

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
December 20, 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, M. Dunwoodie, P. Hollifield, J. Talaga, A. Bedogne, L. MacGregor, C. Madigan

Absent: C. Zuellig (excused) T. Dennis (excused)

Staff: Bonnie Wessler, City Planner
Nan Schuette, Executive Secretary

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Hollifield moved to approve the amended Planning Commission meeting minutes of October 18, 2017 and amended November 13, 2017 Special Joint Meeting of the Planning Commission, Human Relations Commission, and Sustainability Commission minutes (Support: L. MacGregor) and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Hollifield moved to amend the agenda under New Business (Support J. Talaga) and the motion carried unanimously.

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Alice Elliott, 507 Pearl - commended the Planning Commission and their support of affordable housing.

Ray, Ypsilanti – commented on increasing rental costs. Also has done some research on Fresno, CA and Portland, OR – who allow tiny housing on wheels/RV's. She had contacted them to see how things are going. Portland stated that they had many complaints mainly regarding aesthetics and she is waiting for a response from Fresno. The City of Ypsilanti currently doesn't permit RV's, etc on wheels. She added that a conventional mortgage requires a foundation. Complimented staff on their efforts. She referenced a Utah city that has abolished minimums and also a place in Texas where tiny homes are allowed. Talked about frontage build-out being a stopper and accessibility.

Amber Fellowes, Ward 3 – stated she is supportive of the Master Plan committee and pleased with the responsiveness of the Planning Commission. Regarding membership on the committee, she would like to see more renters.

Dave Heikkenen, downtown business owner – stated he was a big fan of the way the last Master Plan process was done. He would like to re-engage a large body of people and do as much outreach as possible, doing it in the same spirit and go through the same process.. He attended the City Council meeting the previous evening – he stated there is not enough money do what needs to be done in Ypsilanti and feels that we need to look at ways to maximize the tax base. While he loves tiny homes, but we need tax base.

Johnny Gates, 1041 Forest (Twp) - has been a resident for five years and wants to stay here. He is a landlord but is also poor. He would like to maintain lower rents. He came here from Washington, D.C. where it is too expensive to live. He studied architecture and is in the process of building a tiny house. Tiny houses are advancing.

Nathaneal Romero, Ypsilanti – liked the update on the committee as well as the style of the Planning Commission’s public comment. He echoed Amber Fellowes. He was concerned of Mr. Heikkenen’s use of “maximizing tax base”. He would rather live in a cheap scruffy city than a “vibrant” one. Having a place to live, cops, parks and fire department is cool though! He is skeptical that increasing tax base increases the quality of life.

Dan Voght, City Council – thanked the Planning Commission for their efforts.

Erica Mooney, Ypsilanti – stated that it is her opinion that the last Master Plan missed some feedback from students and student groups – she doesn’t think the feedback was incorporated very well. Wants a flexible, reflective document to bring all the people that were at the table before, plus more. The plan should leverage connections to build social infrastructure – also wary of “increasing tax base” language.

Desirae Simmons – is excited by the work of the Planning Commission. Should focus on accessibility and affordability – feels that growth doesn’t mean displacement. We should make good recommendations to city council on equity and what is fair and ethical and focus on diversity.

V. PRESENTATION AND PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

1. 218 N. Adams Adaptive Reuse-Planned Unit Development

This application is for approval of an Ypsilanti Performance Space to be located at the southeast corner of Emmet and Adams, north of Washtenaw, South of Cross, between Hamilton and Huron. The subject property consists of two linked buildings and a large parking area, fronting on both Adams and Emmet. The main entrances to the parking area and the large building are off Adams; the main entrance to the small building is off the parking area to the south. The parking area can be accessed via Adams or Emmet. The parcel is approximately 0.75 acres, and is zoned CN, Core Neighborhood. The applicant is proposing to continue the current use of assembly (banquet hall, etc), and to add the use of business and professional offices. Business

and professional offices are not a permissible use in CN. This, the applicant is seeing an Adaptive Reuse Planned Unit Development.

