

City of Grand Ledge
Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes from Meeting Held on
Thursday, February 4, 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, Lynne MacDowell & Matt Salmon. Also present: Council Representative Keith Mulder & Zoning Administrator Sue Stachowiak.

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

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Kane made a motion, seconded by Mr. Baribeau to approve the agenda as printed. On a voice vote, the motion carried 8-0.

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Doty made a motion, seconded by Mr. Gute to approve the January 7, 2016 minutes, with the following corrections:

Delete the paragraph on Page 6 under adjournment and replace it with “Mr. Stevens adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.”.

On a voice vote, the motion carried 8-0.

Notice of Agenda Items Conflicts - None

Business from the Floor - None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Site Plan Review – 403 S. Clinton Street – Building Addition

Ms. Stachowiak said that the site plan is for the construction of a 3,288 square foot addition to the south side of the existing office building at 403 S. Clinton Street. She said that an addition of 11 parking spaces directly south of the existing parking lot at this location is also being proposed. Ms. Stachowiak stated that the site comprises 2 separate parcels of land that will need to be combined before any building permits can be issued for the construction of the proposed addition.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that the site will continue to be accessed via the curb cut along Cedar Street and will also have access via the existing one-way/entrance only curb cut on S. Clinton Street. She said that while the driveway along S. Clinton Street does not comply with the minimum separation distance requirement, the 2 driveways have existed for many years and

have never resulted in any problems. Therefore, staff is recommending that the Commission approve the location of the driveway as shown on the site plan. In addition, she said that the City Engineer stated in his review that the driveway on S. Clinton Street should be increased to 15 feet in width.

Mr. Stevens said that a 15 foot wide driveway would put it too close to the building.

Mr. Gute said that he is comfortable with a 12 foot wide driveway.

Mr. Morris said that 12 feet wide is a bit narrow but there are not too many other options.

The Planning Commissioners agreed that 12 feet would be adequate width for the one-way driveway on S. Clinton Street.

Ms. Stachowiak said that the other issue with the site plan is the lack of curb and gutter around the parking lot and driveway.

Dave Jones, 222 W. River Street, stated that a curb around the parking lot and driveway would interfere with snow plowing.

Mr. Stevens said that this issue came up with McDonald's and the Commission allowed them to install rolled curb rather than straight-back curb.

Mr. Morris said that the site needs to be graded in a manner that allows for snow storage but does not result in excessive drainage onto the adjoining properties as it melts.

The Planning Commissioners agreed that rolled curb would be acceptable.

Mr. Gute said that the site plan shows a new light fixture near the southeast corner of the building.

Mr. Jones said that the new light will be the same as the other 2 exterior lights.

Ms. Stachowiak said that while a photometric plan has not been provided, the ordinance still requires that the lighting be shielded to prevent glare onto adjoining properties.

Mr. Gute said that it is critical in this area that the lighting does not glare beyond the property lines because of the neighborhood to the east.

Mr. Stevens asked about utilities.

Mr. Jones said that the sanitary sewer connects to the existing service line. He said that the water service will be addressed when the main is upgraded as part of the street reconstruction.

Mr. Jones said that he has been working with Larry LaHaie with regard to all utility matters associated with the site.

Mr. Morris asked about the run-off from the site.

Mr. Jones said that the drainage from the site flows to Cedar Street right now. He said that they are not changing the slope of the property by more than maybe 1 or 2 inches. He also said that there is a note on the site plan that they agree to comply with storm water management requirements as part of the future Cedar Street improvement project.

Mr. Mulder said that Mr. Tanasse is a neighbor of his both on S. Clinton and on Saginaw. He said that he is a good neighbor, maintains his property very well and he is looking forward to seeing this project come to fruition.

Mr. Gute said that this is good development for the City.

