

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

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

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

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

The Commission held a moment of silence to honor the passing of Commissioner Steve Baribeau who served on the Planning Commission for many years.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Doty made a motion, seconded by Mr. Gute to approve the agenda as printed. On a voice vote, the motion carried 6-0.

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Doty made a motion, seconded by Mr. Gute to approve the March 3, 2016 minutes, as printed. On a voice vote, the motion carried 6-0.

Notice of Agenda Items Conflicts - None

Business from the Floor - None

NEW BUSINESS

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

Ms. Stachowiak stated that she added a clause that would prohibit an attached garage from extending more than 10 feet beyond the front wall of the house. She said that this was discussed at the March meeting.

Mr. Stevens said that he saw a new development in Grand Rapids recently that had alleyways that provided access to rear, detached garage.

Ms. Stachowiak said that the type of development that we are trying to accommodate will appeal primarily to senior citizens and they are going to want an attached garage.

Mr. Gute asked if City originally had alleys.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that there were some but not in the original plat of the City. She said that the ones that did exist have been vacated.

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Mr. Stevens said that the Commission needs to define the parameters and then leave it to the creativity of the developer.

Mr. Morris said that this appears to extend beyond the Planning Commission's purview as it dictates building design which should be at the discretion of the developer. He said that developers are not going to want to develop ugly design. Mr. Morris said that the Commission has had good luck with getting developers to do right by the community.

Mr. Doty said that the lady that attended a meeting a few months ago was interested in getting a group of seniors together to assist in developing the ordinance. We could ask them such questions as do they want attached garages, what are the desired house sizes, lot sizes, etc.

Mr. Stevens said that the current housing market calls for smaller house and smaller lot sizes and the key to making these developments aesthetically pleasing is by minimizing the roads, parking and garages, and we at least need to have language encouraging these things. He said we also need to consider zero lot line development.

Mr. Gute stated that if we are going to invite seniors and others to come in and give input, we should also invite some developers to weigh in on it as well. This might actually even encourage developers to develop in the City.

Mr. Kane asked if we are still considering a back yard "granny pod".

The Commission stated that it was not in favor of "granny pods".

Mr. Stevens said that the high density single family development would only apply to certain parcels of land where such development is appropriate.

Mr. Doty said that most seniors are going to be looking for single story houses.

Mr. Stevens said that while there are some nice designs for small houses but the smaller they are the more expensive they are to build. The cost per square foot goes up because all of the utilities and basic infrastructure still needs to be installed.

Ms. Stachowiak asked about a minimum house size of 24' x 24'.

Mr. Stevens said that it is the size of a 2-car garage. He said that he was thinking more along the lines of 24' x 28' or 28' x 28'. Mr. Stevens said that he has some design sketches for houses that size.

Ms. Stachowiak said that if the minimum lot size is 45 feet with 5 foot side yard setbacks, that leaves a 35 foot wide building area.

Mr. Stevens said that as soon as you put a 2 garage in, the minimum you can do is a 40 foot wide house.

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Ms. Stachowiak stated that the housing would be focused on empty nesters and therefore, they may not need a 2-car garage. She also said that 45 feet would be the minimum lot width so there would be nothing preventing a developer from making it wider.

Mr. Morris said that we are going to target specific sites for this type of development and what we are proposing in the ordinance is much better than what we have right now. He said that we cannot let perfect be the enemy of good. Mr. Morris said that he likes the idea of a workshop where we bring in the seniors, developers and others to get input on the ordinance.

Ms. Stachowiak asked Mr. Morris if a 40 foot wide right-of-way is sufficient.

Mr. Stevens said that he measured some of the streets in the condo development on Abbot Road and the road was 26 feet from back of curb to back of curb which is about 6-7 feet less than standard. He said that the streets have to get down to that scale to make them fit in to these types of developments.

Mr. Morris said that it all depends on what you want in terms of on-street parking, sidewalks, etc. He said that there would be 2 12-foot wide travel lanes and on-street parking on one side of the road which is 32 feet, leaving 8 feet of excess right-of-way which is not adequate for sidewalks.

Mr. Doty asked about turning radii for fire trucks.

Mr. Stevens said that fire truck turning was what drove the designs of a lot of neighborhood streets which is why the roads/cul-de-sacs are so wide.

Mr. Morris said that if the street has a larger right-of-way, the front setback of the house could be reduced so that the appearance would be the same but there would be room for sidewalks, fire hydrants, lighting, etc. He said that there has to be room for people to park so not allowing for any on-street parking may be problematic, particularly when people have company.

Mr. Stevens said that bringing the homes closer to the road is part of the charm of these types of developments.

Mr. Morris said that these type of developments will primarily appeal to empty nesters and they will want smaller yards. He said that he likes the idea of bringing the houses closer to the roads.

Mr. Doty said that he likes the idea of bringing in citizens and others to obtain input on what they desire for this type of development. He said that we could have a design charrette and advertise it in the paper as well to try to get people to attend.

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Mr. Stevens said that he could put together a list of questions to spur discussions such as:

- How many bedrooms?
- 1 or 2 car garages?
- How many baths?
- Basements?

Mr. Gute said that some of the discussions with the developers can be how do we make some of the parcels, such as the one on Gulf Street, developable.

Mr. Morris said that there is nothing wrong with identifying which parcels we think would be appropriate for this type of development.

Mr. Mulder said that there is a little village in Ann Arbor called Pittsfield that is very small condos with all on-street parking.

Mr. Morris suggested having the charrette in June rather than May so that we have time to do it right. We should use the next meeting to plan for the workshop.