The property is currently owned by the First Congregational Church of Ypsilanti, and has been in use as a church since the large building was constructed in the 1890s. In 1979, the church was granted permission from the HDC to relocate the house located at 212 N. Adams to expand their parking area; that house is now the Parish House Inn at 103 S. Huron. The smaller building was constructed in the late 1980s. At the time of the smaller building's construction, a conditional use permit was sought and granted for operation of the church in a residential zone (then R4).

The applicant is proposing conversion of the smaller building into office space, and after extensive repair and renovation, convert the large building into a performance venue and later activate the banqueting facilities. In all, the project will be completed in three phases as described; first offices, then performance and finally banqueting. Site improvements would be made after the offices are put into use, but prior to the performance space being activated. Banqueting facilities would be completed after the performance space. The assembly space-performance and banqueting- would be permitted as a continuation of the existing use, but the office space requires the ARPUD process for approval, as does the phased approach to site improvements.

Land use and zoning of surrounding areas was noted. The purpose, requirements, process and standards for site plan approval were also noted. Ms. Wessler detailed the site access, traffic and parking. Approval of other department and agencies are required. Any exterior work on the building is subject to Historic District Review. At this point, only repairs are being proposed. A consideration of the Master Plan is that "an objective of site plan review shall be to protect and promote public health, safety, sustainability and general welfare". Ms. Wessler noted that this project is within a high walkable, bike able, and bus-able area; just north of downtown. People from the east, south and west of the neighborhood, as well as from EMU, will be able to reach the site without use of a car. Also, as a performing arts venue, this will help to foster creative business within Ypsilanti. This project would re-use and repair an existing example of historic architecture, and could become a local and regional arts destination.

Ms. Wessler stated that the owner has stated his plan is to put the building back into productive use. Under our current zoning, the parking lot has too many parking spaces. She referred to the standards for a Planned Unit Development adding that staff had approved this project with various findings, a long list of exceptions and conditions, which she detailed.

Steve Pierce, S. Washington – accompanied by his wife Maggie and his architect. He stated that he had arrived here in 1999 - he purchased the Old Huron Hotel, Kresge Building, Glover House and Smith Furniture Building. Within 6 months they bought two of these properties. They also bought other properties that they rehabbed, one of which is the property they now own. They have now embarked on another project which is the First Congregational Church. This building has been on the market since 2007 and has been talked about for a variety of other uses. Other churches have talked about it also as well as possible apartments/condos. There is some real challenges to doing some of these projects since it has a sloped floor, at least 2' rise from the back to the front that would have to be entirely removed, which precludes that use. It is really a one story building. They are proposing it for arts, music and education,

workshops, wedding events. It would seat about 200 people. The organ works and they are planning to have it restored. He showed slides of the interior. They found an old church in Portland Oregon that was built the same year as this one in 1882 also showing slides of it as it is currently in use. It was purchased back in the 60's by people to make it into a performance base. It can seat 100 people for events. Mr. Pierce's focus is to bring back the music – he has the vision and the plan and there is a lot of work to be done. They have very aggressive plans but feel it can be done, starting work this summer and open in Fall 2019. Long-term work will be done in the basement.

Chairperson Jugenitz asked what the intended market would be and Mr. Pierce responded they it would be a wide variety, i.e. jazz musicians; would be open to the community for lectures/workshops, music recitals and for schools to come to see performances. Free concerts with local performers at lunch time.

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

Dave Heikkenen - 133 W. Michigan – stated he was very excited when he heard about this project. Not only is it good for downtown but is an excellent opportunity for more people to visit our area. He would like to see this happen.

Karen Maurer - bought the Kresge building from Mr. Pierce in 2000. When they moved here in 1990, her husband was rehabbing a house on Washington Street and there were always “girls” going by who were rather friendly - turn out they were prostitutes!! So that is what we used to have downtown. Back then there was only about 15 businesses back then. She said Steve and Maggie Pierce have done some great work in the city – the main thing she loves about this project is that 1) puts the property back on the tax roll; 2) brings people back to community; and 3) Ypsilanti is at a point now where we are ready for this type of project. She is asking that the Planning Commission support this project.

