

REGULAR MEETING OF THE WEST BRANCH PLANNING COMMISSION HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF CITY HALL, 121 NORTH FOURTH STREET, ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2016.

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

Present: Members: Bob David (arrived at 6:01), Kara Fachting, Heather Grace, Jan Hasty, Mike Jackson, June Longstreet, Shirley McClenahen (arrived at 6:03), Tim Schaiberger, and Dan Weiler.

Absent: None

Others officers in attendance: City Clerk/Treasurer John Dantzer

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Manager Grace noted that the Planning Commission had previously approved participation in the Redevelopment Ready Communities program. Because the program was so demanding, the City had not done much in the program; however, she noted that there were changes coming to the program which would make it easier for smaller municipalities to complete the program. She further noted that City Council approved participation in the program at their last meeting and she shared the dates for training and invited any member that was interested in getting certified to let her know so she could get them enrolled.

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Manager Grace submitted an updated tree policy that included trees that were allowed and trees that were not allowed in City limits. She noted that the City has received grants from Consumers Energy for new trees and that they needed to update the policy to better reflect the trees that they would want to use going forward. She noted that the trees allowed were based on recommendations from Dave Evergreen of the West Branch Greenhouse, the Consumers Energy Right Tree Right Place program, and the National Arbor Day Foundation.

Member Longstreet asked if they would be taking down any trees that were on the not approved list. Manager Grace noted that they would not be taking any trees down and that it was just a list for new trees going forward.

Member Jackson recommended prohibiting all box elder trees.

MOTION BY JACKSON, SECOND BY FACHTING, TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDED TREE POLICY AS SUBMITTED BY THE CITY MANAGER WITH THE CHANGE TO EXCLUDE ALL BOX ELDER TREES AND RECOMMEND APPROVAL TO CITY COUNCIL.

Motion carried

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MOTION BY DAVID, SECOND BY FACHTING, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR MEETING HELD TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2016

Motion carried

A Site plan for a storage structure was submitted by Carl Buck for Buck's Country Cookin'. He noted that he would like to put metal car port up against the back of his building to help keep the snow away from his back door as well as a place to store empty cans and garbage. He noted that he did apply for an 8' X 18' but after some more planning, he would prefer to have a 10' X 20'.

Member Longstreet asked if it would be attached to the building and Mr. Buck noted that it would not be attached to the building, it would just be put up next to it.

Member Longstreet asked if there would be two sides to it and what type of material was it made out of. Mr. Buck noted that it would have two sides, the roof, and a front and would be made out of steel.

Member David asked if the one end would be open and Mr. Buck noted that the one end would have a roll up door in it.

Manager Grace noted that Chapter 4 of the zoning code had requirements for accessory buildings; however, all of the requirements were for residential buildings only.

Chairman Schaiberger asked if it was going to be just for storage and Mr. Buck noted that it would be just for storage.

Member Jackson asked if the County Building Inspector had approved it yet and Mr. Buck noted that the City had to sign off on the zoning before it went to the building inspector.

Member Jackson noted his only concern was security but if it was going to have a door then that would take care of that issue.

Member David noted his concern was that it could create an odor if it was storing empty beer bottles. Mr. Buck noted that it would not be storing many empty bottles and that they would only be in there for a couple days.

Manager Grace noted that she did not see anything in the dimensional standards that would not allow it for that district so she would concur with zoning administrator Kelli Collins opinion, that it should be approved.

MOTION BY WEILER, SECOND BY HASTY, TO APPROVE THE SITE PLAN FOR CARL BUCK AS SUBMITTED WITH THE EXCEPTION THAT THEY WOULD ALLOW A 10' x 20'.

Motion carried

Chairman Schaiberger noted that they would need to reschedule their next meeting due to the November presidential election.

MOTION BY SCHAIBERGER, SECOND BY MCCLENAHEN, TO SCHEDULE THE NEXT PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING FOR TUESDAY NOVEMBER 22 AT 6:00 PM

Motion carried

Denise Lawrence addressed Council and noted that she was there on behalf of the businesses at the East Plaza and the need for a new sign so they can advertise their businesses. She noted that the way the current sign ordinance is written; it doesn't allow them the ability to put out a sign to advertise that they are there. She noted that Kue's café has been allowed to put out flags at limited times only and they do seem to notice a difference in business when the flags are out. She recommended looking to see if there was something that could be done to help them because that plaza is now finally full and it is in the best interest of the City to keep the businesses in there and that the sign ordinance as it is currently written is a detriment to them. Ms. Lawrence noted that the plaza is currently up for sale and is concerned that the owner will not update his sign to show all of the changes that have taken place and it is in a bad location anyways.

Member Hasty noted that she would like to help in some way but is not in favor of flags. She noted that she does not like the looks of them, they fade, they can fall down, and they start to look bad. It was her opinion that they should have some way to put up one sign up that list all of the businesses.

Chairman Schaiberger noted that he agreed, it was something they need to look further into.

Member Jackson noted the onus should be on the property owner.

Carl Buck noted that the sign was his next project after the storage building was done. He noted that it is a mess because that area is owned by two separate people.

Member Jackson noted that because it is a unique situation within the City, it needs to be looked at to see what could be done but that it isn't something they could do something about right away.

Member Fachting asked about the temporary sign that Buck's Country Cookin' has out right now and if the Planning Commission needed to do anything about it right now. It was noted that he did need to fill out an application for the temporary sign and submit it to the City for approval.

Chairman Schaiberger noted that they need to look into what the business owners would like and it would be great to be able to get them to a meeting so they could voice their opinions.

Member McClenahen asked if anyone has ever talked with the owners. Mr. Buck noted that he did talk with the owner and at first he was against it but has since changed his mind and was open to the idea. He further noted that he is going to work on the sign plan this winter and then will present it to the owners of the property.

Manager Grace noted that she has recently talked with the MDOT regional director for right of way permits and he is open to being less stringent on right of way requirements as long as it is not near any hinge points of the road.

Denise Lawrence noted that she has heard that by next summer all of the building downtown should be full which will be good for the City.

MOTION BY SCHAIBERGER, SECOND BY JACKSON, TO EXCUSE THE ABSENCE OF SHIRLEY MCCLENAHEN FROM THE MEETING HELD ON SEPTEMBER 13, 2016 DUE TO HER ATTENDANCE AT A KIWANIS SWEARING IN CEREMONY.

Motion carried

Member Hasty asked about possibility of a Meijer's coming into the area. Chairman Schaiberger noted that he has heard that it is possible based on their expansion plans but it is not finalized yet. Manager Grace noted that she has heard that we are in line for the year 2020.

Member McClenahen noted her concern for a house on Wright St that has not had the siding put back on because it looks terrible. Manager Grace noted that the City has started blight proceedings on some buildings but they have focused on homes with more structural issues so they have not addressed that particular house yet.

Member Hasty asked about a house on Hall St and Manager Grace noted that the City is working on that one currently.

Manager Grace noted that she would like to have the Planning Commission help with the plan for the placement of the next round of trees. Member Hasty asked if they can look into having older dying trees replaced with these new ones and Manager Grace noted that they could look into doing that. Member David noted that they would have to be in the road right of way or on City property.

Manager Grace reminded everyone to bring their planning handbook with the zoning ordinances with them because it is a best practice of the Redevelopment Ready Communities and the MEDC could possibly show up to any meetings. She further noted that she would like to have the Planning Commission start working towards updating the master plan possibly one chapter at a time.

Member Weiler reminded everyone that he is running for City Council and encouraged everyone to get out to vote and would appreciate their vote.

Chairman Schaiberger adjourned the meeting at 6:46 p.m.