

**JOINT PLANNING COMMISSION & COUNCIL MEETING
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, April 17, 2013
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER
7:00 P.M.**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: R Johnson, D. Lautenbach, G. Clark, M. Bullard, R. Murphy, P. Hollifield,
C. Zuellig, Mayor Schreiber, Council Member Jefferson, Council Member Vogt,
Council Member Robb, Council Member Murdock

Absent: K. Weger (excused) B. Lenart (excused) Mayor Pro-Tem Richardson (excused)
Councilmember Moeller (excused)

Staff: Teresa Gillotti, Community Development Director
Bonnie Wessler, Planner I
Nan Schuette, Executive Secretary

III. INTRODUCTIONS

Mayor Schreiber introduced members in the audience: Former Mayor Dr. Cheryl Farmer, Former Council Member Nickels, Former President Jane Schmiedeke, HDC, Professor Norm Tyler – EMU, Ralph Lange, City Manager, Darryl Denard from Hamilton Crossing. He stated that the master plan is a long term plan for the city and we need to take it seriously. He was very pleased with the attendance and participation at the various sessions that have been held all week, which indicates that there is a lot of interest in the future of the city.

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Cheryl Farmer, 214 N. Huron – thanked Council for initiating the process of updating the Master Plan. She has been very impressed with quality of the people hired to do this project and the level of engagement by the public which speaks well of Teresa Gillotti, City Planner,

and her ability to get all the information out to the media. The real importance of having a plan empowers council to move forward when there is grant money available.

V. Presentation

Chairman Johnson stated that this is a presentation by the Shape Ypsilanti Planning Team. We started out with focus groups in January and engaged the community, found out their desires, feelings, etc. and directions to get a pulse of the community. Staff then followed up with a charrette in March, where again, people came in and had direct contact with the planner. Now we come to the design charrette where we see firsthand work as to what they heard and what was said by the citizens and what this will mean in our direction as to how the City of Ypsilanti is going to move forward in this process.

Ms. Gillotti introduced Megan Minock from ENP & Associates, who is the lead the project.

Megan Minot began by thanking the people in attendance at this meeting as well as the many people who attended the various focus groups since January. She was totally pleased with the amount of engagement by people from all the over the community, including residents, business owners, politicians, commissioners, etc. In the next month or so, they will have more information. In July, they hope to have a draft Master Plan. This Master Plan is a guiding document in terms of what the city is going to see in 10-20 years ahead about land use. This would be more to do with form than use, i.e. where buildings are, how they look and how far apart, etc. Also, housing and transportation, which would include cars, walking, buses, bicycles; complete streets and complete transportation systems, equity and sustainability. These are areas that they are concentrating on and that document becomes a living document that the city uses every day, as well as others members of government, informing them on what the city plans are for the future. Public Housing is required by state law.

The Master Plan is a guide. We also have a zoning ordinance, which is considered the rules/laws that dictate what happens on property in the city. We will be working with the community on a draft zoning overview and that will be done in October and hope to have it passed next year. The Master Plan creates a vision and predictability. A sample of questions we asked was: what you want to preserve, what you want to change and what you want to build. These responses, in combination with the focus groups, gave the consultants a good sense of vision for the future of the City of Ypsilanti. Three guiding values is [Safety](#) (a secure place for people to live, work, study, visit and play; [Diversity](#) (people and structure) and [Sustainability](#) (Efforts to make city environmentally sustainable while financial viability should factor into decisions).

Ms. Minot referred to the street system adding that it is dysfunctional – too many one way streets. She recommended that we make the city more legible and more navigable to Depot Town, Downtown, Cross/Washtenaw, Water Street and Waterworks Parks.

The framework of the city consists of various core neighborhoods:

Centers – heart of the city focuses on mixed multi-use (Eagletown, Depot Town, Downtown Neighborhoods – muscle – concentrates on residential

Corridors – linear concentrations of development, i.e. Washtenaw, Harriet, Cross, East and West Michigan.

District – predominantly single-use areas, i.e Bortz, EMU – vitality of city

Ian Lockwood, AECOM, Transportation Engineer – working alongside ENP – reviewed what he referred to as “big ideas”. He began with I94/Huron/Hamilton stating that the entryway to the city on Huron has three lanes of traffic coming in, and in order to leave the city, one must go back up Michigan three blocks to take another one-way to leave the city. His point is that this not easy for visitors or even for residents. He heard a lot about these two streets during the focus groups. Mr. Lockwood met with MDOT to discuss the possibility of changing the one-way to two-way streets. They were not averse to the idea and in fact were quite open to a study. He reviewed the possibility of a 2 lane round-about at the exit on to Huron.

