

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE WEST BRANCH PLANNING COMMISSION HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF CITY HALL, 121 NORTH FOURTH STREET, ON TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 2022.

Chairperson Cori Lucynski called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Bob David, Yvonne DeRoso, Josh Erickson, Kara Fachting, Cori Lucynski, Mike Jackson, and Rusty Showalter

Absent: None

Others officers in attendance: None

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All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Chairperson Lucynski opened the public hearing on changes to the zoning code at 6:02 pm.

Beth Peszko addressed the Commission and asked why they were relooking at changes at this time.

Chairperson Lucynski noted they had several questions and concerns at the time the State came out with the Marijuana Act and the City had to opt in or out but they now felt many of their questions and concerns were answered and were more prepared to make decisions.

Member Showalter noted the City originally opted out but always had the intention to relook at it once the State laws became more evident.

Member Fachting noted that many of the what ifs had been answered since the law was passed.

Member Jackson noted a lot of the legal questions and concerns have been answered since the original date when the City was required to opt in or out and they now felt more comfortable that the law could allow for community revitalization, job creation, and economic improvement. He further noted the Planning Commission was only voting on changes to the zoning ordinance and not on the decision to allow or not allow the facilities with that decision falling on City Council.

Chairperson Lucynski furthered the statement by Member Jackson noting the Commission is only approving the areas that each facility would be allowed to operate in if the City did vote it into effect.

The Commission went over the areas each facility would be allowed and the number of each type.

Ms. Peszko noted she was not in favor of it and expressed her concern with the large amounts of marijuana advertisement associated with the businesses. The Commission did note they had some requirements in place to help try and control the advertisement and make them more tasteful.

Member DeRoso noted West Branch Township has two sales centers approved already and they will be bringing beautiful new buildings to the area.

Member Showalter spoke on his tours of sales centers noting how nice and professional they were. He also noted he had the same concern with signage expressed by Ms. Peszko and the City, while not being able to control the content of signs, did have points in the scoring rubrics for signage that does not display or feature marijuana defying logos.

The Commission discussed if there were any changes or addendums that needed to be considered. Member Fachting discussed churches not being included in the distance requirements and the possibility of not allowing business on Sundays.

Ed Peszko expressed his concern that by opening these centers could lead to more drug problems because marijuana is a gateway drug that can lead to stronger drugs.

Carol Adair spoke and noted in her years of working for 911, they had far less issues with marijuana than drinking alcohol.

Member Fachting noted marijuana has some medical value and isn't always used just a recreational drug.

No one else wished to speak on the subject.

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**MOTION BY DEROSO, SECOND BY ERICKSON, TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 6:34 PM.**

**Yes — David, DeRoso, Erickson, Fachting, Lucynski, Jackson, and Showalter**

**No – None**

**Absent – None**

**Motion carried**

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Chairperson Lucynski called for a five-minute recess. The Commission resumed the meeting at 6:39 pm with all members still in attendance.

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**MOTION BY DEROSO, SECOND BY DAVID, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETINGS HELD JANUARY 11, 2021 AND FEBRUARY 7, 2022 AS PRESENTED.**

**Yes — David, DeRoso, Erickson, Fachting, Lucynski, Jackson, and Showalter**

**No – None**

**Absent – None**

**Motion carried**

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**MOTION BY JACKSON, SECOND BY DAVID, TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDATION OF APPROVAL OF ORDINANCE 22-01 OF 2022, CHANGES TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE.**

**Yes — David, DeRoso, Erickson, Fachting, Lucynski, Jackson, and Showalter**

**No – None**

**Absent – None**

**Motion carried**

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Chairperson Lucynski noted business in the area seems to be picking up.

Member David spoke on the Optimist Camel Race, noting it was a big success. Member David also noted the new Kits store downtown is fantastic.

Member Showalter and Chairperson Lucynski noted the Chamber Ball was also a big success.

Member DeRoso updated the Commission on her tour of the new Meijer’s and noted real estate is still busy but the stock of houses for sales is low.

Member Fachting stressed the housing problem in our community and noted many of the people moving to jobs in this area are required to live outside of the County. Member DeRoso noted the City is continuing to work on their housing property in an effort to increase housing stock.

Member Fachting also noted an upcoming event downtown with a band asking that anyone who attends to bring canned goods for donation for the needy.

Member Jackson gave an update on the Meijer’s construction.

Member Erickson noted the original survey that was sent out by the City was about 50/50 and he believed by not allowing businesses in the mixed use or downtown districts was a good compromise for both sides.

Member Showalter notified the Commission he was nominated to serve on a focal group through the MML to bring items of needs to the legislature on things communities are lacking.

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Jocelyn Garza of the Ogemaw Herald asked about the process of the ordinance amendment. The Commission noted they were just in charge of putting the zoning requirements in place so it was ready if the City Council did decide to opt in. Member DeRoso went over the education processes involved in the decisions.

Chairperson Lucynski noted the concern that if the City did not put requirements in place and the State ever changed and said marijuana facilities have to be allowed, then they could lose some of their control.

Member Showalter updated the legislature of House Bill 531 which was on the floor and had potential changes to the Marijuana Act.

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Meeting was adjourned at 7:05 pm