

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
October 18, 2017
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: H. Jugenitz, C. Zuellig, T. Dennis, M. Dunwoodie, P. Hollifield, J. Talaga,
C. Madigan

Absent: L. MacGregor (excused) A. Bedogne (excused)

Staff: Joe Meyers, Community Development Director
Cynthia Kochanek, Presentation Planner
Nan Schuette, Executive Secretary

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Dennis moved to approve the minutes of September 20, 2017 (Support: M. Dunwoodie) and the motion carried unanimously.

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Ray – Ypsilanti – stated she would not give her address due to problems she has had giving it at previous meetings but she was in attendance to represent the Tiny Houses Group.

She read a news article from Portland, Oregon, allowing people to park tiny homes and recreation vehicles on properties detailing the guidelines that covered it with regard to electrical, sanitation, etc. She then went on to discuss the need for affordable housing in Ypsilanti, where, it is her opinion that rents are very high and unaffordable to many people. She referred to the public housing on Hamilton, adding that there was a \$35 cost to get on the list and that there is a six month waiting list. She referred to the high homeless rate in San Diego and Honolulu and the increase in Hepatitis C is spreading so quickly they are having to spray down all the sidewalks with bleach.

She added that the property taxes in Ypsilanti are very high and allowing people to park their RV's or tiny homes on their property would allow a lot of their tax burdens.

Nathanael Romero, West Cross – thanked the board for having this discussion on Affordability and Accessibility asking for more clarification of what the accessibility part entails.

Commissioner Madigan responded that it entails the actual physical meaning of accessibility of a structure. Chair Jugenitz agreed with Commissioner Madigan but added that as we look to the future, how and when we would use that term - choosing the term that is all encompassing and then breaking it down into various components. Mr. Romero stated that both are important.

He continued that he has been working to mobilize people around the International Village issue since one of the concerns is the effect that the development will have on housing. Some statistics that are important that have been previously voiced by Amber Fellows (who is on the Human Relations Board of the city) statistics from the American Community Survey shows that 65% of household in Ypsilanti are non-family households; median age is 24.6; millennial comprise 48% of the population; and median household of non-family income is \$26,000; so we have a lot of young people below the poverty line in Ypsilanti. We have a vibrant community with artists and musicians and people who work in shops who give value to the community but are at risk of displacement. His committee would like to hone in on the need for non-family housing, particularly the young.

Commissioner Dennis repeated his statement of “need for non-family housing” and asked Mr. Romero his definition of this. Mr. Romero responded that he believes according to the Census Bureau it refers to that as individuals or people living with a non-family member, i.e. housemates. He added more detailed information on available data.

Amber Fellows – Jarvis. She is on the Human Relations Commission and at their June meeting had completed a resolution to set up a joint meeting with the Planning Commission and their board but somehow did not come to fruition.

She stated that Ypsilanti has the most rental units in the County – 67% are rental, and we have the least amount of home ownership and it is denser. We are a low income community and most live under the poverty line as previously stated. Wants this discussion to amount to something; not just discuss and then move on without nothing getting done.

Ray – would like the board to look at micro apartments that are spreading up over all the country and world. She recommended that the board create an affordability commission in Ypsilanti.

Chair Jugenitz thanked all for their input and everything offered is extremely helpful.

V. PRESENTATION AND PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

None

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Affordability and Accessibility in Ypsilanti

Chair Jugenitz stated that there are two issues that have become current during our site plan and special use reviews. This comes back to one of the guiding values of the Shape Ypsilanti

Master Plan that anyone of any age or income should be able to find housing in the City of Ypsilanti. Chair Jugenitz stated that she has more of an idea on a directive for the Affordability and Accessibility than the Public Hearings issue. Because the Planning Commission is the authority that adopts the Master Plan, she wants to frame this as an issue of affordability and accessibility within the context of the Master Plan.

In October 2013, we adopted the Master Plan and unlike previous master plans, this was intended to be a hybrid of a land use plan and provide policy guidance and laid out a road map for the next 20 years in the City. It replaced the one developed in 1998 and Ypsilanti was in a different position at that time because it had a very active industrial sector and job linked to that sector. A few years later, it changed rapidly and one of the motivations of the 2013 Master Plan revision was an update to make it relevant as it exists today. The stated purpose to set the framework for future development, redevelopment and preservation by building on its people, buildings and businesses, and infrastructure when making decisions on land use, sustainability, etc.