Eric Maurer - echoed his wife's comments – he is also excited about the project. Mr. Pierce has a high threshold of what he wants to do with the building and will not be cutting corners.

Melody Gable - is a community member. Known them for a long time and they only do what is good for community to retain the heritage and turn it into an open door. There is a plethora of uses of what they can do. Steve and Maggie Pierce are willing to invest in the community once again. She is very supportive and thinks it is nice that Ypsilanti would have this type of thing, drawing from the community, drawing from colleges, drawing from schools and create something that has been there and make it functional.

Paul Medler - his father was the pastor of the First Congregational Church in 1969. He opened a café on Washington Street before Beezys was there. He is now the Caterer for Zingermans and has done many big events so he will be able to help on any events. He is very supportive.

John Harrington, 209 N. Huron – stated he favors the project, would be a great use for this building. He used to own property in Oregon and nearby was a very similar project – an old church that had been turned into a performance venue. He can envision the same type of

thing here and strongly encourages support asking that the Planning Commission make this happen.

Steve Pierce – gave kudos to the Planning staff, i.e. Beth Ernat, Joe Meyers, and Bonnie Wessler. His experience with working with them has been incredible, from contacts they have given him as well as many ideas. They have been wonderful support.

Bonnie Wessler, City Planner – stated that we had received three letters of support from Richard Murphy, Dave Strenski, which she read. Joe Lawrence also submitted a letter of support and asked that this letter be read and written into the record, which was done by Ms. Wessler. (See attached).

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

Chairperson Jugenitz asked the architect to discuss the landscaping. She stated that they do not have the plans at this time, but it will be part of a well thought plan prior to completion of the plan.

Commissioner Hollifield stated that he absolutely loved this plan. He saw the intent and likes the concept. He likes that they are not asking for tax abatements and there will be no problem with parking and not having to go to Detroit to enjoy music is a win-win.

Commissioner MacGregor asked about the time frame for landscaping, although she does support the project, and Mr. Pierce responded with details but will be going to experts in landscaping and will definitely inform the Planning Commission and Administration prior to installation.

Chairperson Jugenitz agreed that this project will be a major benefit. She is happy it is a local endeavor and also happy that it will be on the tax rolls and that it will be open to the community and schools.

Commissioner Dunwoodie stated that one of the things under consideration would have to include insulation pedestrian consideration from vehicular thoroughfare, although might be too fine a point to hold up the project but just wanted to note it. Also the exception from Sec 122-691 that notes the maximum of parking spaces and it seems that from the information earlier in the packet that this might also be a minimum number of bicycle spaces and whether we feel this is justified. Steve Pierce responded that he has no object to bike parking and can be done on the backside. Ms. Wessler stated it can be flexible and she will work with Mr. Pierce and the architect enumerating various options. Commissioner MacGregor still had concerns about landscaping to which Mr. Pierce responded that he will definitely agree to work with staff to ensure everyone is completely satisfied with the results.

Commissioner Dunwoodie moved that the Planning Commission recommend the Adaptive Reuse Planned Unit Development for the Ypsilanti Performance Space at 218 N. Adams with the following findings, waivers, and conditions:

Findings

1. The application substantially complies with Sec 122-310, Sec 122-702, Sec 122-703.

Exceptions

1. Exception requested from Sec 122-684(b)(1), install one tree per 8 spaces, requested due to existing layout of the parking lot.
2. Exception requested from Sec 122-684(b)(2), one landscaped island per 16 spaces, requested due to existing layout of the parking lot, in lieu of landscaped island, provide protective bollards or similar for guy wire.
3. Exception requested from Sec 122-684©(2), screening from the right of way, due to existing paving.
4. Exception requested from Sec-691, maximum number of parking spaces, due to anticipated popularity of the venue provided that the applicant provide ten bicycle parking spaces.
5. Exception requested from Sec 122-609, requirement for photometric, as applicant is re-using existing site lighting.
6. Exception requested from Sec 122-608, masonry dumpster enclosure, due to existing nonconforming wooden enclosure.
7. Exception requested from Sec 122-636 due to site constraints on Emmet and building aesthetics on Adams.