Mr. Gute made a motion, seconded by Steve Baribeau that the City of Grand Ledge Planning Commission approve the site plan prepared by Lyle Funkhouser, dated December 22, 2015, for the construction of a 3,288 square foot addition to the south side of the office building with related site improvements at 403 S. Clinton Street, subject to compliance with the applicable items contained in the staff report and the following:

- 1. The 2 parcels of land that comprise the site as depicted on the above-referenced site plan must be combined into one parcel of land;**
- 2. Compliance with the applicable items contained in the City Engineer's letter dated January 15, 2016 and the Public Service Director's letter (to be received at a later date);**
- 3. Compliance with the items contained in the Grand Ledge Area Fire Department's letter dated January 13, 2016;**
- 4. The driveway on S. Clinton Street is widened to 12 feet; and**
- 5. Rolled curb is required around the parking lot/driveway.**

On a voice vote (8-0), the motion carried unanimously.

2. Request for 1st Floor Apartment – 118 S. Bridge Street

Ms. Stachowiak said that this is a request by Dr. Williams Brooks to allow the vacant dental office suite in the building at 118 S. Bridge Street to be used for a single family residential apartment. The suite is approximately 1,500 square feet in area and is accessed via the entrance

to the building on W. River Street located between “The Nail Shop” and Ledge Craft Lane. It is part of the same building that contains Edward Jones Investments which has its entrance on S. Bridge Street. The suite is designed as a typical dental office but does contain a kitchen and bathroom. If this request is approved, a building permit will be required to convert the office into a residential apartment.

Ms. Stachowiak said that since there are commercial/office uses on the first floor of the building at 118 S. Bridge Street, in order to approve a first floor apartment at this location, the Planning Commission must find that the commercial, office and residential uses will be compatible with each other. She said that there is nothing to suggest that the office/commercial uses would have any negative impacts on the occupant(s) of the proposed residential unit. The businesses at 118 S. Bridge Street include “The Nail Shop”, “Edward Jones Investments” and a chiropractic office. These types of businesses typically do not generate any noise, vehicular and pedestrian traffic is minimal and their operations are generally confined to normal, daytime business hours. Based on these findings, Ms. Stachowiak said that she is recommending approval of the request.

Mr. Kane expressed concerns about adequate egress from the building in the event of an emergency.

Dr. William Brooks, 118 S. Bridge Street, said that there is another door that faces the park. He said that he is not sure that he will rent out the suite as a residential unit but he would like the option of doing so if he cannot find an office tenant.

Mr. Stevens said that a building permit will be required to convert the office to a residence and all code requirements, including proper egress, will have to be met.

Mr. Gute said that he is supportive of the request. He said that there are building code issues associated with the building that will have to be addressed, such as egress and window light.

Mr. Morris said that the tenant space that is the subject of this request may be useful for something other than residential space in the next few years. He said that the downtown is doing very well right now and residential may not be the best use of the space.

Ms. Stachowiak said that even if the space were to be converted to a residence, it could go back to being used for office or commercial uses at any time.

Ms. MacDowell said that the space is not desirable for retail space as there are no windows facing the street and not much room to install one to create a display window.

Mr. Doty made a motion, seconded by Mr. Gute to approve the request by Dr. William Brooks to utilize the 1,500+/- square foot, vacant office suite at 118 S. Bridge Street for a single family residential occupancy, based on a finding that the residential use will be compatible with the adjacent commercial and office uses. On a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

3. Master Plan Update – Chapter 4, Transportation Plan

Ms. Stachowiak said reviewed the change she made to the document since the last meeting. She asked if the second to that last sentence in the 4th paragraph should be rewritten to state that the City should focus first on maintaining roads that are already in good shape.

Mr. Morris said that it is cheaper to keep good roads in good condition.

Mr. Mulder said that the City is committed to maintaining good roads first.

Mr. Morris said that the last line on page 47 should have “including alternate pedestrian signal phasing” between “pedestrian safety” and “at that location”.

