



**Special Meeting
LANSING PLANNING BOARD
January 22, 2019
6:30 p.m., Conference Room
Neighborhood Empowerment Center
600 W. Maple Street**

MINUTES

1. OPENING SESSION

Mr. Ruge called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

- a. Present: John Ruge, Josh Hovey, Tony Cox, Farhan Bhatti, Katie Alexander, Lynne Martinez & Marta Cerna
- b. Staff: Bill Rieske & Susan Stachowiak

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Ruge approved the agenda by unanimous consent.

3. COMMUNICATIONS

- * Email from Richard O'Connor in support of Z-8-2018

4. COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Jonathan Gilmore, President, U-Haul Western MI, spoke in support of Z-8-2018. He said that since the December meeting, they have revised the plan to provide for an additional outlot near the front property line. Mr. Gilmore said that a broader view of the zoning map for the S. Cedar Street corridor shows several properties that are currently zoned "G-2" Wholesale. He said that there are also several parcels along S. Cedar Street that are being used for industrial or quasi-industrial uses, even within one block of the subject property. Mr. Gilmore said that the U-Haul proposal is thus, consistent with the land use pattern in the area and the direction with which the S. Cedar Street corridor has been moving. He said that there are very limited for a large commercial site on S. Cedar Street and if left vacant, it will continue to deteriorate to the point where it will eventually be unable to be renovated/reused.

Kevin Dohany, Gershenson Realty, 31500 Northwestern Hwy., Suite 100, Farmington Hills, MI 48334 said that he is the property manager and owner's representative for 5400 S. Cedar Street. Mr. Dohany said that there is a scrap yard and other industrial uses located within 100 yards of the subject property. He said that U-Haul will plant trees/shrubs on the site and will make substantial improvements to the building. Mr. Dohany said that U-Haul does a great job of maintaining its properties. He also said that there are no other options for this property as they have tried really hard for a very long time to find tenants or new owners for the site and there just isn't anything. Mr. Dohany stated that the Board has been provided with an email from Rick O'Connor explaining why there is such a need for more storage facilities.

5. **RECESS** – Not taken

6. **BUSINESS**

A. **Consent Items**

(1) **Minutes for approval:** December 4, 2018

(2) **Z-9-2018**, Vacant lot south of 601 S. MLK, Rezoning from “C” Residential to “F” Commercial

Without objection, the consent agenda was approved.

B. **Old Business**

(1) **Z-8-2018, 5400 S. Cedar Street, Rezoning from “F” Commercial & “J” Parking districts to “G-2” Wholesale district**

Ms. Stachowiak stated that this is a request by AMERICO Real Estate Company to rezone the property at 5400 S. Cedar Street from “F” Commercial & “J” Parking Districts to “G-2” Wholesale District. The purpose of the rezoning is to permit the property to be used for self-storage, U-Haul truck and trailer sharing and a moving and storage retail store. She said that the request was tabled at the December meeting to give the applicant an opportunity to present a revised plan addressing some of the concerns that have been raised. Ms. Stachowiak said that there is a revised plan in the packet that shows 2 out-lots along S. Cedar Street at the southeast corner of the site and two new self-storage buildings at the northeast corner of the site, near the front property line. She said that the two out-lots, presumably, are for future commercial development that would make use of a portion of the massive parking lot on the site and provide a commercial buffer between the street and the storage facilities. Ms. Stachowiak said that the applicant has not, however, excluded the outlots from the rezoning and therefore, the request is still to rezone the entire site to the “G-2” Wholesale district.

Mr. Ruge said that he is conflicted over this matter because the proposal would make use of a site that otherwise, may just continue to sit vacant. He said that the storage business is growing and current trends seems to support the need but if that changes at some point, we may have a glut of these facilities.

Mr. Hovey stated that he is having a hard time with what other uses could occupy the site given its size and location. He said that there do not appear to be any other options for the property that would not involve self-storage. Mr. Hovey said that the commercial outlots will help to mitigate many of the concerns about the appearance of the site, the lack of customer activity and the large sea of unused parking

Ms. Cerna stated that she understands the need for self-storage but would prefer to see some type of commercial business occupying the site rather than storage. She said that the south side of Lansing needs to be fixed and in doing so, other opportunities for the subject property will become available as a result.

Ms. Alexander said that she is struggling with this request because there doesn't appear to be any other viable uses for the property, at least not at this time, and she does not want to see it continue to sit vacant and further deteriorate. She also said, however, that her concern is setting a precedent for further rezonings in the area and elsewhere in the City to allow conversion of commercial properties into storage or warehouse uses which would not be in the best interest of the City.

Mr. Ruge said that a lot of cities are experiencing problems with reuse of large vacant commercial properties because the retail industry is changing with so many people buying off the internet.