He then went on to discuss other specific streets, i.e. Washtenaw/Cross, which the transit people are open to also make changes, extending River Street corridor, and Depot Town. He recommended that Washington be a “flush” street and consider making it a barrier free plaza for use as a festival-type street as well as a day-to-day street. He also showed slides of various streets in both Florida and Colorado, both before and after, which showed the vast difference to the areas by installing roundabouts. By making these changes, it made differences to bringing in businesses and improving traffic flow and parking. Connectivity is very important and by extending through streets and changing to two-way streets, it would be helpful in what he describes as a form based plan.

Regarding standards, he listed overall considerations:

1. Respect ROW and blocks (keeping them to our layout)
2. Block perimeters
3. New development should be organized with A & B Streets.
4. A & B cross section elements – on street parking
5. Driveway apron design

“A” streets should be 90-100% of a building – should build to line with 60% of first floor to have glazing and keep frontages open.

He reviewed the concept of the proposed Family Dollar on how it should be structured extending Lincoln and Parson to be within the framework of A & B Streets, after which, he finished his presentation. This was followed by comments by both Planning Commission and City Council members.

Council Member Vogt commented that Mr. Lockwood's six minute presentation is the most important six minute presentation he has seen during his time on council and the 20 minutes before that provided us with concepts that tied things together in a way that we have never seen before that are brilliant and would solve many problems in the city. His presentation on the dollar store is spot on and feels that council should carefully consider when making a decision on that project. Commissioner Murphy asked if his comments were specifically about Family Dollar or was it more general toward any project that would be built on that lot, to which, Mr. Lockwood responded that it can be generalized for any use, since the market will change.

Chairman Johnson referred to the whole Water Street zone and how it provides a mean of communication between the city and developers and what may or not work and very important to have a Master Plan. The form based zoning is new to us but is very important, like Motor Wheel, Water Street, Waterworks Park, etc. that we can look at undeveloped land and be able to effectively engage a developer as to what will or not work and not focus on what kind of business they are doing but more what will work into our vision. Mr. Lockwood responded that by having a structure, one can open up the area to numerous developers of any kind as long as they follow the vision and developers can go in knowing they are going to be held to the same vision as their neighbor. It gives the city more flexibility and will still have a nice framework and walk ability.

Council Member Murdock stated that Family dollar is closer to meeting the framework than the recreational center. When we set up the criteria is it an all or nothing with a developer? Currently we are using design standards and a plan that was previously put forth by the Planning Commission and approved by City Council. Mr. Lockwood stated that previous design relied upon one developer – these framework/rules ensures regulatory stability and allows flexibility and predictability creating an urban structure.

Mayor Schreiber asked for more clarity on the question of height and density – referring to Water Street, one thought is to try and fill up as fast as possible or lower density, which would mean holding out and trying to build up higher density not using up the space. Mr. Lockwood gave a detailed response adding that smaller lots would sell more quickly, and larger lots a little slower.

Commissioner Clark was on a previous 20/20 Task Force. The members of 20/20 felt it was essential that River Street run through the Water Street property. It is his opinion that he is happy that this is a part of their recommendation and would open it up to all of the south side, which is more isolated from the rest of the city. He is also in favor of having the Recreation Center in Waterworks Park. Mr. Lockwood agreed that this could be a good site, especially with the all the soccer fields, etc. around that location. Commissioner Clark also added that it accommodates people from the Township to access the Center from I-94.

Mayor Schreiber stated that an outstanding job had been done on the process – one-way to two-way and the Water Street grid concept and how two-way would affect EMU, which would help parking on the street, helps get students off campus downtown and depot town.

Commissioner Lautenbach asked about West Michigan and Megan Minock, ENP, responded that W. Michigan faces a lot of the same challenges as other corridors. They will also be addressing general standards for corridors and drill down where they can.

Chairman Johnson moved to open up the meeting for audience participation.

Wanda Wysor - lives outside the city limits. She attended the presentation on the Recreation Center and it is her opinion that it should be located on Michigan Avenue and not in Waterworks Park as has been suggested by some. If the city is not willing to put the Recreation Center on the Michigan Avenue corridor, it is possible we could lose them completely.

Aaron Scott - likes one-way streets but is OK changing to two-way. Also, does not want to move the Recreation Center from Michigan Avenue, but if it has to be, it would be easier if Huron was changed to two way, making it easier to get downtown.

Bill Nickels – The backside of Water Street along the river has always been thought of as the backside, and has been less desirable for development than Michigan Avenue. People are interested in Michigan Avenue rather than the river. The bridge across River Street stands out more than anything else in this presentation and would open up the backside and make that whole river side more desirable than Michigan Avenue.

Nathan Phillips, 422 Hawkins – Been a resident for 7 years. Walks along the back of Water Street often and enjoys the natural environment – like being in the suburbs. He would love to see a cultural center located there. Thanked the consultant for doing such a great job.

Will Thompson, Chidester Apts – Also loves to walk along the river and would love to see it opened up for bike trails, etc.