The Commissioners agreed that the Master Plan should encourage nicer entrances to the City.

Mr. Morris said that the character of Grand Ledge is its downtown and people pass through on M-43 and never see it. The City just seems generic like any other town. He suggested that the City work with MDOT to make M-43 unique.

Mr. Morris said that “complete streets policies” would be helpful for Jefferson Street and that the Master Plan should be forward thinking document and therefore, references to what has already been accomplished should be removed from the document.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that she added “bumpouts” to line 2 of the second paragraph on page 51.

Mr. Morris said that there is a limit to how far out the bumpouts should extend so as to not interfere with corner clearance requirements for trucks to maneuver. He suggested removing the last line in paragraph 2 and replacing it with “...reducing the distance for pedestrians to cross the street.”

There was discussion about how the bumpouts would work with the on-street parallel parking spaces.

Ms. MacDowell said that people use the parking spaces as a right-turn lane.

Mr. Stachowiak said that she added a paragraph on page 59 recommending a pedestrian bridge at Clinton Street.

Mr. Gute said that if the crossing is from S. Clinton to N. Clinton, the document should simply state that rather than just “M-100”.

Mr. Kane said that a second vehicular crossing would make it more inviting for pedestrians in the downtown by alleviating some of the traffic.

Mr. Morris said that providing an alternate means of crossing the Grand River can have negative implications for the downtown as potential customers to the businesses may not go through downtown if there is an easier way to cross the Grand River.

Mr. MacDowell said that the trucks are probably the safest drivers in the downtown as they are paying careful attention because of the presence of pedestrians.

Mr. Baribeau said that the Jefferson/Bridge intersection either needs to be fixed to make it safer for pedestrians or an alternate crossing needs to be provided.

Mr. Morris said that there are two options: (1) demolish the building at the northeast corner or send all trucks down Jenne Street. He said that creating a truck route on Jenne Street would not likely go over too well with the residents in that area.

Ms. Stachowiak said that she would make the necessary changes from this meeting and the Commission can start reviewing Chapter 5 at the next meeting. She said that the goal is to have the entire document updated and adopted by the end of the year.

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

Ms. Stachowiak stated that she provided a map showing 5 potential locations for the type of high density single family development that is being proposed in the ordinance. They are the property at the north end of Gulf Street, the Dible property north of Vision Collision, the Tim Ellis property south of Castle Ledges Estate, the vacant property on the east side of S. Clinton Street, south of the businesses along M-43 and the Gilbert property that was newly annexed to the City. Ms. Stachowiak said that the Ellis property is the most logical location as that property was always intended to be high density, single family detached condominiums. She also said that, while it would be very expensive to install the infrastructure necessary to accommodate development, the property at the north of Gulf Street would provide a nice atmosphere for residential development.

Ms. Stachowiak said that the way the ordinance amendment is written, a parcel of land would have to qualify for high density single family residential use. She said that the site would have to comply with all of the following criteria:

1. The site has at least one property line abutting a nonresidential zoning district or parcel of land that is not being used for residential purposes.
2. There is at least one vehicular access point to the site that does not cross through a single family residential neighborhood.
3. The site is irregular in size, shape, topography or some other physical feature that makes development under the one-family low density residential site condominium option not reasonably practical.

Ms. Stachowiak said that the 3rd condition may be too restrictive as most of the sites identified on the map do not have any unique physical features. She said that the other conditions are necessary as they would prevent a situation such as use of the unplatted section of Meadow Woods Subdivision for high density, single family residential use.

The Commissioners agreed that condition 3 should be eliminated from the ordinance.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that at the last meeting, there was discussion about whether high density single family residential use should be its own zoning designation altogether as opposed to being an option for development under the R-MD district. She said that she feels strongly that it should not be its own zoning designation since doing so would prevent other types of development on the parcels of land that would have that designation such as typical single family development as allowed under the current ordinance.

