

REGULAR MEETING OF THE WEST BRANCH PLANNING COMMISSION HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER OF CITY HALL, 121 NORTH FOURTH STREET, ON TUESDAY, JUNE 7, 2016.

Chairman Tim Schaiberger called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Members: Bob David, Kara Fachting, Heather Grace, Jan Hasty, Mike Jackson, Tim Schaiberger, and Dan Weiler.

Absent: June Longstreet and Shirley McClenahan.

Others officers in attendance: City Clerk/Treasurer John Dantzer

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Manager Grace shared some photos of parking signs that were displayed at various locations in downtown Gaylord.

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Chairman Schaiberger at 6:02 pm opened the public hearing to take comment on parking issues throughout the City as well as requiring business registration permits.

Manager Grace noted some of the parking issues that have been brought up are having metered parking or parking limits. She also noted the business registration permits would help collect data for economic grants and for zoning purposes. She further noted that there would not be a fee charged for this permit.

Chairman Schaiberger noted that he was not in favor of having meters.

Member Hasty noted the meters would discourage downtown shopping.

Member Jackson noted the last time they had meters there were several complaints that downtown businesses were losing customers. In addition, he noted it would be costly because we have to buy all of the equipment and then pay someone to monitor them.

Eric Young noted he doesn't see a big parking issue throughout town and doesn't think anything needs to be done.

Manager Grace noted that most of the complaints were on Houghton Ave only. She further noted that some of the complaints were coming from business workers using the parking spaces in front of the businesses as well as downtown renters using those spaces.

Roger Noble noted the need for signs to direct people to the additional lots behind the businesses because unless you are a local, you wouldn't know they are even there.

Member Hasty noted concern that the renters are not using their parking permits properly.

Member Jackson noted the need to look into designated areas with signage for downtown renters.

Member David added that they then could look into the possibility of fining renters that aren't parking in their designated areas.

Member Jackson noted that by creating the designated spaces and having fines associated with them, it should eliminate parking on Houghton Ave. altogether after 2:00 am when the bars close. Discussion centered around the issue of giving tickets to people who did not move their vehicles off Houghton Ave. because they had consumed alcohol. Member David noted that they could look into a forgiveness policy to address this concern. Manager Grace noted they do currently have a one-time policy in effect if it happens during the winter months when parking is restricted on Houghton Ave.

Corrine Jones noted that she believes most of the parking issues started during the winter because of large snow mounds that hindered the ability to get out of the vehicles and onto the sidewalks. She also noted that several business owners in town try to control the parking spots in various lots. She noted the possibility to increase parking spots on the North side of town by redesigning the parking lots and agreed that parking signage would be a great idea. Member David and Manger Grace responded on the snow pickup in town.

No one else wished to speak on issues during the public hearing.

MOTION BY HASTY, SECOND BY FACHTING, TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING TO TAKE COMMENT ON PARKING ISSUES THROUGHOUT THE CITY AS WELL AS REQUIIRING BUSINESS REGISTRATION PERMITS AT 6:23 PM

Motion carried

MOTION BY FACHTING, SECOND BY HASTY, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR MEETING HELD TUESDAY MAY 10, 2016 AND THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD TUESDAY APRIL 26, 2016.

Motion carried

A sign permit variance was submitted by Roger Noble of Farm Bureau Insurance. He noted that his original sign was denied because it did not have any Victorian design to it and it is 32 square feet which is larger than the 24 square feet maximum requirement. He submitted updated plans that will have some Victorian theme now so he wouldn't need that variance any longer and noted that he would like to keep the 32 square feet because he is just replacing the previous sign that was 32 square feet and he would be reusing the existing support posts.

MOTION BY FACHTING, SECOND BY WEILER, TO APPROVE THE SIGN VARIANCE FOR FARM BUREAU INSURANCE AS PERMITTED AND TO ALLOW THE SIGN TO BE 32 SQUARE FEET.

Motion carried

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Tim Prater, on behalf of Kmart, submitted a variance to allow for five flags to be used in front of the business. He noted that they were trying to increase the visibility of their pharmacy and that they have been actually up for quite some time with no complaints until now. He further noted that he kept them away from the road as far as possible so it wouldn't affect the sight of anyone driving. He further noted that he did see them in one other location in town. It was noted that the particular business that was using them did come in and receive a variance. Mr. Prater asked to be able to keep them out to try and keep the pharmacy business thriving which is vital to the business open.

Member Jackson noted that those types of flags should be allowed because they can increase business but they must keep some sort of limitations. He further noted that because of the size of road frontage, they should be allowed more signage than a smaller lot.

Member Hasty acknowledged that it may help with business but that she is concerned with preserving the look of the area and that if you allow one then you would be setting a precedent and it could affect the aesthetics of the City.

Chairman Schaiberger asked about the ease of bringing them in and out every day and that the current variance required this.

There were questions raised by those in attendance of why there are even sign restrictions because they are vital to businesses.

Manager Grace noted that the City uses the regulations to maintain the visual appeal of the City as well as maintain the safety for pedestrians and motorists.

Mr. Prater noted that because of the size of frontage that he has, he doesn't believe it clutters the area.

Manager Grace noted that they would need a height variance because they are seven feet tall as well as they have more than the one allowed sign. She further noted that the ordinance does allow for more if a business has more than 400 lineal feet of road frontage which Kmart definitely has.

Member Fachting noted that in her opinion because of the size of road frontage more signage could be allowed and that part of the issue with the other flags were that the other business had no road frontage.

Member Jackson noted that because he is the only business that owns that road frontage and it is so large, it does allow them some leeway.

Manager Grace noted that the ordinance does clearly state that because the applicant has more than 400' lineal feet of road frontage then he can be granted additional signage.

MOTION BY WEILER, SECOND BY JACKSON, TO ALLOW KMART TO USE UP TO FOUR FLAGS BECAUSE THE BUSINESS HAS MORE THAN 400 LINEAL FEET OF ROAD FRONTAGE AND TO ALLOW THE VARIANCE OF 7' HIGH

Yes - David, Fachting, Grace, Jackson, Schaiberger, Weiler

No – Hasty

Motion carried

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An informal site plan was submitted by O'Reilley's Auto Parts to get input on their initial site plan that they are working on and would be submitting in the future.

Member David noted his concern that he would like them to keep with the same Victorian theme sign as everyone else does.

Clerk Dantzer noted that the major concern that was noticed by administration with the site plan is that they would be asking for a variance to encroach on the back lot line and be 3' from the lot line instead of 10' as well as have no landscaping belt in the front of the building.

Manager Grace noted that the rear lot line does need to be looked at because it abuts to the City cemetery which is a sensitive issue.

Member Jackson brought up concerns with parking if they were not allowed the rear setback variance because it would eliminate one entire row of parking.

Manager Grace noted that there was some distance from the lot lines to where the headstones start. She further noted that she could have DPW go and measure that distance.

Member Jackson noted that he would recommend we send correspondence that he would encourage any way possible to try and keep the 10' rear lot line setback.

Clerk Dantzer noted that they have offered to put up vinyl privacy fencing to block the view from the cemetery.

Member David brought up issues with fire safety if they allow the smaller rear lot line.

Chairman Schaiberger noted the main issue of concern is the rear lot line distance because of fire issues and how a fire truck would get to the back of the building.

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Chairman Schaiberger adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.