that the city has a water/sewer agreement with Oneida Township and this resolution may commit the city to something that is not in its best interest. Mr. Kane said that there needs to be a committee comprised of representatives of the City and Township to study this issue. He also suggested that Mr. Bayless make a presentation to Council or otherwise explain what this means to the city.

Mr. Willobee said that he is also concerned that this resolution may put the city in a negative position when it comes to negotiating with other municipalities as regards utility services.

The Planning Commission decided to delay action on the Urban Service Management resolution.

Discussion regarding the keeping of chickens in the City

Ms. Stachowiak stated that there is a proposed ordinance in the packet that would allow chickens in the city, under certain conditions and another proposed ordinance that would expressly prohibit chickens in the city.

Mr. Graber asked how the ordinance protects the neighbors.

Mr. Kane said that Grand Ledge is a nice, serene town and he would not want to have chickens living next door to him. He said that there is not reason to change the ordinance to allow chickens as it would not be fair to the people who would have to live next to them.

Ms. Malecki said that 5 chickens are way too many. She also expressed concerns about the definition of "wild animal" because people may want to keep snakes for example and as long as they are kept inside, that should not be a problem.

Mr. Willobee said that he would be in support of allowing chickens. He said that chickens, as long as they are controlled, are no more objectionable than dogs or cats. Mr. Willobee said that the problem is when they are not controlled and are allowed to roam free. He said that the same conditions that are listed for chickens should be extended to dogs, cats and other household pets.

Mr. Doty made a motion, seconded by Mr. Graber to set a public hearing for the January meeting on the proposed ordinance to strengthen the ordinance language prohibiting chickens in the city. On a voice vote (7-0), the motion carried unanimously.

Zoning Ordinance Amendments to Section 220-66, Landscaping & 220-67, Walls & Berms

Ms. Stachowiak reviewed the landscaping ordinance. She said that one of the changes involved giving Planning Commission the authority to require the preservation of a tree when it can be done

with minimum disruption to the site. The primary change involves requiring that if trees to be preserved as part of the site plan approval are cut down, damaged or destroyed, a sufficient number of trees shall be planted to equal or exceed the diameter of the tree that was to be preserved.

Mr. Stevens said that the method for measuring the size of the trees needs to be consistent throughout the ordinance.

Mr. Kane made a motion, seconded by Ms. Lawrence to set a public hearing for the January meeting on the proposed amendments to Section 220-66, Landscaping and 220-67, Walls & Berms. On a voice vote (7-0), the motion carried.

Adams Outdoor sign

Mr. Doty stated that Adam's put the digital face on the west side of the sign but left the frame for the double, non-digital sign on the east side of the sign.

Mr. Kane said that the sub-structure is not what was approved by the Commission.

Ms. Stachowiak will contact Adam's and e-mail the commission members with the outcome.

City Hall Update

Mayor Smith said that there is no update. He said that the City was told by school officials that they did not want to talk about it until after the election. He said that the school had a discussion Monday night at the School Board meeting and simply instructed the Superintendent to keep talking to the City. The City has made the school an offer and is awaiting a response. Mayor Smith said that there is an issue with Aria Link. They started boring in the right of ways without permission. The city has a court order to stop them because we have a lot of older homes in the area where we don't know the depth and precise location of their sewer leads.

Review of Violation Report

Ms. Stachowiak reviewed the violation report. She said that the signs in the downtown are pretty much under control. The Commission asked that Ms. Stachowiak contact Walt Eschtruth regarding the child care center that is reportedly going in to his building on S. Bridge Street in violation of the Zoning Ordinance. There was also a concern raised regarding the unsightly farm market on the corner of Bridge and Scott.

Zoning Administrator's Report - None

Zoning Board of Appeals Representative's Report

Mr. Graber suggested that we put something in the newspaper that the city has a Zoning Ordinance and people have to comply with it. He said that maybe an article could be written that could also be put on the City's website.

Council Representative's Report

Mr. Bonofiglio stated that he would like to commend the Planning Commission. He said that it is not always easy to make tough decisions.

Mayor's Comments

Mayor Smith stated that there was a Public Service & Facilities Committee meeting this evening and one item on the agenda was the walkway. He said that there is concern about Dr. Ball's parking area since there is very little room between the curb and his building. Mayor Smith said that out of this whole project, that is the biggest area of concern.

Mayor Smith said that the city received a complaint about parking on the corner next to Preston's. He said that the Police Chief studied the area and determined that it was not a dangerous situation, so no action was taken.

Comments from Commissioners

Mr. Doty wished everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. He said that he is promoting the Holiday Wishes Benefits Concert because all proceeds go to the Grand Ledge Food Bank. Mr. Doty said that he hopes to see everyone next Thursday at the Christmas party. He stated that the GLAESA property on M-100 looks much better since they took down the houses. He also stated that there may be a site plan coming to the Commission for a 30,000 square foot building on Charlevoix.

Mr. Kane stated that maybe the fire barn should be thrown in the hopper as a potential location for a City Hall/Police Department if the Fire Department is going to move to its new location on M-100.

Mr. Graber stated that he enjoys being on the Commission.

Chairman's Report - None

Adjournment

Ms. Lawrence made a motion, seconded by Ms. Malecki to adjourn the meeting at 9:18 p.m.
Motion carried 7 - 0.

Submitted By:

Amee King
Assistant City Administrator

Ann Lawrence, Secretary
Planning Commissioner