

FARMINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS  
Monday, June 14, 2010

Chairperson Gronbach called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. in the Farmington City Council Chambers, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Bowman, Christiansen, Gronbach, Kuiken, Sutton,  
Absent: Crutcher, Ingalls, Scott, Wiggins.

A quorum of the Commission was present.

**OTHER OFFICIALS PRESENT:** City Manager Pastue, Building Inspector Koncsol.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Sherrin Hood, LSL Planning, Inc.; Steve Schneeman, Chair of Design Committee DDA; Chuck Frost, DDA board member; Dave Cornwell, DDA board member; Dan Higgins, DDA board member.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

MOTION by Kuiken, seconded by Bowman, to approve the agenda as submitted. Motion carried, all ayes.

**APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON CONSENT AGENDA**

MOTION by Kuiken, seconded by Bowman, to approve the items on the consent agenda as follows:

- Regular meeting minutes of April 12, 2010
- Regular meeting minutes of May 5, 2010

Motion carried, all ayes.

**DISCUSSION WITH DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BOARD MEMBERS REGARDING PLANNING AND REDEVELOPMENT ISSUES IN THE DOWNTOWN.**

The members of the Downtown Development Committee introduced themselves to the Commission.

Chairperson Gronbach inquired as to how many members comprise the DDA board and the question was responded to as eleven.

Pastue indicated that he put together a summary of topics that he thought need to be covered and reviewed.

**1. Outdoor Vendors**

Pastue responded to inquiry by Gronbach as to current hot dog vendor that is at Shiawassee Park, that approval was granted by city, but no formal license has been put together for that process, but may be in the future.

Cornwell indicated that one of the vendors has been a lifelong friend and that he had solicited them for possible attraction for downtown and for Village Mall, they have met whatever requirements were imposed, gone through Oakland County Health Department training plus. He stated he thought having them would generate foot traffic and create some point of interest on the sidewalk that would encourage people to be out more.

Schneeman indicated with regard to the spirit of the Master Plan, the intent is to make it more walkable and pedestrian friendly, that having street vendors as part of the mix would add a good element that is not being utilized currently and would solidify the energy that is starting to have some momentum in the downtown. He agrees there would have to be limits as far as number of permits, and from design point of view the cart that may be used for this purpose should not create an eyesore.

Cornwell indicated that perhaps having the endorsement of existing business or property owner may be beneficial to regulating this.

Gronbach indicated concern for business owners when he thought this was going to be limited to pavillion area.

Schneeman stated that with a couple well-placed vendors with the right product would add a nice piece to puzzle coming together.

Kuiken inquired as to length of permit issued and Pastue indicated if they were going to do this, it would probably be an annual one.

Christiansen indicated in his role as planning commission they are dealing with specifics in terms of land use, permanent structures, and compliance with zoning standards within zoning districts, physicality. He stated that there are no provisions for vendor-type use, it's not a zoning type issue, uses may be seasonal/temporary, and that these are more often found in code ordinances, and that liability insurance should be a major concern, locational requirements, hours of operation, and other issues must be addressed but likes idea and feels it is more of an administrative structure.

Pastue indicated there are challenges along Grand River and cited Cowley's outdoor seating having to go through MDOT.

Christiansen stated that zoning board deals with some temporary issues, signage, etc., and the Planning Commission deals more with outdoor seating, physical, structural land use issues.

Sutton cited some concerns with regulating vendors, doing criminal background checks, also perhaps putting more park benches out, and monitor trash receptacles for overflow.

Cornwell stated that is why he wanted endorsement of business owners, to monitor area and he entertained thought of leasing space in parking lot to vendors, so they would be subject to same regulations in lease with other tenants.

Sutton indicated her concerns with the different issues being a grey area and in creating an ordinance to apply across the board, and the competition it would place on our current downtown businesses.

Schneeman agreed with Christiansen's assessment that this is an ordinance issue versus a zoning issue, and that many factors have to go into the equation and Pastue responded that he would probably bring any ordinance through the Planning Commission.