Mr. Cox stated that he has mixed feelings about the proposal because he does not like seeing large commercial buildings sitting vacant but he is concerned that if the site is allowed to be converted to self-storage, any opportunities for a better use of the site will be lost. He said that U-Haul does a very good job with its properties and has successfully renovated other sites, including vacant K-Mart properties that have turned out very well. Mr. Cox said that he is inclined to support the request but does not want to give up on the property when there may be a much better use for it, even if one is not evident right now.

Dr. Bhatti asked if the City has any data on the number of storage units in the area or in the City in general.

Ms. Stachowiak said that the City does not have any data on storage units.

Mr. Hovey asked what the outlots will be used for.

Mr. Gilmore said that U-Haul would not be the ones to develop the outlots. They would be sold off to others for commercial development. He said that U-Haul is willing to commit to that in writing.

Mr. Martinez asked why there would be a need for 2 new smaller storage building near the road when there is such a large building on the site.

Mr. Gilmore said that the new buildings are a visual aid/advertising method because the existing building is located so far from the street.

Mr. Hovey said that appreciates U-Haul coming back with a revised plan that demonstrates its willingness to work with the community.

Ms. Martinez made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cerna to recommend denial of Z-8-2018 to rezone the property at 5400 S. Cedar Street from F” Commercial & “J” Parking districts to “G-2” Wholesale zoning district. On a roll call vote, the motion carried (5-2). Mr. Hovey and Dr. Bhatti cast the dissenting votes.

C. New Business

(1) Act-1-2019, 212 E. Howe Avenue Easement

Mr. Rieske said that Cindy Rase, on behalf of Nathan Shell, owner of 212 E. Howe Avenue, is requesting a 15’ wide easement across a 66’ City Sewer right-of-way for the purpose of providing driveway access to the property at 212 E. Howe Ave., which is currently land-locked and contains a single family home. He said that East Howe Ave. is a discontinuous street and the east end of the west leg ends with a sewer right-of-way.

Mr. Rieske said that Public Service has determined that there are no issues with the easement as long as no structures/paving/etc. are installed without City approval. He said that the applicant has worked with the City’s Engineering office on the alignment and description of the proposed easement. He also said that the applicant intends to sell the property at 212 E. Howe Avenue and a formal easement agreement would provide assured access for future owners.

Andy Kilpatrick, Public Service Department Director, stated that there is access across to the parcel across the sewer right-of-way right now but the easement will make it legal.

Mr. Hovey made a motion, seconded by Dr. Bhatti to recommend approval of Act-1-2019, a request to grant a 15 foot wide easement across a 66 foot sewer right-of-way to provide access to the property at 212 E. Howe Avenue. On a voice vote, the motion carried (7-0).

(2) Act-2-2019, Eastside Connector

Mr. Rieske said that the City of Lansing is proposing the construction of a ten-foot wide asphalt non-motorized pathway with two-foot shoulders to serve the east side of Lansing. He said that all parcel owners would be paid \$1 each for the execution of the agreement and a license to use the land which the pathway occupies. The pathway would be constructed on Lansing School district property at Pennsylvania Ave. and Shiawassee St. just north of the existing school driveway, wind its way to the Pattengill property, then north to Saginaw Street. Mr. Rieske said that three neighborhood connections would be incorporated into the project allowing residents and students to access the path.

Mr. Rieske said that the pathways that are the subject of both Act-2-2019 and Act-3-2019 are in the City's long-term non-motorized transportation plan, will fill in gaps in the pathway system and both projects are being federally funded. He said that the majority of the Act-2-2019 pathway will be located on school district property.

Ms. Martinez said that Act-2-2019 is very important for the east side as it will provide connections to the new Eastern High School on the former Pattengill Middle School property and to the new athletic fields on Pennsylvania Avenue. She said that Saginaw Street is not a pedestrian-friendly environment which makes the pathways even more critical for safety purposes.

Mr. Kilpatrick stated that the pathway will end at Saginaw Street. He said that the plan was to extend it through the Pattengill property all the way to Wood Street but the School district was not agreeable to the extension.

Ms. Martinez made a motion, seconded by Dr. Bhatti to recommend approval of Act-2-2019, a request to enter into a license agreement for the construction and maintenance of a 10 foot wide non-motorized pathway on Lansing School District property beginning at Pennsylvania Avenue and Shiawassee Street just north of the existing school driveway, through the Pattengill Middle School property, north to Saginaw Street. On a voice vote, the motion carried (7-0).

(3) Act-3-2019, Bear Lake Pathway

Mr. Rieske said that the City of Lansing is proposing the construction of a ten-foot wide asphalt non-motorized pathway with two-foot shoulders. The pathway will be constructed on MSU, Consumers Energy, Hospice, Lansing School district, Tammany Hills Apartments and one residential property. The path will begin at Cavanaugh Road where the South Lansing Pathway ends and will continue north, winding through several parcels as identified in the maps included in the packet.