Condition

1. Applicant to work with staff to develop a solution to prevent vehicle encroachment into the sidewalks.
2. Applicant to provide ten bicycle parking spaces, as a condition of the exception from Sec 122-691.

The motion was supported by Commissioner Hollifield. A roll call vote was taken and carried unanimously 7:0.

2. 206-210 N. Washington – Special Use

This application is a request for approval of a Special Use for multi-family – 15 units on the East side of N. Washington St, between Washtenaw and Emmet Street. This parcel consists of 0.45 acres and includes both the 206 and 210 N. Washington addresses with frontage on N. Washington Street. There is an existing 7,197 square foot three floor apartment building with an attached 2,903 sq. ft. single story apartment building. There are two outbuildings on the east side of the site at 504 sq. ft and 407 sq. ft. respectively. Parking is located to the south and to the east of the structure. The parking spaces are currently unmarked therefore, it is unclear as to how many are currently on site.

The three story structure has been used as an apartment building since it was modernized in approximately 1926. Multiple family dwelling units for more than two families were a permitted use for this parcel when it was built. In 1926, the ZBA allowed a variance from the 800 sq. ft. requirement for each family dwelling unit. The one story office was added in 1944 and an additional to the rear of the office was built in 1955. The one-story addition was converted to apartment use likely at the time of the 1955 additional, but the files are silent. There was a one-story addition apartment which was a conversion possibly at the time of the addition in

1955 but there is nothing in the files to confirm this. There was substantial fire damage to the structure in January 2017 and the cost of the restoration is expected to exceed the 100% percent of the SEV; thus prompting the need for a special use application under Sec 122-205(4). At the time of the fire, there were 16 units in the building, the applicant is currently seeking approval for 15 instead of the 14 approved by the Planning Commission in April.

No special use permit had been approved for the property prior to 2017. In April 2017, the Planning Commission approved the site plan and special use proposed for the property for 14 units. One of the conditions included in the approval was that the applicant address barrier-free access on the site and make two of the units barrier free. In July 2017, the Planning Commission removed the condition of converting two of the units to barrier-free and adding barrier free access to the site after the applicant provided proof of the difficulty in converting the units.

The applicant is proposing that the two units in the 206 N. Washington section of the building be converted to three units. The apartment that had 6 bedrooms over two floors will now be split into two three bedroom units, one on the first floor and one on the second floor.

The parcel is zoned CN Core Neighborhood, which allows for multiple family dwellings of more than 4 units per building after approval as a special land use. Special land use is regulated under Article V of the zoning code. The plans submitted call for the number of units to be 15 and some additional landscaping while retaining the pre-fire site layout. A single barrier-free parking space has been added to the site with the plans.

Land use and zoning of surround area was reviewed as well as special use criteria and review.

Ms. Wessler, City Planner, gave a brief presentation on this item reminding them about the fire at this property earlier in the year and the fact that it is going through a major renovation. As a part of that – it has been before us twice on special use. The plan now before the committee is to split one of the larger apartments into two separate apartments. The applicant got revised site plan pursuant to the previous approval but there are still outstanding conditions. She reviewed the conditions adding that technically what the committee would be doing is to approve the revised special use conditions. Commissioner MacGregor asked if the city planner had spoken with the owner about these conditions and Ms. Wessler responded that she had made them aware that occupancy could not occur until all conditions were in compliance. Commissioner MacGregor asked about an accessible apartment for handicapped and the owner responded that he had requested an exception to this because the cost to restructure the building is prohibitive to do any kind of any acceptable requirement, i.e. widening hallways and stairways and would require redesigning the whole building. This building is 100 years old.

Commissioner MacGregor moved to open the public portion of the hearing (Support: A. Bedogne) and the motion carried unanimously.

