

**PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
October 15, 2012
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER
6:00 P.M.**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: R. Johnson, R. Murphy, B. Lenart, C. Zuellig, D. Lautenbach,
P. Hollifield

Absent: G. Clark (excused) K. Weger (excused). M. Bullard (excused)

Staff: Teresa Gillotti, City Planner
Bonnie Wessler, City Planner I
Nan Schuette, Executive Secretary

III. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None

IV. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS & PRESENTATIONS

Ms. Gillotti stated that this is a special meeting for Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance Revision Consultant Presentations. Chairman Johnson stated that the board would be interviewing two companies in response to an RFP sent out on a revision of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance. He reviewed the format of the presentations. Ms. Gillotti added that the first company is a local firm and the second one is based out of Traverse City, Michigan.

Megan Masson-Minock, Project Manager, introduced herself representing ENP & Associates. She also introduced Erin Perdu, who owns and operates the company, which was founded in 2002. They are based in Ann Arbor, Michigan and can offer decades of experience on comprehensive planning, GIS systems, public participation and implementation. Ms. Masson-Minock added that they have worked in communities that share many of same characteristics of Ypsilanti, including Howell, Ferndale and Detroit. She detailed the various services they have

provided for each of these communities and also referred to various companies that they have partnered with in previous projects to provide expertise as needed, which included Diane Van Buren of Zachary Associates, who has expertise in market rate housing, low income housing and commercial district redevelopment, AECOM, who have skills in transportation oriented designs, and Ross Johnson of 3.7 Designs to do a website, blog and social media campaign.

Ms. Masson-Minock stated that Ypsilanti faces the challenge of having the underlying structure of an early 20th century town, regulations of a post WWII suburb and desire to be a 21st century city. These three components are at odds with one another and a master plan process, coupled with revision of the zoning ordinance, should bring these components together to create a sustainable community. The challenge is of course, that the budget could be spent on any one of these components but their team has designed a process to allocate the resources in more targeted ways. The result of this will be a policy direction that, while targeting a series of actionable changes that can be implemented within the next five to ten years, will also serve the City well over the long run.

She added that they plan “with” communities and not “for” communities. The project approach would be a collaborative process, in which the community, the stakeholders and the City’s leadership “own” the ideas. This involvement is necessary to build on the vision/outcomes to have lasting value. Their process identifies what is working in the City and then focuses on what is not. They propose a process that shortens the project time-line from 30 months to 18 months since it is their opinion that this will result in higher levels of collaboration, better communication and a more integrated Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Masson-Minock stated that they had chosen the area of Ecorse and E. Michigan and described their approach on how they see this area working for the betterment of the City. They had map boards of the city from 40+ years ago up to the present and how the city had evolved. Ms. Perdu added that these boards fit into their process and help them with the discovery and also help to inform the discussion, which is on-going, i.e. how the connection to the neighborhood works or does not work? They would bring this information to the charrettes, have it at the open house so that people can indicate how they see it, as well as walking neighborhoods and have them identify how a specific neighborhood feels when you walk through and what is special about it. There are certain amenities at this intersection that people need to have accessible, social services, etc.

Ms. Van Buren added with the images of maps, you can see the transition over the years – parking may have been required that was tied to regulation but is there another kind of vision on this for the 21st century?

All of the participants gave detailed information on their understanding of the project and were excited about the possibility of being involved.

There were a number of questions by board members; 1) compression of the schedule from 30 months to 18 months, 2) how ENP felt Ypsilanti was unique to them compared to Ferndale and Howell, 3) recommendation of possible extension of the Historic District, 4) form based approach to overlay. All of their questions were responded to in complete detail.

Questions were also taken from the audience and responded to. Because of the time limit, it was recommended that any further questions by board members be sent in written form to staff, who in turn, can elicit responses from ENP & Associates.

Chairman Johnson thanked the group for a very informative presentation.

After a short break, the second company, Land Information Access Association (LIAA) was in attendance to make their presentation. Mr. Joe Vandermuelen, Executive Director, introduced his team. While his company is based in Traverse City, he is partnered with the Michigan Association of Planners, (MAP) based in Ann Arbor, the Huron River Watershed Council (HRWC) in Ann Arbor and Olson, Bzdok & Howard, a public interest legal firm in Traverse City and Harry Burkholder who would be the lead planner for the project. He feels that they bring together extensive research capacity, facilitation and process experience and a commitment to community sustainability and resilience throughout Michigan. Mr. Vandermuelen added that they have secured an additional \$55,000 from private funding for this project and they are also committing another \$20,000 in reduced overhead charges.

Mr. Vandermuelen discussed his understanding and challenges of the project, specifically, the challenges faced by the City. One in four city residents live below the poverty lines and nearly as many receive food benefits. Nearly 68 percent of the city's housing stock was built before 1970, resulting in upkeep and high energy costs. Fifteen percent of this stock is vacant and 60 percent of it is rental. Minority populations disproportionately suffer from these challenges.

Regional and global forces have unprecedented influence on local communities. While no local plan or ordinance can predict or control external forces, it is also true that these forces have accelerated and will continue to accelerate challenges to sustainability of local communities. Communities have the ability and opportunity to design policies and plans that are explicitly constructed to face current challenges and prepare for uncertain futures.

Planning for resilience requires a comprehensive approach and works best when various sectors and interest groups are communicating, cooperating and coordinating their action. It also demands intensive civic engagement and involvement to recognize the community's strengths and vulnerabilities as well as a commitment from community leaders. Mr. Vandermuelen listed several projects they have worked on in numerous projects across Michigan that he feels share community development circumstances similar to Ypsilanti.

Mr. Burkholder, Community Planner for LIAA stated that they selected the Downtown area and Water Street as mentioned in the RFP to describe their approach. He planned to review the work plan and discuss some of the tasks and activities that they hope to achieve. He would create a website with a name board to enable the public to have access since public input is very important. They will also develop an aggressive branding and marketing campaign to win the attention of residents using public notices, advertising, posters, flyers, social media and web-based outreach efforts. They are prepared to build a unique civic engagement program with a focus on enhancing community sustainability and resilience. They will also work with a Steering Committee to plan and facilitate at least four large community workshops involving professionally facilitated small group discussions as well as large audience, interactive presentations. Workshops provide an opportunity for participants to respond and react to an

overview of existing conditions and current trends. Through this interactive discussion, participants will develop the vision and major themes of the Master Plan.

Ms. Andrea Brown, Director of MAP, detailed some of the strengths that MAP can bring to the project.

Board members asked a number of questions regarding 1) how their process interacts with neighborhoods, 2) how they would bring innovative ideas to our project, 3) role of HRWC, 4) Ypsilanti larger project than they have worked on and how would that compare to our city, 5) use of prime consultant or sub consultant on previous projects 6) describe typical charrettes. They responded to these questions in more detail.

After this presentation was concluded, Mayor Schreiber thanked the Planning Commission for all the time, effort and thought that had gone into this project and the professionalism of each of the board members.

Ms. Gillotti again stated that because of the time allotted for these presentations, board members should email any questions they have to her and she in turn, will forward to the company in question and include the responses in the packets for the next Planning Commission meeting on October 24th.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Since there was no further business, Commissioner Lenart moved to adjourn the meeting (Support: D. Lautenbach) and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.