PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
October 15, 2014
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER
7:00 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: R. Johnson, P. Hollifield, N. Sandberg, A. Bedogne, S. Straley, H. Jugenitz

Absent: Cheryl Zuellig (excused)

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

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Hollifield moved to approve the minutes of September 10, 2014 (Support: A. Bedogne) and the motion carried unanimously. Commission Hollifield moved to approve the minutes of September 17, 2014 (Support: A. Bedogne) and the motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Johnson explained to the audience the purpose of the meeting and how it would be conducted, giving everyone an opportunity to comment or ask questions.

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Norman Burgess – Is the owner of two properties on Spring and Bell and did not receive any notices, nor did any of his neighbors. Ms. Gillotti responded that 1700 notices were mailed last week; however, they were only sent to the properties that would be affected either by significant changes in up zoning or downzoning. Chairman Johnson added that upon completion by the Planning Commission, it will not be an enactment by City Council, only a recommendation.

Beverly James, 968 Monroe – had concerns about the proposed properties at Parkridge and how that zoning would affect her property. Ms. Gillotti responded that the letters were sent out a week in advance of the meeting. She also responded to her particular area, which will be covered in her presentation.

V. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

Commissioner Bedogne moved to open the public portion of the hearting (Support: P. Hollifield) and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Gillotti stated that the reason we are undertaking rezoning is a result of the Master Plan efforts last year and the Shape Ypsi process. She will be providing an update since we have received a significant amount of feedback from the meetings and notices in the mail. Staff also has some alternatives to be presented for consideration and also plans to focus in on comments by the public.

Staff started the process in January, 2013. The City adopted the Master Plan in October 2013 and immediately started on the rezoning. The Zoning Ordinance is one of the key tools used for a vision of where we would like to see the city go in the future. We now have a draft zoning ordinance and the Planning Commission will make a recommendation to City Council, who will deliberate over two meetings or more if necessary, to make a decision, so there is time to make adjustments.

As part of the Shape Ypsi process – there were 10 guiding values, the key three of which were most important – safety, diversity and sustainability. Communications is also important, letting residents know what is going on in the City of Ypsilanti.

Zoning is the rules for places and guidance for our end goals as to what we want for our city, i.e. regulating land use, types of activities that are acceptable, where property can go, how tall buildings can be, how a building interfaces with streets, what it looks like and also what must be on a site, etc. The main purpose is to make sure everyone is a good neighbor and not allow buildings that are not in accordance with the zoning rules for that particular area. We want to be able to aid and encourage new businesses, ensuring that they are not affecting residential. Different places have different zoning. A Zoning Ordinance is a predictable document letting people know what is allowed or not allowed in a specific area.

Both Ms. Gillotti and Ms. Wessler reviewed all the various zoning designations of the city in detail, describing what the previous zoning was and the reason for the proposed zoning as well as the need to update our zoning ordinance.

The zoning ordinance is being updated to implement the vision of a safe, diverse, sustainable Ypsilanti – the vision for the City established by the Shape Ypsi process. The reason for updating the zoning ordinance is to do the following:

- make the rules clearer and more predictable
- makes development reviews quicker and easier
- better protects the historic nature and diversity of buildings in Ypsilanti
- modernizes and simplifies what uses are allowed
- requires pedestrians, cyclists and transit riders be considered as part of new developments
- decreases parking requirements and allows waivers

Roberta Wocjik Andrews - 7 N. Normal – has lived in Ypsilanti since 1990 and in the mid-town area since 2000 – she is an attorney and served on the Planning Commission from 2007-2010. She was new in the neighborhood when the downzoning occurred, which she worked diligently to have her property downzoned to R2. At that time, the goal of the city was to reduce congestion in the area and she accepted R2 with the understanding that in the future, while it could split up her home, it was better for the area as a whole. The goal of the city is to have safe and sustainable neighborhoods. The new zoning increases density and will overshadow single family. She is opposed to the proposed rezoning of CN in her neighborhood and encourages Planning Commission to take a tour of the neighborhood to see what she and her family are dealing with. She also urged Planning commission to look at group homes.

Guy Conti - Local Attorney representing Budget & Stadium Towing on Railroad Street - stated that he is concerned about the new provisions in the proposed zoning ordinance on special land uses. Under the current zoning, it is a very simple process – if the six requirements are met, a special land use is granted. The language in the new ordinance is a very qualitative type of language, i.e. structure must be similar to surrounding structures – the issue with that is the amount of discretion it puts in the hands of the Planning Commission, which, in his opinion, would be grounds for taking to court. He is requesting that the Planning Commission should look at the special land use language in the proposed ordinance. He would also like Planning Commission to discuss the issue of non-conforming permitted use. His client is suggesting that an economic study be done as to how many business-related parcels in the city will be converted to a non-conforming permitted use. This would include duplexes that will then become non-conforming permitted and will have problems with insurability, both positive and negative.

Pastor Robeson, 221 S. Hamilton - his question did not pertain to the rezoning. He asked about future traffic changes on S. Hamilton from one-way to 2-way. Ms. Gillotti added at the end of the meeting that Pastor Robeson would be contacted to inform him of a non-motorized meeting being held on October 20th to discuss his issue.

Heidi Basinger, City resident – real estate broker, had concerns about on "eyes on the street" and asked if the Police Dept had been consulted for their input. She also had a concern on R2 going Historic regarding the issues of mortgages.

