

REGULAR MEETING OF THE WEST BRANCH PLANNING COMMISSION HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF CITY HALL, 121 NORTH FOURTH STREET, ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 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 (joined by speaker phone from 6:07-6:12 pm) and Jan Hasty

Others officers in attendance: City Clerk/Treasurer John Dantzer.

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All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

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At 6:07 Manager Grace joined by speaker phone to give an overview of the plan to combine the Planning Commission and DDA into one committee, in order to streamline processes, make the City more efficient, and also address attendance issues.

Member Stroebel noted he is also a DDA member and that they do have trouble getting enough people on the board in attendance and getting anything accomplished. He also asked about the meeting times if they were to combine and noted that it may be too much to handle in one meeting a month. Manager Grace noted they would meet according to the Planning Commission times which is currently they are set to meet the second Tuesday of each month and the fourth Tuesday of each month as needed but they did have the option of changing those times.

Member Longstreet noted her concern that it would be a lot of work for the Commission to take on both roles. She also asked about how the DDA tax capture would work. It was noted that the DDA tax would continue in the exact same way it currently was but that the Planning Commission would be responsible to decide where that money is spent.

Member Weiler asked if there had been any dialogue with the current DDA yet. Manager Grace noted that she did bring it up at a recent Downtown Merchant meeting where many DDA members were at. She further noted that any correspondence she has received has been all positive to the combining of the groups.

Member Weiler asked if the DDA knew about the Planning meeting. Manger Grace noted that all Planning Commission meetings are open to the public and noticed in many places, but that she did not specifically invite any of them to tonight's meeting, but they will be personally invited to speak at the public hearing that will be held at the City Council meeting on Monday October 2.

Member David noted he would like to reach out to the DDA to have them fill any open seat on the board. Chairman Jackson agreed.

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Manager Grace updated quotes received to redo the Masterplan and current zoning ordinance. She further noted if they used the NEMCOG nonprofit organization, they would be eligible to have 50% of the fees paid for by a grant from the MEDC. She further noted that it would be up to the Planning Commission if they wanted to recommend redoing the masterplan and zoning ordinance to City Council.

Member Longstreet noted her approval in redoing both of the plans.

MOTION BY FACHTING, SECOND BY STROEBEL, TO RECOMMEND TO CITY COUNCIL TO APPROVE THE QUOTES FOR THE MASTERPLAN AND ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE AND TO FORGO THE BIDDING PROCESS AND APPROVE THE SOLE SOURCE VENDOR REQUEST TO USE NEMCOG DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE MEDC WOULD PAY FOR 50% OF THE COST IF NEMCOG WAS USED.

Motion carried

MOTION BY JACKSON, SECOND BY FACHTING, TO EXCUSE MANAGER GRACE FROM THE MEETING DUE TO THE FACT THAT SHE WAS ATTENDING THE MML ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

Motion carried

At 6:22 Manager Grace ended her speaker phone participation in the meeting.

Member Stroebel again noted his concern that they would need two meeting a month to take care of everything if they combined the Planning Commission and DDA. He also noted he was in favor of it because they have trouble getting stuff accomplished with the current limited DDA involvement.

Chairman Jackson noted they would just have to see if they needed both meetings or continue to use the second meeting each month as needed if they do combine and they see how it goes.

MOTION BY JACKSON, SECOND BY FACHTING, TO POSTPONE ANY CHANGES TO THE SIGN ORDINANCE UNTIL THE UPDATE TO THE ENTIRE ORDINANCE IS DONE.

Motion carried

MOTION BY DAVID, SECOND BY FACHTING, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR MEETING HELD TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 2017.

Motion carried

A communication from MDOT on Major/Local road changes was shared.

Member Weiler noted they are in the last class of their Citizen Planner training.

Member Fachting noted she was sad to see the resignation of Commissioner Hasty.

Member David noted the upcoming homecoming parade to get people downtowns and to try and increase local spirit. Member David also asked about the downtown flower pots. It was noted they will be brought in shortly.

Member Saurer noted her concern to be able to keep up to date on changes in planning and zoning laws and asked about looking into a magazine that they could subscribe to that would keep them up to date on these types of issues. Clerk/Treasurer Dantzer noted he would look into it.

Member Stroebel noted he has been attending the West Branch Initiative seminars that focuses on West Branch revitalization and that they are looking on making changes to the Victorian Theme but not eliminating it entirely. He further noted they are looking for more people to attend and encouraged other Planning Commission members to attend. He further noted that he is in favor of combining the two groups and feels they would be able to accomplish a lot more.

Member Longstreet talked about how the Victorian theme came about in the first place for the City. Member Longstreet noted her agreement that any change should help the Victorian theme and not eliminate it.

Member Longstreet talked about the number of heavy vehicles, the speed they are going by, the noise they make going by, and that it shakes her entire house.

Member Longstreet noted that she has no intention of resigning from the Planning Commission due to attendance and will make Council decide what they want to do. Member David noted they should have excused her from the meetings she missed. Chairman Jackson agreed they should have excused her. Member Longstreet noted she did miss the meetings but went many years during her 40 years without missing any meetings.

Member Longstreet noted they should be working on the 5 Year Capital Improvement Plan.

MOTION BY DAVID, SECOND BY SAURER, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:04 PM

Motion carried