

City of Grand Ledge
Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes from Meeting Held on
Thursday, May 5, 2016

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

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

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

Approval of the Agenda

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

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Kane made a motion, seconded by Mr. Gute to approve the April 7, 2016 minutes, with the following correction to Page 6:

Change “Ms. MacDowell” to “Ms. Stachowiak” under “Zoning Board of Appeals Representative Report”.

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

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

Mr. Doty suggested changing “charrette” to “public workshop” as many people may not know what a “charrette” is. The other Commissioner’s agreed.

Ms. Stachowiak reviewed the list of invitee’s for the workshop. She said that she included the Mayor’s email address book as that is probably the best way to reach a large amount of people.

Mr. Doty said that the Mayor’s email address book has more than 8600 email addresses in it.

Mr. Stevens asked about Allen Edwin Homes that is finishing the Meadow Woods Development.

Ms. Stachowiak said that she intentionally left out Allen Edwin Homes as they specialize in taking over defunct developments rather than new development. She said that Meadow Woods would not even meet the threshold criteria for higher density single family residential development at that location.

Mr. Stevens said that price point needs to be added to the list of topics for discussion.

Mr. Kane said that there should be easels with plans for people to look at and comment on.

Mr. Salmon questioned how restrictive the Commission should be with respect to architectural design. He said that the ordinance reads like it is permitting low income housing.

Mr. Gute showed the Commission a digital presentation of a neighborhood where, with one exception, the house sizes are what is listed in the ordinance - 45 feet wide and 100 foot deep lots – the road is 25 feet back of curb to back of curb - no on-street parking - houses are 25 feet from the curb. He asked if the porches count towards the setback.

Ms. Stachowiak said that porches can extent 8 feet into the required 25 foot front yard setback.

Mr. Gute said that he is showing one car garages with a single lane driveway. He said that there is one house shown that has a 2 car garage but it does not leave much house space. He agreed with Mr. Salmon that the ordinance does sounds a bit like low income housing because the houses will be so small. Mr. Gute said that the houses are right at the 5 foot setback.

The Commissioners thanked Mr. Gute for preparing the presentation. Mr. Salmon said that it will be a great tool for the workshop.

Ms. Stachowiak said that we will have it running on the 3 television screens during the workshop.

Mr. Stevens said that there should be some examples of these types of developments at the workshop to foster discussion. He suggested Verndale Lake as one example.

Mr. Gute said that the houses shown are 22 feet wide with one-car garages and single lane drives. Since the road is only 25 feet wide, there would be no room for visitors to park. He said that if the street is little wider, there would be room for on-street parking on one side of the road.

Mr. Morris said that 30 feet wide would allow 2 travel lanes with parking on one side of the street. He said that some of the houses are so close to the road that it would barely allow a vehicle to park in front of the garage without obstructing the sidewalk. Mr. Morris said that there can be a 2-car garage if it is detached from the house. He also said that the houses can be longer and narrower to allow for more garage area.

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Mr. Stevens said that the sidewalks can be placed closer to the street than what is typical in the City. He stated that people today want attached garages. He also said that alley access to garages can help maximize space and allow for 2 car garages/

Mr. Morris said that if they are connecting streets, they can be one-way and much narrower to allow for on-street parking.

Mr. Stevens said that the ordinance needs to allow flexibility in road design so that alleyways are an option.

Ms. Stachowiak said that most of the potential sites shown on the map for possible development of higher density single family development would not be large enough to accommodate alleys.

Mr. Mulder said that there is always a potential for more land to be annexed in future.

Ms. Stachowiak asked if the map showing the potential locations for this type of development should be displayed at the workshop.

The Commission agreed to not show that map as the issue is not the locations for development by the development standards themselves.

Ms. Stachowiak said that she intentionally set the time for 6:30 p.m. rather than 7:00 thinking that it would be a better time for the public to attend and would get the meeting over with somewhat earlier.

The Commission agreed on a 6:30 start time.

Ms. Stachowiak asked about having some house designs displayed at the workshop.

Mr. Stevens said that he will provide some designs.

Ms. Stachowiak said that if Mr. Stevens can email them to her in advance of the meeting, she can get them mounted on presentation boards.

Mr. Kane asked if the public will be provided with the proposed ordinance.

The Commission agreed to hold off on distributing it to the public at this time since it is still in very rough draft form and is likely to change significantly based on input at the workshop.

Mr. Gute asked if the Commission feels that a 45 wide lot is too narrow.

Mr. Stevens said that he has built on 40 foot wide lots. It allows for a 22 foot wide double garage with a 14 foot wide bedroom and a 6 foot wide porch. This allows for 10 feet between houses. Once the lot goes below 40 feet, it becomes really difficult to construct a home.

Mr. Gute asked Mr. Stevens to send him the house designs so that he can put them to imagery.

Mr. Morris said that the the market will dictate what size the lot needs to be.

Mr. Stevens said that the ordinance needs to be purposefully ambiguous to allow the developer the flexibility to create the right designs.

Mr. Gute asked if the ordinance is setting things up for variances to the ordinance standards.

Ms. Stachowiak said that a new neighborhood would not be able to meet the criteria to vary the ordinance standards.

Mr. Gute said that one could make a case that it is reasonable to have an attached garage and therefore, a variance should be granted to allow for reduced setbacks. He also said that there could be variance requests for people wanting to enclose porches as well.

Ms. Stachowiak said that there has to be something physically unique about a particular parcel of land that sets it apart from most other properties that warrants relief from the ordinance.