Hood responded to inquiry by Schneeman that she does have examples that can be provided that are being utilized in other cities.

Gronbach inquired if there are two different set of guidelines and rules that apply to private property versus public and Hood responded it generally is a general code provision and further discussion was held on the topic, the pros and cons of various scenarios.

Pastue indicated that Hood's presence at the meeting is to allow her to assemble something and bring it back for further discussion. The topic of sponsorship was further discussed.

## **2. Drive-through Facilities**

Pastue indicated with the recent change of zoning code, that certain drive-throughs may be deemed appropriate in certain circumstances.

Schneeman responded that as part of the Design Committee of the DDA, a certain balance has to be achieved in downtown, bearing in mind not to overburden existing or potential businesses and in instances where it is found to be appropriate, it should be written in such a way to allow for Planning Commission and Design Committee to consider it as a special land use issue.

Christiansen indicated that a special land use would require a public hearing.

Hood indicated that it could be addressed in the Master Plan, and that she agreed that making it a special land use would be the way to go.

Further discussion was held on the drive-through facilities.

Pastue indicated that he could have Hood draft some standards for consideration and run them through Design Committee and back to Planning Commission as well.

Sutton pointed out that a lot of time was spent discussing the drive-through issue downtown, and an about face is now happening and perhaps the DDA should be invited for discussion before a decision is made and involved initially in the process.

Further discussion was held on the topic.

Schneeman clarified DDA's position on drive-throughs being acceptable.

Pastue asked Hood to draft something and identify appropriate/not appropriate uses.

### **3. Outdoor Sales and Displays**

Gronbach encouraged tight control being maintained.

Sutton inquired as to the DDA's concern regarding this.

Pastue explained areas of concern and approval process and cited Farmington Plaza as an example.

Gronbach clarified request and differentiated short term/seasonal permits and further discussion was held on subject.

Schneeman cited the 5 ft. minimum sidewalk area and that esthetic concerns should be included in language.

Further discussion was held on the topic and Hood indicated she would check on public right of ways and how to do it and Schneeman inquired as to MDOT's input on businesses that front Grand River.

Cornwell indicated that sidewalks appear sterile and that risk needs to be taken to create an environment, scenery and events, to maximize pedestrian traffic.

Higgins pointed out that good way to draw more people in is to have tasteful displays on sidewalk.

Schneeman indicated it is DDA's job to promote business and be business friendly while at the same time maintain a certain standard in our downtown and by allowing for administrative approval, that would be a move towards being more business friendly. He expressed concern for enforcement of the rules and regulations and questioned if there is the budget and the staff to allow for it.

### **4. A-Frame Signs.**

Schneeman indicated that upon further review of sign ordinance there was not specific language in there tight enough to allow the A-frame signs but only allow more durable materials. He stated that there was not a more stringent review process needed, but could augment current standards to strengthen those for that sign type.

Koncsol responded to question from Christiansen that current standard is 42 inches tall, 7 square feet per side, made of a durable, weather resistant material, to be brought in at night after hours, set in a couple feet from the curb, temporary daily use downtown only.

Pastue indicated that structurally and from an administrative process, applications would be reviewed on a regular basis, so there is certain regimen and can follow-up with visit if questions arise in conjunction with Design Committee.

Further discussion was held and Pastue commented that with ongoing review things should be kept up to standards.

## **5. Planning Commission Procedures**

Gronbach jokingly suggested that DDA attend all Planning Commission meetings and that would enlighten them as to procedures.

Pastue cited the dry cleaners as one in recent past that brought reasonable time into the picture and stated that the Planning Commission doesn't want to hold up projects over minor details and there is a lot of latitude given such as landscaping, placing of waste receptacles.

Sutton indicated that Planning Commission met on site for a special meeting conducted to keep process moving along on.

Christiansen indicated that he hoped it was understood that Planning Commission is not an all ruling body, that it has tools they utilize and are provided with. First one is Master Plan that gives guidelines to follow; another one is design guidelines from the DDA, so there is a lot of flexibility as Master Plan is a very general guide with some specificity; design guidelines are flexible but are specific. He stated the downtown is an ever evolving part of community.