Rae, Ypsilanti – asked about snow maintenance since she had noticed that the sidewalks needed to be cleaned off. Also, she noticed that since windows have not been covered if there was any possibility of mold. The owner responded that all of the moldy dry wall and wood had been removed. He also responded to her concern of snow removal and assured her that this would be taken care of.

Since there was no further discussion, Commissioner MacGregor moved to close the public portion of the hearing (Support: P. Hollifield) and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Dunwoodie moved that the Planning Commission approve the Special Use Modification for the Phoenix Apartments Restoration Project at 206-210 N. Washington with the following finding and conditions:

Finding: The application is substantially in compliance with Section 122-127.

Conditions:

1. Applicant to provide sign details with sign permit application.
2. Applicant to make the following changes to the southern lot:
 - a. Grade lot to address drainage issues (apparent per paving failures). Staff recommends a rain garden in new SW landscaped island.
3. Applicant to make the following changes to the eastern lot:
 - a. Consider adding a mirror at the one-vehicle choke point between apartment building and northern outbuilding, due to limited visibility and narrow path of travel
4. Applicant to install dark sky compliant lighting and provide staff with a detailed lighting plans for staff review.
5. Applicant to provide details for a compliant dumpster enclosure for staff review.
6. Applicant to provide an additional one tree in the front yard to meet the street requirement, or request a waiver under Sec 122-713.
7. Applicant to maintain all existing and new landscaping in good condition and to provide staff with additional details on the new landscaping.
8. Applicant to replace or repair existing fence on site.
9. Applicant to increase the distance between the curb and plantings in the southwest island to 3'.
10. Applicant to provide 3'-4' screen 80% opacity where parking is visible from TOW.
11. Applicant to provide curbing for the landscaping/walkway at the northern front entrance.
12. Applicant to provide an additional 3 spaces of uncovered bike parking.

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

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. 2018 Schedule of Meetings

A discussion was held on the meeting to be held the evening before Thanksgiving. The board agreed to amend the schedule to change the November meeting to November 14th. Commissioner Dunwoodie moved to approve the amended meeting schedule as stated (Support: P. Hollifield) and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Appointments of Non-Motorized Advisory Committee

Commissioner MacGregor moved to appoint Anthony Bedogne and Martha Cleary to the Non-Motorized Advisory Committee (Support: M. Dunwoodie). A roll call vote was taken with a vote of 6:1. Commissioner Bedogne abstained.

3. Creation of a Committee to review the Master Plan

Chairperson Jugenitz stated that in the packet that was drafted in October she asked for input on initiating this citizen committee to update the Master Plan, specifically on two issues of affordability and accessibility. Also, in November, a joint meeting was held with the Sustainability Committee and Human Relations to get further input on the composition of this new committee and get further input on specific issues people wanted to see addressed as well as process. She incorporated what she had heard at both of these meetings and the draft charter that is included is a result of that. Basically the main parameters that she has incorporated are that we would have a committee comprised of 4 planning commissioners, a member of the Human Relations Commission, a representative from the Sustainability Commission Board, a representative from the Ypsilanti Housing Board, a representative from EMU, representative from Affordable Ypsi, representative from Independent Living in Ann Arbor, representative from Avalon Housing, a representative from Civic Affairs at the County or State level, one owner occupant, one Ypsi business owner, one representative of rental properties and two representatives from the community at large. These would be representatives of the City of Ypsilanti as a whole with respect to diversity, race and income as well as affordability and accessibility interests.

This will not be a fast process and she put in a deadline of October 2018 with the thought of bringing them back to Planning Commission and also informing City Council.

Under the activities she gave a general overview of the major steps in the process but did not delineate is not going to be the sole voice on updating the Master Plan so we will need focus group for broad public input. She invited questions or adjustments from the Planning Commission. Commissioner Dunwoodie stated that the language seems to imply that the committee is going to consist of all of these people. Originally it had been approximately a dozen people, and wondered if 12 is still the range? Chairperson Jugenitz responded that she thought 12-15 is still manageable and also taking into consideration there will probably be some absences along the way. Commissioner MacGregor asked why Avalon Housing and not services that are based in the community, i.e. SOS. Ms. Wessler responded that Avalon Housing does work in the community but actually provides housing and have connections in Ypsilanti.