Cheryl Farmer, 214 N. Huron - Wanted to ensure that the proposed zoning changes will make Ypsilanti better and attract more of what we want. Having a tow-yard on the river is not the best use. She questioned that the proposed zoning of GN (General Corridor) along the river will protect the river. Re: the parks district – we have a county-wide plan for the border to border trail - would like to see the park corridor continue.

Beverly James, 968 Monroe – Is concerned about Parkridge and the proposed new buildings and also that all of the zoning will be R1. She is also concerned what will be put at the back of her property.

Alan Seger - complained about the permit system in the Building Dept, and micro-managing residents' property making them so restrictive.

David Herman - 954 W. Cross – the property has 5 bedrooms, is currently zoned R2 and is now proposed R1, which would limit him to 3 unrelated people – would like it rezoned to CN.

Skip Cerier – Owner of 300 and 318 W. Forest. When he bought the property, it was zoned WS (Workshop Studio). It was Ave Maria College Campus, which was a non-producing tax property, which then became a tax-producing property. When he bought the property, it was zoned WS, was with the understanding he would be able to expand the property as the business grew. Since 2009, they have grown from 18 to 41 fulltime employees and 50 part-time employees, which would not have been possible without the use of the 3 buildings. He now wants to add another storey, but would be unable to do so under the proposed zoning. He is asking that the zoning be changed to a PUD and respect that which was agreed to five years ago. Miss Gillotti added that a meeting has been scheduled with Mr. Cerier for Thursday for further discussion.

Cindy Carver – W. Cross (behind Domino's) would like Planning Commission to consider another option on the proposed zoning.

Leonard Smith – 947 W. Cross - Does not want zoning changed from R2 to R1. He is currently surrounded by multi-unit buildings and the possibility of selling their home as R1 would be difficult.

Barb Hale – no concerns on the rezoning – complained about the school system in Ypsilanti.

Patricia Trout - Does not want her property zoned R2 – she added that the deed restriction for the subdivision includes a clause stating that it could never be anything but single family.

Helene Al-Qadi, 818 N. River – is currently zoned R3, does not want proposed zoning of R1. She is concerned about property values and future use of the property.

Richard Austin, 835 Jefferson – has owned the property for 10 years – he is concerned about downzoning his property from R2 to R1. He has some duplexes in the area which would be affected, especially, if something happened to the property, would not be able to rebuild as R2. He is opposed to the change.

Mark Naess – 302 Miles – mostly 2-units on one side. He bought the home in 2009 as R2, the reason being that he has a disabled son and wants to be able to build an apartment on the property for him. He is opposed to R1.

Ted Mull, 704 Dwight – is concerned about going from B4 to NC on Lincoln . Also asked where automotive work would be permitted in the new ordinance.

Tom Tamou, Owner of Keg on Forest – concerned about rezoning – has future plans to redevelop – wonders if this would be allowed under the proposed zoning from B3 to NC. Ms. Gillotti responded that it was proposed for NC to catch all of his properties including the parking lot, since currently, the B3 only applies to the business of The Keg and the other two pieces have residential zoning.

Julie Brown, 313 Olive – attended meeting at the freighthouse where the possible conversion on Hamilton & Huron from one to two-way was discussed. The proposed road-diet meeting will be held on Monday, October 20th at City Hall. The total conversion from one to two-way is a 4-5 year study process. Ms. Gillotti responded that the meeting was posted on the city website.

Pecola Lewis, 142 S. Prospect – her property is currently zoned R4 and proposed to be CN. She is not sure what that means and asked for clarification. It is the only property she owns in the city – complained about the lack of businesses for everyday essentials as well as garbage pick-up.

Michael Gelletly, 921 Sheridan – owns house 943 W. Cross Street and 945 W. Cross Street. He is concerned about rebuilding in the event of a catastrophe and starting over. Asking for consideration to be given concerning West Cross – he is recommending CN.

Norman Burgess, owner of 102 Spring and 29 Bell. He is concerned about conditions of various properties in his area.

Shaunda Harris, 957 W. Cross - feels that her area should all be same zoning – she was fine with R2. Re: "Eyes on Street" – for properties facing the street - safety vs privacy – she prefers privacy.

Cheryl Farmer, 214 N. Huron - We need to decide what we want more of or less of – the area that was rezoned years ago from R1 to R2 is now being proposed to go back to R1 and there's a reason for that. When it got upzoned, we saw more and more multi-families uses and residents that owned their own homes were not happy with that and this allows the neighborhoods move back to single family.

Commissioner Bedogne moved to close the public portion of the hearing (Support: P. Hollifield) and the motion carried unanimously.

There was much discussion among board members on the various concerns brought up by many residents. Commissioner Jugenitz asked if there was any data on the number of residences being affected by downzoning or upzoning, however, staff did not have these numbers. It was agreed that staff would revisit the following areas: W. Cross to Oakwood, Miles, South Side, N. River to CN-Mid, Farmers Market Classification, Accessory Structures limit two in R1.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

None

VI. OLD BUSINESS

None

VIII. FUTURE BUSINESS DISCUSSION/UPDATES

1. Adoption of past minutes – August Meeting

2. October 22nd meeting – alley and street vacations and site plan for 311 S. Grove

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Since there was no further business, Commissioner Hollifield moved to adjourn the meeting (Support: H. Jugenitz). The meeting adjourned at 11:15 p.m.