Mr. Stevens said that the Ellis property is a good location for this type of development. He said that there is a real trend right now towards smaller homes on smaller lots and we have to accommodate it in our City so that people do not have to move away. He also said that the ordinance needs to include design guidelines so that garages do not become dominant features of the streetscape, entrances to the houses face the street and the structures are architecturally significant.

Mr. Doty mentioned the Roger Love property on W. Main Street as a possible location for this type of development.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that the Love property is surrounded by typical single family residential development and therefore, it may not be the best site for higher density single family development.

Mr. Baribeau said that the Gilbert property south of Old Saginaw Highway was presented to the neighbors as being typical single family development and therefore, it may not be fair to change that now by allowing high density residential development on that property.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that she would continue to work on the ordinance and bring a revised draft back to the Commission at the next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Joint Planning Committee Report

Mr. Doty stated that the Committee will meet next month.

Zoning Administrator's Report

Ms. Stachowiak stated that she distributed copies of the site plan for a new manufacturing facility (Capitol Bedding) in the industrial park. She said that the facility would be located just west of the Lowes Distribution Center. Ms. Stachowiak said that the site plan will be on the March 3rd Planning Commission agenda for review and approval. She said that there are two issues. First, the landscaping plan is inadequate and secondly, the site plan does not provide for curbing around the parking lot. Ms. Stachowiak asked the Commission if they are going to require curbs around the parking lot.

Mr. Morris said that he does not believe that it is necessary except that there are other businesses in the industrial park that had to install it.

Mr. Gute said that he is supportive of the drainage concept wherein the drainage flows across the grassy area to clean itself before it filters in the system.

Ms. Stachowiak also said that the preliminary plat for Phase 5 of Fieldstone Farms has been submitted. It consists of 12 lots located just west of the existing Fieldstone Farms subdivision in Oneida Township and is part of the area that was recently annexed into the City via a 425 agreement.

Zoning Board of Appeals Representative's Report

Ms. MacDowell said that the ZBA did not meet in January.

Council Representative's Report

Mr. Mulder said that the Capitol Bedding facility needs to be operational by the end of the year as their lease expires at their current facility in Lansing. He also said that the City will not close on this property until tomorrow and therefore, the project needs to be kept confidential until that time.

Mr. Stevens asked about the status of the Rounds property.

Mr. Doty said that the City is trying to find a way to keep the garage for storage but if it is too costly, it will be demolished at the same time as the house is demolished.

Mr. Mulder said that he anticipates that construction of the boat launch will begin this construction season.

Mr. Kane asked about getting a copy of the list of priorities that the Council established.

Mr. Mulder said that the City can email them to the Commissioners.

Mayor's Report - None

Comments from Commissioner's

Mr. Gute said that the Commission could hold a special meeting to review the site plan for Capitol Bedding.

Mr. Salmon said that it is nice to see so much new construction taking place in the City. He said that the retail building at the site of the former Feldpausch building looks really nice.

Mr. Doty said that Facebook is blowing up over a front yard parking violation notice that Ms. Stachowiak sent out.

Mr. Doty stated that an old brick wall in the Davis building was located that has the names going back to 1867 and a lot of them are well known Grand Ledge names.

Mr. Doty said that he is working with Adam Smith, Rick Jones and the Michigan Municipal League to change the Home Rule City Act so that that appointed Board members can also serve as elected officials on the Charter Commission. He said that otherwise, he and Ms. MacDowell will have to resign from the Commission in August.

Mr. Doty asked Ms. Stachowiak to have copies of the agenda available at the meeting for the public.

Comments from Chairman

Mr. Stevens welcomed Mr. Morris back to the Commission. He also thanked Ms. MacDowell for serving as secretary of the Planning Commission for the next year..

Adjournment

Mr. Stevens adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Submitted By:

Susan Stachowiak
Zoning Administrator

Lynne MacDowell, Secretary
Planning Commission