

City of Grand Ledge
Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes from Meeting Held on
Thursday, January 7, 2016

Chairman Mike Stevens called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Attendance - Present: Mike Stevens, Bill Kane, Bob Doty, Todd Gute, Eric Morris, Steve Baribeau & Matt Salmon. Also present: Council Representative Keith Mulder. Absent: Lynne MacDowell & Zoning Administrator Sue Stachowiak.

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

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Morris made a motion, seconded by Mr. Gute to approve the agenda as printed. On a voice vote, the motion carried 7-0.

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Doty made a motion, seconded by Mr. Kane to approve the December 1, 2015 minutes, with the following corrections:

Page 3, 3rd paragraph: "...that if she and her husband are out of town, ~~the~~ THEY have someone..."

On a voice vote, the motion carried 7-0.

Notice of Agenda Items Conflicts - None

Business from the Floor

Cheryl Mattson, 1114 Timbercreek Drive, spoke about the need for more housing for senior citizens. She said that she has friends that have had to move out of Grand Ledge because the City does not have adequate housing for senior citizens. Ms. Mattson said that a lot of seniors do not need a 1,400 square foot home on a large lot. She said that she would like to be kept informed as more progress is made on amending the Zoning Ordinance to address this matter. She also said that she hopes that new development, possibly condominiums, will occur in the City that will provide one-story, accessible housing with smaller houses on smaller lots.

Mr. Stevens said that the Planning Commission is in the process of developing ordinance language that would allow higher density single family residential development. He said that the Commission is also working on updating the Master Plan to determine appropriate locations for this type of development.

Mr. Kane said that there should be a zone for smaller houses with narrower streets and smaller lot sizes. He said that he is not sure where this should occur.

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Ms. Mattson said that she is not sure exactly where these types of developments should be located but there needs to be easy access to stores and offices as well.

NEW BUSINESS

Master Plan Update – Chapter 4, Transportation Plan

Mr. Doty said that on page 46, last paragraph, Ms. Stachowiak removed “Unfortunately, the wide, expansive lanes on N. Bridge Street...”. He asked if this sentence should this be removed.

Mr. Stevens said that there are some inconsistencies because some of these issues have been resolved since the last Master Plan.

Mr. Morris said that a Master Plan is a forward looking document that does not need to describe what has already occurred. He said that traffic on Jefferson and Bridge has calmed down quite a bit. Mr. Morris said that he spent quite a bit of time reviewing this section of the Master Plan over the past week and he has some questions, some of which are philosophical in nature. He said that the Master Plan seems very progressive in terms of future, new road construction although it does not address growth that would necessitate construction of those roads. Mr. Morris said that there needs to be a discussion about growth of the business districts as well as new residential development. He said that the new roads to the south make sense but he is not sure about the one off of Tallman Road as well as the second bridge crossing outside of the City.

Mr. Kane said that the Master Plan has to address the future use of the Gilbert property was recently annexed into the City. He said that the north end of that property may be a good location for the type of higher density residential development that the Commission has been discussing as well as some convenience retail uses that would create a walkable community in that area. Mr. Kane said that the other area that may be appropriate is the area north of the railroad tracks on W. Jefferson Street. While that area may not be very walkable to the downtown, it is a nice, underdeveloped area.

Mr. Doty said that the area Mr. Kane is referring to is the Gulf Street area and it would be really ideal for a senior citizen housing development.

Mr. Stevens said that the area north of the railroad tracks on Gulf Street would be ideal for higher density residential use. He only down side to this area is a lack of connectively to the downtown. Mr. Stevens said that the Commission did identify “PRD” areas in the Master Plan and needs to specifically identify parcels that would be appropriate for higher density, single family development.

Mr. Kane said that the Dible property on Charlevoix may not be ideal for this type of development but it makes sense on some levels. He said that the connectively to Candlewood needs to be revisited.

Mr. Mulder said that the Dible property is a good location for such use and it is near some convenience commercial uses.

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Mr. Stevens said that people want to be connected to a variety of uses and not just by automobile.

Mr. Morris asked if there is still a vision for a median along M-43.

Mr. Stevens said that Delta Township has this in its master plan but it seems unlikely to ever occur.

Mr. Doty said that there used to be a boulevard on M-43 from M-100 to Nixon Road.

Mr. Morris said that a boulevard within the City would be beneficial. It calms traffic and provides a refuge for pedestrians. He said that there is precedence for boulevards as there are safety as well as aesthetic benefits.

Mr. Stevens said that there is a great deal of excess right-of-way on M-43 to accommodate a median.

Mr. Morris said that the entrances to the City, particularly from the north, need to be improved.

Mr. Gute said that some priority should be given to improving a couple of the entrances to the City from an aesthetic standpoint.

Mr. Morris said that the problem with the north entrance is that it is an industrial area. He suggested focusing on the M-43/M-100 area from a transportation, safety and aesthetic standpoint.

Mr. Doty said that there are numerous walkways around town but the pathways/sidewalks at the M-43/M-100 intersection are completely snow covered. This requires the folks from Serenity Place to go in road.

Mr. Salmon said that the pathway on M-43 is very inviting but it does not go anywhere. It should be connected to the downtown to truly make the City walkable.

Mr. Morris said that he supports Mr. Gute's suggestion of focusing on a couple of entrances to the City. He said that the plans/maps need to be updated. Mr. Morris said that the latest thinking in urban transportation planning is utilizing transportation facilities to drive a communities planning needs. He said that M-43 in the City is ripe for connecting areas of the City. He suggested including a plan/exhibit that specifically shows what the City wants to see on M-43.

Mr. Stevens said that a defined plan for M-43 needs to be included in the Master Plan. He said that the changes to Jefferson Street and the Willow/Clinton/Jefferson intersection came to fruition because the City's has a very specific plan defined in Master Plan.