Further discussion was held on historic relevance of buildings.

Schneeman commented on the process that as an architect he works with a lot of municipalities around the country, and for a city of our size we are very business friendly and Planning Commission and administration bend over backwards to accommodate applicants. He also stated we have low tolerance for people who try to skirt intent of zoning ordinance which don't comply and encouraged Planning Commission to not be shy or afraid to flex muscles to enforce the same. He also requested a greater involvement from administration with design committee and that they be included and brought in as early as possible in process.

## **6. Downtown Master Plan**

Pastue indicated this was just a broad question brought up by Annette that was on her

list to discuss and that board members have expressed what Master Plan calls for and to do a reality check if that's direction that they need to stick with.

Gronbach explained the Downtown Master Plan and efforts made to coordinate and make it compatible with updated overall City Master Plan and indicated if there are things that need to be addressed in the Downtown Master Plan, it can be looked at.

Pastue indicated approximately a year ago an updated sign ordinance was adopted. The first ordinance dealt with was just the downtown signs. This incorporated the remainder of the city and where it essentially incorporated a lot of the same concepts, definitions throughout.

Gronbach stated that if DDA Board wants to review the Master Plan and make comments on things that should be addressed and look at the City Master Plan at the same time and come back and have a meeting such as the one tonight, the Commission would be receptive to that.

Schneeman indicated he has lived in downtown for 13 years and that in his perception it is functioning different than it ever functioned, the changes that have happened for the most part are good and leading things in the right direction, but also feels a lot of new ground was broken and the design standards that are specific to downtown really need to be a living document to be continually tweaked and ask that this meeting not be a one-time thing.

Pastue responded to question from Christiansen that the 2004 Downtown Master Plan was the joint effort between city and DDA putting funds together, but functionally it was adopted by the Master Plan adopted by the Planning Commission, so it is an element of the overall Master Plan for the City.

Christiansen explained the history of the Master Plan that was adopted in 2004, the subsequent 2009 Master Plan and that it is a guide and usually gets updated anywhere from 3-5 years.

Schneeman indicated that he didn't believe a wholesale revisiting or rewriting of the Master Plan is indicated but perhaps more of a tweaking.

Hood suggested if DDA is looking at Master Plan and think there are changes to be made to it, to let Vince know or Planning Commission and it will be looked at whether it be amendments to general Master Plan, but that Planning Commission can amend Master Plan at any time.

Further discussion was held concerning Downtown Master Plan.

## **7. Downtown Redevelopment**

Pastue explained that the redevelopment is actually a revenue generator for downtown,

citing a couple examples, dry cleaners, Cowley's, Orchard Condominium, view redevelopment not just from planning standpoint but income generation standpoint as well and adds to broader mission of having more viable attractive downtown for businesses, does have an economic impact on the Downtown Development Authority and the revenues that they have for other uses with the downtown.

Schneeman indicated points to improve on being landscaping standards in ordinance don't necessarily work physically with streetscape; Design Committee feels need to take a look at buildings, landscaping. Signage needs to be tweaked to refine the ordinance issue where language isn't explicit enough to differentiate between one type of signage to another, would like to add change to language to be more specific.

Gronbach cited an example that owner of downtown center ripped out big section of sidewalk and that that would have been an opportunity to require replacement match streetscape and there should have been guideline in ordinance in place covering that.

Further discussion was held and "Best Practices" handout was distributed to those present and the challenges that the Planning Commission faces.

Gronbach suggested to DDA board members to review revised Master Plan and see how it relates to Downtown Master Plan, and to present any thoughts or suggestions as far as changes they would like to see.

Further discussion was held concerning monitoring speed in downtown area.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

CONSOL responded to inquiry about when dry cleaners would be paved that it would be any day.

### **COMMISSION COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Kuiken announced that this would be her last meeting. Commissioner Gronbach thanked her for her service.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION by Kuiken, seconded by Bowman, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried, all ayes.

The meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Secretary