Ms. Stachowiak said that the Commission will have to assemble to call the meeting to order, after which she will give as brief presentation at to what we are doing and what we want to accomplish with the workshop. Then the Commission can spread out and man the easels, ask questions, write down responses, answer questions, etc. At the end of the meeting, the Commission will have to reassemble to adjourn meeting.

Master Plan Update – Chapter 6, Implementation

Ms. Stachowiak reviewed the changes that she made. She said that this is the final chapter of the Master Plan. Ms. Stachowiak said that she will have Jim Foster update the maps and then assemble the entire document with all the revisions. She will provide a copy to the Commission for final review before putting it out to the public at a charrette/workshop and beginning the approval process. Ms. Stachowiak said that there is a lot of notifications and other red tape involved in approval of the Plan and it will likely take until the end of the year for it to be completed.

Mr. Doty said that the City of Portland's Master Plan contained photos/pictures that make it visually appealing.

Ms. Stachowiak said that she can do the same for our Plan.

Mr. Stevens said that there is still a reference to a second bridge on page 79.

Mr. Morris said that it states that there should be a second bridge in the area.

The Commission agreed to keep this in the Plan.

Mr. Kane said that page 77 states that there should be an annual meeting of the Planning Commission for new members as well as elected and appointed officials of the City. He said that this is not being done but that it should.

Mr. Stevens said that page 83 states that there should be architectural design standards.

Mr. Kane said that it is referring to design standards for historic districts.

Ms. Stachowiak said that the City does not have a local historic district. We do have an area that is on the National Register of Historic Places but the only time that this would come into play is if federal funds were be used to make improvements to a house within the district.

Mr. Kane said that it is too bad that we do not have a local historic district

The Commission agreed to leave this in the Plan.

OTHER BUSINESS

Joint Planning Committee Report

Mr. Doty stated that after the last meeting, he received a letter from City Administrator Adam Smith about the boat launch. The letter states that the boat launch improvement project will occur this summer. It also states that the original project cost estimates were significantly underestimated which has resulted in a minimalistic approach to the round-about drive, asphalt and an emphasis on retaining the parks greenspace. The letter goes on to state that vehicular/trailer parking for the boat launch will be directed to E. River Street. Mr. Doty provided the Commission with the most recent plans for the boat launch, including the project costs, and a plan that shows the Rounds property as "future parking for boats".

Mr. Stevens said that this is a mistake. He said that this project has been in the works for 6 years and now this is what we are getting. 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 also worried about the effectiveness of the design, let alone asking people to park their vehicles/trailers up on River Street.

Mr. Doty said that the DDA has not even been approached about the possibility of contributing to this project to make it what it should be. He said that the project does not even include a canoe launch.

Mr. Morris said that the plan begs the question of why the City even bought the Rounds property. He said if it is a money issue, the ultimate project should be determined and then the City could do part of it with what money it has available at this time. He said that he commends the City for not paving the boat launch as that can be done at any time.

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Mr. Doty said that the City now has less than 120 days to do this project because of the grant.

Mr. Morris said that the time frame just requires obligating the funds. Not building the project.

Mr. Mulder suggested bringing these concerns to the Parks & Recreation Commission. He said that this may be a phase 1 of a bigger project. Mr. Mulder said that money is the primary factor. He said that he will try to make the next Parks & Recreation Commission meeting as well. Mr. Mulder said that it all revolves around the budget and the Parks Commission does not have a budget. He stated that the State is requiring the City to do this project or it will lose the grant as this project has been in the works for years.

Mr. Stevens said that he and Mr. Doty already did that. He said that someone is probably going to get this contract within the next month for it to be built this summer. Mr. Stevens said that the Commission has been asking to have input into this project for a year.

Mr. Doty said that according to the Michigan Municipal Planning Act requires that a project of this nature come to the Planning Commission and this did not happen.

Zoning Administrator's Report - None

Zoning Board of Appeals Representative's Report

Ms. MacDowell said that the ZBA met on April 28, 2016 and denied a variance request to construct a 6 foot high privacy fence in the front yard at 700 Degroff Street.

Mr. Doty asked about the gravel parking area that was installed at 960 Degroff Street.

Ms. Stachowiak said that it is completely illegal and she has notified the property owner that it has to be removed.

Mr. Morris said that there is an illegal front yard fence on Union Street.

Council Representative's Report

Mr. Mulder said that he would relay the Commission's concerns about the design of the boat launch and the lack of communication regarding this project to the City Administrator.

Comments from Commissioner's

Mr. Gute introduced David Rademacher. He said that he, David and Mayor Smith had breakfast and the Mayor is going to recommend him for appointment to the Planning Commission at the next Council meeting. Mr. Gute said that David owns one of the most recognizable homes in the City located on W. Jefferson Street

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David Rademacher, 315 W. Jefferson Street #2, said that he grew up on Chadwick Road in Eagle and has lived in the Lansing for the past 7 years. He said that he and his wife moved to Grand Ledge about 1 ½ years ago when the house on W. Jefferson became available. They are in the process of restoring the property as old houses are his passion. Mr. Rademacher said that he is in sales for Wimsatt Building Materials. He said that he was a building contractor prior to the recession.

Mr. Doty said that the Parks & Recreation Commission just put out a survey on the Grand Ledge website. He said that there is a possibility of a new pizza parlor and a dialysis clinic coming to Grand Ledge.

Comments from Chairman - None

Adjournment

Mr. Stevens adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Submitted By:

Susan Stachowiak
Zoning Administrator

Lynne MacDowell, Secretary
Planning Commission