PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
September 19, 2012
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER
7:00 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: R. Johnson, R. Murphy, D. Lautenbach, M. Bullard, P. Hollifield, K. Weger, B. Lenart

Absent: G. Clark (excused) C. Zuellig (excused)

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

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – July 25, 2012

Commissioner Lenart moved to approve the minutes of July 25, 2012 as read (Support: M. Bullard) and the motion carried unanimously.

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Ian Klepetar, 309 Oak – just recently moved to the area. Interested in transportation and encouraged the commission to be bold and visionary, keeping in mind when designing roadways, it is what the public would like. He is particularly interested in biking, traffic volumes, width of roads and speeds.

Chairperson Johnson recommended to Mr. Klepetar check out the city website for information on the various commissions, adding that he may be interested in the non-motorized sub-committee since they are always looking for board members.

V. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS & PRESENTATIONS

None

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Water Street Recreation Center Update

Ms. Gillotti stated that there will be a public presentation by the UM design team which is comprised of two professors and eight students who have been working on two design schemes for the proposed Water Street Recreation Center. There are two large site concepts. The models will be at Spark East starting on Tuesday. The formal presentation will be held on Thursday, September 27, 2012, from 4 – 7 p.m. They will use this opportunity to get feedback, i.e. interaction with Michigan Avenue, the river, etc. from residents, business owners and interested parties.

2. Master Plan RFP process update

Commissioner Lenart stated that the Master Plan Sub-Committee has met twice now since receiving proposals for the RFP for an update to the Master Plan. Five proposals were received and out of that process, they have arrived at two preferred proposals. They envision early October inviting these two firms for a non-traditional interview with whoever would be interested in attending: City Council, ZBA, Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission, and DDA. Commissioner Lenart went into more detail on how the Master Plan Sub-Committee perceives what would be included. Commissioners had many questions and lots of input.

Ms. Gillotti recommended that the commission pick two locations, have staff take and provide the firms with photos and GIS map of area – have them tell us what potential is – no formal presentation, no graphics, no boards, no power points – basically discuss what the challenges of the site are and how the firms would approach them. Tentative date of presentation is October 11, 2012.

After further discussion on various possibilities of what would be required of these two firms and how these sessions would be conducted, Commissioner Weger moved to interview the two firms as recommended by the Master Plan Sub-committee, no visuals preferred and have staff provide the areas in question as noted above (Support: R. Murphy).

3. Site Plan approval Extension Requests

   a. 328 E. Michigan (Rent-A-Center)

   Bonnie Wessler stated that the original site plan was approved. This is a national chain and recently they had a change in leadership, the paperwork was lost and they are now running into a time constraint. Commissioner Lenart moved to grant a six month extension (Support: K. Weger) and the motion carried unanimously.

b. 301 W. Michigan (Key Bank Building)

Bonnie Wessler stated that this original site plan was also approved. They have recently lost one of their major tenants and had planned on that income. They would like more time to do some refinancing. Commissioner Lenart moved to grant a six month extension (Support: R. Murphy) and the motion carried unanimously.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Alley Vacation – East-west alley bounded by East Cross, River, Photo and Ninde

This is a request for an alley vacation that is located at the rear of the building owned by the applicant. While the alley physically does not behave as such, it has been treated by the adjacent property owners as if it were private property. If approved, this vacation would primarily provide a change in legal documentation, rather than a functional change of the property.

This alley does not exist in the original plat; there were no east-west alleys dedication in the Compton & Showerman's addition, of which the subject properties are a portion. The alley appears to have been dedicated as a portion of Lot 315 of the original plat at a later date. There are no recent surveys available of the properties in this block and there are conflicting legal descriptions on the exact location of the alley and related property lines. Overall, the legal boundaries have shifted quite a bit from the original plot and successive deeds for what appear to otherwise be the same property, have differing legal descriptions. Thus, it is impossible for staff to determine the precise location of the alleyway in question or whether there have been encroachments upon it. As a result, staff is recommending a boundary survey of all properties in the block bounded by River, Ninde, Photo and E. Cross prior to execution of the vacation.

Other factors that may be important to consider for this request include fire protection, snow removal, and trash collection.

As the alleyway does not serve a vital function for the neighborhood, and that its vacation will not negatively affect the health, safety, welfare or traffic/freight patterns of the neighborhood, staff recommends that they alley be vacated. However, to eliminate confusion about parcel boundaries in the future, staff strongly recommends that the block in question be surveyed prior to executing the vacation of the alleyway. Staff further recommends that a shared use access easement be executed along adjacent properties to ensure future access.

After much discussion, Commissioner Lenart moved to approve recommendation to City Council of the vacation of the alley bounded by East Cross, River, Photo and Ninde, subject to the following findings:

1. Subject to verification that there are no public utilities in the easement.

2. Subject to the five standards that were included in the staff report dated September 13, 2012.

The motion was supported by Commissioner Lautenbach. A roll call vote was taken and carried unanimously.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Master Plan Update Committee – (Johnson, Murphy, and Lenart) noted above.

- Ordinance committee (Bullard, Lautenbach, Weger) – no update

- Non-motorized transportation committee (Johnson, Murphy) Minutes of meetings held in May and June were included in packets. Commissioner Murphy noted that MDOT in Indiana/Illinois are starting up a process of planning capital and service improvements for the whole Chicago/Detroit/Pontiac passenger line, which may be an opportunity to get a stop in Ypsilanti for one service or another. They will have a Webinar on Monday, 9/24/12 and public scoping meeting in Dearborn on Wednesday, 9/26/12.

IX FUTURE BUSINESS DISCUSSION/UPDATES

Grove Road Capital Improvement Plan review: Food related ordinance amendments; disposition policy.

Ms. Gillotti stated that the City expects to move forward on the Grove Road Capital Improvements and expect to have the plan review with particular interest that the links to the order-to-border trail, etc. are addressed. Staff hopes to bring back the food related ordinance amendments and a disposition policy.

A rezoning application was submitted for 311 S. Grove for Total Auto Repair, for either B4 or CI for used car sales, minor auto repairs.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Since there was no further business, Commissioner Murphy moved to adjourn the meeting (Support: M. Bullard) and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.