Mr. Baribeau said that on page 54, item D needs to be removed.

Mr. Doty said that item "C" on Map 6 also needs to be taken out.

Mr. Baribeau said that at one point, there was talk about a median on Bridge Street to slow traffic.

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Mr. Stevens said that curb bump-outs help to slow traffic and make it a much safer environment for pedestrians. He said that these types of things need to be specifically shown in the Master Plan.

Mr. Morris said that there are still references in the plan to traffic calming measures. He suggested eliminated things like speed bumps and roundabouts and focusing on things that actually may come to fruition. Mr. Morris said that he strongly encourages requesting a safety study at the corner of Jefferson and Bridge. He said that he has personally almost been hit a few times standing there with his family.

Mr. Salmon agreed. He said that he is very uncomfortable at that intersection when he has his son with him.

Mr. Morris said that there is not enough room at that intersection to change the geometry. He said that the conflicts at the Bridge/Jefferson intersection are between vehicles and pedestrians. Mr. Morris suggested signal phasing options and restrictions on turning movements. The only other way to calm traffic at that intersection is to prohibit trucks and that is not a practical option.

Mr. Gute suggested getting together with Mr. Morris and possibly other members of the Commission and putting together some sketches.

Mr. Mulder said that the various Council committees have talked about options for the Bridge/Jefferson intersection to make it safer. He said that this issue is on the City's radar and having it in the Master Plan helps to bring it to fruition.

Mr. Doty said that a lot of great ideas have been discussed this evening. He asked that the Commissioner's email their suggestions to Ms. Stachowiak.

Mr. Morris said that a second bridge across the Grand River could have unintended consequences for the downtown. The further away the crossing is from the downtown, the less of an impact a second bridge will have on downtown. If it is close to downtown, people are going to use it for convenience purposes and will not visit the businesses in the downtown.

Mr. Kane said that there will never be a bridge at Clinton Street and therefore, it may as well be removed from the Master Plan. He said that he can support Delta Township's recommendation for a bridge at Broadbent but if that is going to happen, they need to start acquiring right-of-way.

Mr. Stevens agreed that there will not be a vehicular bridge at M-100 but a pedestrian bridge may still be appropriate.

Mr. Salmon said that the pedestrian bridge is a good idea as long as it connects to something.

Mr. Kane said that the pedestrian bridge is not going to happen unless it is in the Master Plan. He also said that the City has made a list of capital improvement priorities over the next 3 years and he asked that the Planning Commission be provided with that information.

Mr. Mulder said that a list of priorities has been developed by the Council and this information could be provided to the Commission.

Zoning Ordinance Amendments – Article V, R-LD, R-MD: One Family Residential Districts

Mr. Morris said that on page 17 it states that the Planning Commission chairman will distribute copies of the plan when actually it will be the Zoning Administrator.

The Commission decided to delay its discussion on this matter until the next meeting when Ms. Stachowiak is present.

Mr. Kane stated that the ordinance is a good start.

Mr. Stevens said that higher density residential homes are very desirable right now and there is a significant demand for them. He said that the biggest challenge is how to handle the garages from an architectural standpoint so that they do not become dominant features of the building.

Election of Officers (Chairman, Vice-Chairman & Secretary)

Mr. Gute made a motion, seconded by Mr. Salmon to nominate Mr. Stevens for Chairman, Mr. Doty as Vice-Chairman and Ms. MacDowell for Secretary. On a roll call vote (7-0), the motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

City Charter Update

Joint Planning Committee Report

Mr. Doty stated that there was a Jaycee Park update last evening by the City Administrator. He said that the 90 days to vacate the Rounds property is about to expire so the State has given the City a 30 day extension. There is a request into the contractor for a re-bid to leave the garage for storage for the park. If it is going to cost more to keep it than to tear it down, it will be torn down. He said that this demolition will occur at the same time as the demolition of the Scout building.

Zoning Administrator's Report – Ms. Stachowiak was absent.

Zoning Board of Appeals Representative's Report – Ms. MacDowell was absent.

Council Representative's Report - None

Mayor's Report – Mayor Smith was absent.

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Comments from Commissioner's

Mr. Morris said that this will be his last meeting. He thanked the Commission for the opportunity to serve. He said that he has enjoyed these meetings and being part of this community. Mr. Morris said that he is looking forward, however, to work with Mr. Gute on some designs.

Mr. Salmon thanked Mr. Morris for helping him get up to speed when he first joined the Commission.

Mr. Doty said that as of last evening, the LDFA has officially been rejuvenated. He said that Verizon Wireless will be moving from its current location to the new strip mall to its east. He also said that there will be a flashing light like the one by Neff Elementary School by Serenity Place to make it easier for pedestrians to cross M-100 in that area. Mr. Doty said that if any of the Commissioners know of someone to serve on the Charter Commission, please let him know as they are in need of additional members. He said that the members of the Charter Commission have to have lived in the City for at least 3 years. Mr. Doty passed out copies of a site plan for an addition to the building at 403 S. Clinton Street. The stated that this site plan will be on the February agenda for review and approval.

Mr. Kane asked how many members were on the Commission when the last Master Plan was approved.

Mr. Doty said Mr. Stevens, Mr. Baribeau, Mr. Kane and himself.

Mr. Kane said that the Commission held a community meeting and presented the Plan to the City Council the last time and we should do the same this time around.

Comments from Chairman

Mr. Stevens wished Mr. Morris well and thanked him for his service on the Commission.

Adjournment

Ms. Morris made a motion, seconded by Mr. Salmon to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. On a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously (7-0).

Submitted By:

Susan Stachowiak
Zoning Administrator

Lynne MacDowell, Secretary
Planning Commissioner