Mr. Rieske said that the pathway will be constructed as close to parcel lines as practical to avoid any potential impediments to development on these parcels in the future. He said that the pathway will be constructed around wetlands with the exception of one location on MSU property, and the City has already received approval from the MDEQ. \$1 will be provided to the parcel owners for execution of the agreement and construction and maintenance of the pathway on the owner's parcel.

Mr. Hovey made a motion, seconded by Mr. Cox to recommend approval of Act-3-2019, a request to enter into a license agreement for the construction and maintenance of a 10 foot wide non-motorized pathway from the south Lansing pathway to the rivertrail. On a voice vote, the motion carried (7-0).

(4) Act-4-2019, Sale of Townsend Parking Ramp

Mr. Rieske said that the City of Lansing proposes to sell the Townsend Parking Ramp to the State Senate. The site consist of two parcels located in the 200 block of the east side of Townsend Street, at the northeast corner of Townsend and Washtenaw Streets. Mr. Rieske said that the ramp was built in 2004 to accommodate the Capitol View building, a 160,000 square foot Class A office building located across the street from the State Capitol, which was built at the same time. The Senate offices now occupy the Capitol View building, and the Senate proposes to purchase the adjacent parking structure. He said that like most of downtown, the property is zoned G-1 Business District. The ramp holds approximately 1250 parking spaces on nine levels (eight stories) and City employees occupy 228 spaces in the ramp. Mr. Rieske said that after the sale, a maximum of 228 covered spaces will be reserved for City employees (in a 5-year, renewable parking agreement), and 50 spaces for public parking (in a 20-year parking agreement). He said that the property will remain exempt from property taxes after the sale.

Mr. Rieske said that the State will be paying 18 million for the ramp and take over its maintenance which is another benefit to the City.

Ms. Martinez asked if the City employees will be paying the State to park in the ramp.

Mr. Kilpatrick said that it all depends on the union contracts. He said that some employees pay for their parking and other have it covered under their union contract.

Dr. Bhatti spoke about the need for parking in the downtown. He said that there are a lot of positive changes taking place in the downtown and opportunities for even more changes that will bring additional traffic into the downtown and people need to have a place to park.

Mr. Kilpatrick said that there is a significant surplus of available parking, both on-street and in the ramps and surface lots. He said that based on current trends, the City is projecting a decrease in the need for parking in the downtown. Mr. Kilpatrick said that the supply of parking well exceeds the demand.

Mr. Hovey made a motion, seconded by Ms. Martinez to recommend approval of Act-4-2019, a request to authorize the sale of the Townsend Parking Ramp property, 221 Townsend Street, to the Michigan Senate. On a voice vote, the motion carried (7-0).

(5) SLU-2-2018, 1609 N. Larch Street, Residential use in the “H” Light Industrial zoning district

Ms. Stachowiak said that this is a request by Adam Brewer, Larch Street, LLC, for a special land use permit to convert the building at 1609 N. Larch Street into residential apartments. Residential use is permitted in the "I" Heavy Industrial district, which is the zoning designation of the subject property, if a Special Land Use permit is approved by the Lansing City Council. Ms. Stachowiak said that staff has some concerns about a residential use at 1609 N. Larch Street given the heavy industrial nature of the surrounding area.

Ms. Stachowiak said that the applicant purchased the subject property from the City in 2018, following approval of an Act 33 request (Act-3-2018) authorizing its disposition. The property contains a 2-story, 5,040 square foot masonry building that was formerly used as a Board of Water & Light electrical substation. She said that the building has been vacant for more than 10 years. Ms. Stachowiak said that the building is located between an elevated, 45 MPH 6-lane highway and a large manufacturing company (Demmer Corporation). She said that Melling Drop Forge is located to the west on the opposite side of the highway and there are several smaller industrial facilities in the area as well. Ms. Stachowiak said that the area does not seem to be very conducive to a quality living environment, although she recognizes that the small size of the site and the building present serious challenges with regard to its reuse.

Ms. Alexander asked the applicant why he would like to use the building for residential purposes.

Adam Brewer, 2177 Tamarak, Okemos, MI, spoke in support of his request. He said that he has been gutting the building since he bought it from the City and has been trying to determine what would be the best use. Mr. Brewer said that he could go with less than the 5 units if parking is a concern but he wants to make use of the building and residential apartments seems like the only viable use. He said that the traffic is minimal, there is very little noise and more than adequate parking in the area to support the proposed use.

Ms. Martinez said that the building is very attractive with great architectural details. Ms. Martinez said that she is supportive of the request and is glad that the building will be preserved and put back into use.

Mr. Cox made a motion, seconded by Ms. Martinez to recommend approval of SLU-2-2018, a request by Adam Brewer, Larch Street, LLC, for a special land use permit to convert the building at 1609 N. Larch Street into residential apartments. On a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously (7-0).

12. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 p.m.