Liz asked about sub-committees. Chairperson Jugenitz will add sub-committees under the committee as appropriate. Commissioner Bedogne was concerned about a policy that would be too restrictive to renters and limiting growth. Chairperson Jugenitz responded that Michigan law is already restrictive and while she understands his concern, we wouldn't be able to make any rent controls, etc. There are lots of things it can potentially do both with the zoning ordinance and with other broader policy, i.e. increase availability of affordable housing, being more permissive with micro apartments, opening up more areas to tiny houses, etc. and we need this committee to do a rigorous study. Commissioner Dunwoodie added that it will be up to the committee to look at various trade-offs and consider the benefits, but allowing some of those trade-offs to be put in the charter from what the committee could do would put a

stranglehold on the committee and we would be starting with our hands tied from the beginning.

Commissioner MacGregor asked that a regular update from the commission be included in the charter.

Commissioner MacGregor moved to pass a resolution to create the Master Plan Update Committee with the charter as amended at the table (Support: M. Dunwoodie). A roll call vote was taken with a vote of 6:1 in support. Commissioner Bedogne opposed.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

None

VIII. FUTURE BUSINESS DISCUSSION/UPDATES

Ms. Wessler stated that there is a meeting in January – 75 Catherine.

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. October minutes - Non-motorized Advisory Committee
2. December minutes - Non-motorized Advisory committee
3. 2018 Project Priorities - Non-Motorized Advisory committee – Commissioner Bedogne stated that the committee had been awarded a Bronze Bike award

X. ADJOURNMENT

Since there was no further business, Commissioner Madigan moved to adjourn the meeting (Support: P. Hollifield) and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:25 pm

Bonnie Wessler

From: Joe Lawrence <joe@ypsi.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2017 3:15 PM
To: Beth Ernat, Bonnie Wessler
Cc: Steve Pierce
Subject: Letter support for 218 N Adams to Planning Commission tonight

December 18, 2017

Planning Commission
City of Ypsilanti
151 Huron Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Planned Unit Development for 218 N. Adams

To the Planning Commission of the City of Ypsilanti:

I am pleased to submit this letter in wholehearted support for Steve Pierce's and Dr. Maggie Brandt's planned unit development for the former First Congregational Church property at 218 N. Adams Street and I request this letter be read into and made a part of the official record of the December 26, 2017 meeting of the planning commission.

I am the fourth generation of my family to live in Ypsilanti. My paternal grandparents, my parents, and I were members of the First Congregational Church of Ypsilanti. I was married in that church in 1965.

When Maggie and Steve came to me with their plans for the P.U.D at 218 N. Adams, I knew this property would be in good hands. Their proven track record of historic preservation and the care they have shown in preserving buildings in Ypsilanti is best exemplified by the home they restored at 218 South Washington that many call the Glover House. Few would have dared to take on such a large and complex project. Some had looked at Glover House and wanted to make it apartments or condos. Steve and Maggie understood that the Glover House was originally a home and that if the building were ever cut up into apartments or condos, that history and its place in our community would be lost forever.

Glover at that time was a neglected 1893 Victorian home which had been used as an office building by a non-profit for over 30 years. When Maggie and Steve made it back into a home, it forever changed our neighborhood for the better and helped jump start a number of other restoration projects in our neighborhood.

When I learned that Maggie and Steve planned to make the First Congregational Church into a music performance and event space, I demonstrated to me the planning and vision they have. Some have said the Church should be made into restaurant or condos without taking into consideration the role this building and church have had in our community since 1882.

I, too, have been active in historic preservation in this community. Working with architect Elisabeth Knibbe, I have restored and own or co-own a number of historic commercial and residential properties in the City, seven of which have been awarded plaques by the Heritage Foundation. Two of those properties, 601 Emmet and 309 North Huron, are in the vicinity of 218 N. Adams Street. Elisabeth Knibbe has also reviewed this project and it has her support as well.