The master plan also provides a list of measures that helps us track our progress and performance on the guiding values. They are measures and not targets! It was designed to be highly participatory – there were a number of forums that were held in order for residents could participate, i.e. charettes.

Other commissions in some way have had conversations come up that apply to affordability and accessibility, but specifically she wished to point out the various issues that had come before the Planning Commission. Planning Commission has seen the issue arise in the number of agenda items – for example, the Bell/Kramer issue where we saw unforeseen impacts that this rezoning had on property values in that neighborhood; we heard about affordability issues during the Thompson Block presentation because that is going to be all market rate housing. There was also the development that was originally planned for Water Street by Herman Kittle but did not come to fruition because of soil remediation issues and last month we had a proposal for senior housing on Michigan Avenue. There have been a number of cases where specific issues on affordability and accessibility have come before the commission.

We are seeing that property values in the City of Ypsilanti have risen. Along with these changes, it affects higher tax bills which get passed along by property owners to renters. Nationally, there are trends showing that there are more homes under ownership than fewer people which affects people who rent.

She referred to two bills in the House and Senate that pertain to making short-term rental uses permitted by right in all residential zones. There is a lot going on in a number of communities.

Chair Jugenitz closed by stating that she has been reflecting recently on what the role is of the Planning Commission is on this issue. She wants to propose and establish a Citizens Advisory Committee (which is allowed in our bylaws) which would consist of interested planning commission members and representatives of the community that have a major stake in this issue to study housing accessibility within the framework of the Master Plan and to recommend concrete land use and policy changes to sustain and enhance access to people of all ages and incomes. She wanted to get the rest of the board's reaction to this proposal and if they agree, what kinds of issues they would want to see tackled.

Commissioner Talaga agreed with the proposal since one of the issues he is interested in is how it relates to being able to get people remodeling to include accessibility. Adding to Commissioner Talaga's comments, Commissioner Madigan shared with the board some printed information on "Visitability" – which intends to provide a basic level of accessibility in new housing construction in hopes of benefitting the entire population. Visitability is an affordable, sustainable and accessible design approach. Commissioner Zuellig indicated that she thinks it would be a great idea to have such a committee and would be supportive. She also discussed the possibility of having some kind of focus group. After further discussion with comments by all members, Chair Jugenitz stated that she would contact the Sustainability Commission and Human Relations Board members to schedule a meeting to discuss the viability of a Citizens Advisory Committee. They would have to draw up a charter to include what is expected, when the meetings would be held, etc. in order to notify all citizens to be able to participate.

2. Planning Commission Protocol for Public Hearings

Chairman Jugenitz asked about the protocol for public hearings, adding that at a couple of recent meetings questions have come up as to why we are not having public hearing for a certain item. She wants a discussion as to what is the document that governs this and how we can make it a default process rather than err on the side of not allowing the public to speak.

Chair Jugenitz stated we should do a brief review of what the existing practice is on notification asking if it is only in the case of public hearing that notices are mailed out. Mr. Meyers stated that last month, we changed our practices to get more public notice out. It is a fine line when it comes to a permitted use site plan by right because then it becomes more of a technical review instead of a special use, which is more subjective and so we had some questions during the meeting. Staff had questions as to what is allowed on permitted use site plans and we found out that we probably could have amended the agenda to include a public comment before the site plan, but we would have to do some investigation about holding a public hearing for a permitted use site plan only because of how state legislation reads. Special uses require a public hearing, permitted uses do not.

Chair Jugenitz stated that it sounds to her that we do not have the discretion to hold a public hearing and Meyers responded "without changing the zoning ordinance."

Ms. Kochanek added that right now we only have to have a public hearing for special uses, PUDs, zoning map and text amendments, etc. Permitted uses by right come to Planning Commission if they are commercial but otherwise they do not.

The zoning ordinance would have to be amended and Mr. Meyers stated that he would discuss this with our city attorney for their advice. Meyers did state that in the future, any site plan that will be reviewed by Planning Commission will be noticed. Board members were happy with that comment. Chair Jugenitz requested that the city attorney be contacted on the possibility of adding public comment on site plans.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

None

VIII. FUTURE BUSINESS DISCUSSION/UPDATES

Ms. Kochanek stated that there were no applications submitted by the deadline today, therefore a November meeting is only needed if the Planning Commission would like one. Chair Jugenitz indicated that one is not needed.

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Non-motorized Advisory Committee – September minutes, were postponed due to the Planning Commission representative on the non-motorized committee not being present.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Since there was no further business, Commissioner Dennis moved to adjourn the meeting (Support: P. Hollifield) and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.