Mr. Gute said that we should talk to the City Clerk about using the City TV channel to advertise the charrette.

Mr. Kane said that on page 5, under 3 where it states that a zoning permit must be issued by the "City", who that is needs to be clarified.

Ms. Stachowiak said that it should state that a zoning permit must be issued by the Zoning Administrator. She said that she would make that change.

2. Master Plan Update – Chapter 5, Subarea Plans

Ms. Stachowiak reviewed the changes that she made. She said that the minimum house size on page 63 is 700 – 1,000 square feet.

Mr. Stevens said that the house size in the Master Plan needs to match what is in the Zoning Ordinance. He said that it should be 700 to 1,400 square feet since 1,400 square feet is the minimum house size for single family development in the current ordinance. He said that we need to determine our low which may be less than 700 square feet.

Mr. Stevens said that on page 61, 4th bullet, put "connections to...".

Mr. Kane said that on page 62, there is a statement that garages should not dominate the streetscape.

Ms. Stachowiak said that for purposes of the Master Plan, she thinks that statement should remain since we really do not want the garages to dominate the streetscape.

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The Commission agreed to leave this statement in the Plan.

Mr. Stevens pointed out a typo on Page 62 where “area” should be changed to “are”.

Ms. Stachowiak that the only chapter left is 6 and that is the implementation chapter. She said that once that is completed, she will have Jim Foster update the maps and then we can proceed with going through the adoption process. Ms. Stachowiak said that we are on pace to have this completed by the end of the year.

Mr. Stevens said that it would be nice for the Commission to get a final draft before it is put out to the public.

Ms. Stachowiak said that she would provide a final draft to the Commission. She also said that Mr. Kane has suggested holding a workshop to obtain input from the community like we did with the original plan.

The Commission agreed that it should hold a public workshop to review and obtain input from the community.

Mr. Doty said that Steve Baribeau needs to be recognized for his work on the Plan.

Mr. Stevens said that the Plan should include a memorial for Steve.

Mr. Kane said that page 63, 3rd paragraph, said that 6-12 units per acre seems high.

Mr. Stevens said that it should state that this is for stacked flats.

Mr. Gute asked if anyone knows that people who are renovating the house on Jefferson Street next to Mike Mayotte’s house. He said that they are making a large investment into the site and may be interested in serving on the Commission. He also said that Ms. MacDowell is going to be leaving the Commission and it has been nice having a downtown business owner on the Commission and hopefully we will be able to get another downtown business owner to replace her when the time comes.

Mr. Morris said that page 68 should say “medium” rather than “high” density.

Ms. Stachowiak said that she will have Chapter 6 on the next agenda.

OTHER BUSINESS

Joint Planning Committee Report

Mr. Doty stated that the Committee met on March 10, 2016. He said that the Parks and Recreation Commission had no representation at the meeting. Mr. Doty said that the Boat Launch project will not include a parking lot as originally discussed. He said that people will continue to park on River Street.

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Mr. Stevens said that this is a mistake. He said that there are only a few chances to do a project and get it right and the boat launch was supposed to be the anchor to the entire Jaycee Park Master Plan. He said that doing a boat launch project not installing a parking lot does not make sense. Mr. Stevens said that the Commission was told that the plans for the boat launch would be brought to the Planning Commission for review and he is very disappointed that this has not happened. He said that the whole purpose of obtaining the Rounds property, which was a suggestion made by the Planning Commission, was to provide enough room to do a proper boat launch with parking. Mr. Stevens said that he left a message for Adam Smith to express his concerns.

Mr. Kane stated that the Joint Committee, the DDA and the Planning Commission should all have input into a project of this nature. He said that the whole idea of the Joint Committee was to coordinate these types of project.

Mr. Stevens said that new plan is just replacing what we already have. He also said that all boat launches, by their very nature, are in a floodplain. He said that the Commission has been asking about this project every month for over a year. He also said that putting more money into the project to do it right only makes sense and is ultimately in the best interest of the City, particularly since the City has spent the money to buy the Rounds property.

Mr. Kane asked if there is any communication that the Commission can make to the Parks and Recreation Commission and the DDA about this matter.

Mr. Doty said that the DDA is moving forward with removing the teller stalls at the former bank building on the corner of Jefferson and Bridge.

Zoning Administrator's Report - None

Zoning Board of Appeals Representative's Report

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

Council Representative's Report

Mr. Mulder said that he would relay the Commission's concerns about the boat launch to the City Administrator.

Mayor's Report – None

Comments from Commissioner's

Mr. Salmon said that he was very proud to have known Steve Baribeau and wishes that he would have gotten to know him even better. He said that the service was a very nice tribute to him.

Mr. Doty said that the City has received a \$42,000 grant from the State for 8 acres of riverfront property to expand Oak Park. The City has to provide a \$6,000 match for the grant.

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Mr. Kane thanked Mr. Doty for spearheading everything with respect to Mr. Baribeau's passing.

Mr. Doty thanked everyone for attending the funeral. He said that the flowers were done by McDowell's and they were very nice. He said that we have 2 vacancies on the Commission and the Mayor has asked if anyone has any suggestions for new members. He also said that the Commission needs an updated membership list.

Comments from Chairman

Mr. Stevens stated that Mr. Baribeau's passing is a great loss to the Planning Commission and to him personally. He said that Steve and his family were friends with him and his family. He said that Steve was a great man, husband, father and businessman and he will be greatly missed.

Adjournment

Mr. Stevens adjourned the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Submitted By:

Susan Stachowiak
Zoning Administrator

Lynne MacDowell, Secretary
Planning Commission