

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
January 21, 2015
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER
7:00 P.M.**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

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

Absent: N. Sandberg (excused) C. Zuellig (excused)

Staff: Leah DuMouchel, Beckett & Raeder Consultant
Nan Schuette, Executive Secretary

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Bedogne moved to approve the minutes of December 17, 2014 as read (Support: P. Hollifield) and the motion carried unanimously.

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None

V. PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

None

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Planning Commission "practice" site plan review and discussion

Leah DuMouchel, Consultant with Beckett & Raeder was in attendance to assist with the presentation and review of a comparison for a variance request that was completed under the old zoning ordinance and how it may differ under the new ordinance. The project chosen was 706 W. Michigan Avenue. There was a lot of detailed discussion and listed below are observations and comments by Ms. DuMouchel:

- **Angled lot lines:** This is a situation that is not explicitly addressed in the new ordinance, and it comes up twice in the site plan review: when determining setback; and when computing the frontage build-out. It was agreed that a standard should be set for consistency, though that standard was not worked through at the meeting.

Considerations included the intent (for the building to address the lot line), context of neighboring properties (which likely also have an angled lot line), complications arising from constructing a building that is not square, and side setback complications arising from placing a square building parallel to an angled front lot line.

- **Frontage build-out:** Ms. DuMouchel wanted to include a definition of this in the template, but was unable to find one through the Form-Based Codes Institute, Congress for the New Urbanism, or APA. The only one she did find was from a community in North Carolina, which read as follows: “The portion of lot frontage which has a building or wall running parallel to it.” So angled lot lines present an explicit problem here in that the building is not parallel. Additionally, the percentage is different when calculated using the frontage length as the denominator than when using the lot width. PC determined that frontage was the appropriate number based on the intent of the requirement.
- **Private Frontages “permitted” vs. “preferred” language:** It was agreed that “preferred” would be the better term, as connotes something stronger than a mere suggestion though everyone recognized that neither has any teeth. (It also sets us up to incentivize these frontages, though we didn’t talk about that.) Another consideration is whether it is easier to change the language of the cut sheet or the text of the ordinance.
- **Circulation standards:** The PC (and Ms. DuMouchel) is very interested to see what one of these will look like.
- **Parking requirements:** We noted that the parking requirements for this site actually increased under the new ordinance from 8 spaces to 18 (14 with transit proximity reduction) due to the removal of the words “or similar” from the parking standards for doctor’s and dentist’s offices. This seems to be an unintended effect, and clarification of the reasoning for that change may be in order.
- **Parking plantings:** The euonymus shrubs on the west side of the parking lot do not have a 3’ separation from the parking spaces. It is not 100% clear from the ordinance that this buffer applies to shrubs, as the only required plantings are trees and the discussion of shrubs comes after the buffering requirement. Assuming that it does, we were also not sure of the best method of addressing it in this plan; the solution seems to be to require the applicant to remove the shrubs from the planting bed, but this is not particularly desirable from any other standpoint.
- **Traffic visibility:** The 10’ clear corner requirement in 122-649 now overlaps/conflicts with the 15’ required distance from curb cuts required in 172-711. Clarification requested.
- **Greenbelts:** This requirement duplicates the requirements in 122-704, Street Trees. A search for “greenbelt” in the zoning document shows that the word now only comes up in discussions about nonconforming uses, satellite dish/cell tower screening, and the PMD district. In the latter case, the wording refers to the Parking requirements in 122-835, not the Greenbelt section (122-705). This section may be somewhat obsolete.
- **Foundation landscaping:** There was a question of how to pro-rate the “6 shrubs per 30 lineal feet” requirement. She had assumed that the language was written to require that shrubs come in a sort of “6-pack” and so required 12 for 49’ of frontage. The PC thought that this may prove contentious at times. We wondered what the benefits and drawbacks of changing the wording to “1 shrub per 5 lineal feet” would be.
- **Landscape elements:** This was probably the biggest departure from the previous system, and gave rise to several items.

- o Question: When a tree is closer than the required distance from a tree on an abutting lot, but there is a fence separating them, is that adequate? Should trees be setback from fences, also?
- o There are some elements that are required to be evaluated in 122-711 but are not explicitly required in the landscape plan by 122-702, such as overhead utilities.
- o The Approved Tree List and the Urban Forestry Plan requirements now play a role in site plan review, but required some digging through the website to find them. It would be good if they were readily available with the application.

Overall, the Commission felt that the ordinance had stood up to a very challenging site plan and are looking forward to 1715 Washtenaw. Ms. DuMouchel expressed her delight at being part of this session.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Disposition Policy

At the December meeting, a possible policy for addressing current and future tax-reverted properties within the city was discussed by commissioners. Staff has proposed various procedures and is requesting that the Planning Commission pass a resolution of adoption. Chairman Johnson stated that he did not need more clarification on this issue. Commissioner Jugenitz was of the opinion that the criteria are not detailed enough, adding that there are many variables that could determine what would be the best disposition decision of a specific property's characteristics as to whether it be sold, leased or donated, i.e. location, etc. Commissioner Bedogne added that while the Planning Commission can offer its opinion or recommendation, ultimately the final decision is in the hands of the City Council.

Chairman Johnson added that while Commissioner Sandberg was not in attendance, she had forwarded an email with a comment on the disposition policy. At the last meeting, she had requested adding some wording about "consideration for use in the food system" in the section about review. She still thinks this would be a good addition as it is one of several factors that we can take into consideration when these properties come up.

After further discussion, Commissioner Bedogne moved to table this item to get more clarification from staff on leases; incorporate potential food partnerships inside the documents and clarification as to the Planning Commission's involvement with the entire process (Support: P. Hollifield) and the motion carried unanimously.

VIII. FUTURE BUSINESS DISCUSSION/UPDATES

1. Annual report – Committee volunteers, schedule next meeting

Nan will check Ms. Wessler's calendar to schedule a meeting with Commissioners Bedogne and Jugenitz to discuss the annual report.

2. Next month will be another trial of the zoning ordinance using 1715 Washtenaw.

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Commissioner Bedogne attended the Non-Motorized Committee meeting on January 8th, at which time; they worked on priorities for 2015. The committee is working on the Transit Center in downtown Ypsilanti being reconfigured by AATA with one of the considerations being Wayfinding and signage in our community; the first of which will be located at the Transit Center and possibly funded by the DDA and AATA.
- Ypsilanti Bicycle Friendly Business is heading up a campaign to promote active and healthy lifestyles for employees and customers in the Ypsilanti area. By participating in the Ypsilanti Bike Friendly Business Campaign, cyclists and business owners are working together to create and encourage safe cycling and healthy business. Any questions concerning the Ypsilanti Bike Friendly Business Program, contact Bob Krzewinski of the City of Ypsilanti Non-Motorized Advisory Committee at wolverbob@gmail.com or by calling 734-487-9058.
- The committee also had a discussion about adding the different sidewalk gap priorities of the communities. Commissioner Bedogne recommended they try to obtain a list from DPS.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Since there was no further business, Commissioner Hollifield moved to adjourn the meeting (Support: H. Jugenitz). The meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.