Sue Melke – Regarding the potential festival on Washington Street – what is the plan for the buildings that are not occupied now. Mr. Lockwood responded that it would be a street without vertical curves and could be used if the city wanted a festival but would be used same as normal but just no curbs and would not affect the use. It was his opinion that this would attract investment more quickly. She also questioned parking in back. Mr. Lockwood gave examples of types of malls he had worked on previously with rear parking and how important it is to enforce having a front door and can also put something in code that the front door should also be operable during business hours.

Tony Bedogne, Stanley - stated that he was excited about the continuation of River Street. It is his opinion that since the Recreation Center will not generate taxes for the city. They should conform to what the city wants. Bob Tetens doesn't hold the cards – we do!!! It should go where we want it or go away. He does not feel we need the size they are proposing. He loves the YMCA in Ann Arbor and feels that its size is adequate for Ann Arbor and would be a good fit here.

Paul Neuhofer, 814 Stanley – Focused on Motor Wheel and wondered if we want to acquire it. Chairman Johnson informed him that this private property. The Planning Commission can only set the rules for what can happen on sites. If the owner decides at some time in the future, they want to do something different, then we would do what we can to enable that.

Ralph Lange, 206 N. Huron – realizes we have worked hard on this but the hard decisions would have to be made - if Family Dollar does not do what we want – is it all or nothing – let \$1M go away – that could be a reality. On the Recreation Center, he understands some other viewpoints but we have heard from planners that building this, would make the rest of the property more valuable. You can build the Recreation Center anywhere you want but you would have to build the streets and the bridge. – this could be \$1M. Where would the money come from? Wasn't supportive of changing the one-way to two way.

Edna Massey – moved here from Washington, D. C. She used to live on Water Street – then River Street, which burned down. She is very supportive of what we are trying to do.

Cheryl Farmer, 214 N. Huron – referred to neighborhood to the west at I-94/Huron/Hamilton and potential roundabout adding that it would help in drawing Hamilton Crossing into the city and the parks. That area has been isolated for a long time by both the freeway and one-way streets. There is a school that also deserves being pulled into the rest of the city. That used to be a vibrant area in the past. She also referred to the Family Dollar – one concern is that this is a brand name that may brand the whole parcel in a negative way and make it more difficult to market the rest of the property. If the Rec Center does go in, it goes off the tax rolls – can we bring in part of Waterworks Park on to the tax roll but thinks that would be a vote of the people – that could be a trade-off.

Chairman Johnson added that on the “dollar store”, regarding the opinion of the planners, it is only form that we deal with, not function. Branding would be a city decision and how it would work with the property.

Mr. Lockwood stated that he is indifferent about the use but would question signs. Megan Minock (ENP) - stated that signs can vary based on location, i.e. corridor vs neighborhood vs center. They should be sensitive and match to the building style, which we already have here. Mr. Lockwood referred back to the I94 roundabout stating that there are many ideas of how this could be connected. On the Water Street property, it is his opinion that we should stay true to our values and not fall for corporate blackmail. The consultant planners consider themselves as more of a translation service – listening to what citizens want, what is most important to the city and coming up with a plan. This is not the consultant's plan, but it is the plan of the city.

Nathan Etu, 310 N. Adams – student at EMU – stated that he and a number of other students have been working on a final presentation for the former Boys/Girls Club property and wanted to let everyone know that it will be held from 4 – 5:30 at Frenchies in Depot Town on Wednesday, April 24, 2013.

Tim Adkins – asked how two way streets encourages safety, to which, Mr. Lockwood responded that one-way streets encourage cyclists going the wrong way and on sidewalks and two-way reward short trips. He is not trying to make auto-centric but rather trying to make inclusive.

Sue Melke (again) – re Family Dollar – if form matters and not so much use, does name of stores that have bad reputation still hold true in form. Mr. Lockwood responded that it is important that the building can be re-used and not worry about bad reputations.

Wanda Wysor (again) She added that there are people who are interested in putting a “Wellness Center” attached to the Rec Center – this would add value but would not be considered if not on Michigan Avenue. Also handicap accessibility would be required. It was Mr. Lockwood's opinion that the Rec Center does not need to get any bigger and it would be preferable to have its own building.

Megan Minock – ENP – stated that the next step would be a closing conversation at Spark East on Friday, April 19th. There will be a presentation with some more elements of this. She

added that this evening's presentation has been great in looking at more of focus bringing all the elements together. After that, they have some drafting to do with focus groups.

Chairman Johnson ended up by stating that this has been a project long in the making. It has been more involved with citizens and planning staff. We are very fortunate to have a group of staff that has done a top notch job and been sensitive to the public's desires. He commended everyone including public, staff, board members, etc. for their participation.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Since there was no further business, Council Member Vogt moved to adjourn the meeting (Support: R. Murphy) and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:54 p.m.