

REGULAR MEETING OF THE WEST BRANCH PLANNING COMMISSION HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF CITY HALL, 121 NORTH FOURTH STREET, ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2017.

Chairman Mike Jackson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Bob David, Kara Fachting, Mike Jackson, June Longstreet, Lisa Saurer, Jason Stroebel, and Dan Weiler.

Absent: Heather Grace

Others officers in attendance: City Clerk/Treasurer John Dantzer and City Mayor Denise Lawrence.

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

As an addition to the agenda, Chairman Jackson noted, due to recent findings, they needed to appoint a secretary from among the board members.

Member Saurer volunteered to act as the secretary.

MOTION BY DAVID, SECOND BY LONGSTREET, TO APPOINT MEMBER LISA SAURER AS PLANNING COMMISSION SECRETARY.

Yes – David, Fachting, Jackson, Longstreet, Saurer, Stroebel, Weiler No - None

Absent – Grace Motion carried

As another addition to the agenda, the Commission discussed potential changes to the board including the possibility of decreasing the number of members from 7 to 5.

MOTION BY JACKSON, SECOND BY DAVID, TO EXCUSE MANAGER GRACE FROM THE MEETING DUE TO THE FACT THAT SHE WAS NOT IN ATTENDANCE UNTIL FINAL DETERMINATION COULD BE MADE IF IT WAS LEGAL FOR HER TO BE ON THE PLANNING COMMISSION DUE TO HER BEING THE CITY’S ZONING ADMINISTRATOR.

Yes – David, Fachting, Jackson, Longstreet, Saurer, Stroebel, Weiler No - None

Absent – Grace Motion carried

Chris Galea submitted and was on hand to answer questions on the sign variance submitted on behalf of G’s Pizzeria.

Mr. Galea noted that he would be replacing the two current signs with one new sign and that it would be above the current awning.

Member Stroebel asked on the height of the sign and if it was going to have neon lights. Mr. Galea noted that it was 9' in height and that while it is taller than the original signs it is smaller in total size than the two signs that are currently up. Mr. Galea also noted that the sign would be backlight and it would have neon striping on the sign but that none of the lights would be flashing.

Member Longstreet asked if the lights would affect any apartments on the second floor in that area. Mr. Galea noted that there are no second story apartments in that area and that it would only be on during business hours.

Member Saurer asked if there would be any additional signs on the side of the building and Mr. Galea noted there would not be.

Mr. Galea noted that the sign would be good for the City because it is more inviting and that they are trying to make the town seem livelier so they can get more walking traffic into the City.

Member Strobel noted that it is getting away from the Victorian theme.

Mr. Galea noted that it is very similar to signs that are used in mainstreet downtown Disney and submitted a picture of similar looking signs used in that area.

Member David did note that it did have some Victorian type scrolling on the sign.

Member Weiler noted the sign looks good and it would be good for the City and would recommend approving it.

Member Saurer asked about the brightness of the sign. Mr. Galea noted they do have similar signs at their other locations and it is hardly visible during the day and is not super bright.

Member Fachting noted they have allowed larger signs for larger building in that same area.

Member Stroebel noted that even though this one did not have flashing lights, his main concern was that if they allow one of these signs then they may set a precedent to allow everyone to have these type of signs.

MOTION BY WEILER, SECOND BY FACHTING, TO APPROVE THE SIGN VARIANCE FROM G'S PIZZERIA AND ALLOW THE SIGN TO BE LARGER THAN ALLOWED AND TO ALLOW THE BACKLIGHT WITH NEON STRIPING.

Yes – David, Fachting, Jackson, Longstreet, Saurer, Weiler No-Stroebel

Absent – Grace Motion carried

MOTION BY JACKSON, SECOND BY FACHTING, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES WITH CORRECTIONS FROM THE REGULAR MEETING HELD TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2017.

Yes – David, Fachting, Jackson, Longstreet, Saurer, Stroebel, Weiler No-None

Absent – Grace

Motion carried

Member Stroebel noted he was recently elected Chairman of the DDA and went over some of the issues they would be looking at which included moving the DDA mobile stage to a fixed location between the parking lot off of N. Third and the Fire Department; fixing the parking lots between N. Third and N. Fourth and possibly combining them, redoing the steps, and creating a handicap ramp; connecting the Riverwalk with the Tolfree Wellness park by using N. Sixth St.; and adding more sidewalks on the South side of town.

Member Stroebel also noted the Recreation Committee is looking for more members and the next meeting is November 13 at 5:00 pm. He noted currently they are looking at doing a Cinco De Mayo Festival and a concert on September 1st and asked for suggestions on the type of music. Suggestions of the school orchestra, country music, big band type music, and square dancing were made.

Member Longstreet noted the City is in need of a City wide striping project. Chairman Jackson noted they are looking at it for the spring of 2018.

Member Weiler thanked the employees of Chemical Bank who volunteered to stain Fort Austin in Irons Park and that it looked great.

Member Jackson noted his concern for the 6x6 posts that were left in Fort Austin when they redid they fence.

Member Fachting noted a concern if she was able to be on both the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Planning Commission. Chairman Jackson noted his understanding was that she would just not be able to vote on the same subject on both boards.

Member David asked about the Fairview Rd project and Member Weiler noted City Council just approved an engineer to design the redoing of Fairview St. Member David noted they should look at redoing any infrastructure under that road before they redo it.

Member Saurer asked about adding a handicap swing in Fort Austin and that she would be willing to help in any way to get one.

Mayor Lawrence noted her disappointment that there were no member from the DDA at the Planning Commission meeting. She also noted Fabulous Fridays will not be meeting weekly now and that they have nothing scheduled as of now. She also noted that the Recreation Board tried to get a zombie walk and Halloween party planned but they did not get much support so they had to cancel it.

Mayor Lawrence noted that they were looking into doing a subcommittee within the Recreation Committee that work exclusively work on City events and would like to have a member from the different boards such as Planning, DDA, etc. on it.

Member Fachting asked about the Homecoming parade and noted how wonderful it was. It was noted that Ogemaw Heights Athletic Director John Studley was the one that arranged everything and everyone expressed how wonderful it was and their appreciation for Mr. Studley and all his work.

Member David reminded everyone of the next meeting of the Roger Brooks downtown revitalization program will be on October 17 at 6:00 at the West Branch Police Station.

Member Strobel reminded everyone of the upcoming joint DDA meetings with the Townships.

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MOTION BY FACHTING, SECOND BY DAVID, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 7:15 PM

Yes – David, Fachting, Jackson, Longstreet, Saurer, Stroebel, Weiler No-None

Absent – Grace

Motion carried