

City of Howell
Planning Commission
August 16, 2017
611 E. Grand River Avenue
Howell, MI 48843

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order by Chairman Streng at 7:00 p.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Paul Streng, Maryanne Vukonich, Mayor Nick Proctor, Jan Lobur, Erin Britten, Jeanette Ambrose and Robert Spaulding.

ALSO PRESENT: Community Development Director Tim Schmitt and Recording Secretary Deanna Robson.

GUESTS: Mike Nicklowitz and Mike Bramlett.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES, JULY 19, 2017 REGULAR MEETING

MOTION by Vukonich, SUPPORT by Spaulding, “To approve the July 19, 2017 regular Planning Commission meeting minutes as presented.” MOTION CARRIED (7-0).

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

None.

STAFF REPORT

Timothy Schmitt, Community Development Director, stated that two or three upcoming projects are expected this year; and plans were just submitted for development on the two acres recently split from a larger parcel on Lucy Road.

He also added that staff has reached out to Marion Township in order to coordinate another joint planning commission meeting. He asked if there were any issues or projects that the Commission would like to schedule a meeting to discuss, and Chairman Streng recommended scheduling the meeting for after the beginning of the school year to discuss the South Michigan Avenue/Pinckney Road bridge area.

Commissioner Lobur inquired about the former gas station across from the Masonic Lodge and Commissioner Ambrose asked about trays being placed outside of the new bakery at National Street and Grand River Avenue.

PUBLIC HEARING

#17-19 – 920 EAST GRAND RIVER – SPECIAL LAND USE - BRAMLETT HEATING AND COOLING

Chairman Streng opened the public hearing at 7:04 p.m.

Community Development Director Schmitt stated that the request is for a change in use of the property formerly occupied by Marcy’s Dry Cleaners; the plans include some nice changes to the

exterior and interior for use as Bramlett Heating & Cooling; the use is permitted as a Special Land Use under B-2 zoning; and conditions are recommended.

Commissioner Vukonich inquired if environmental work would be necessary. Mr. Schmitt responded that the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is conducting environmental testing as well as an attempt to treat environmental issues resulting from the previous occupation of the property, and additional work is not currently needed as long as the new owner is not digging below ground.

Commissioner Lobur asked if the property will be used as a showroom. Mike Bramlett, 14301 Worden Road, Gregory, responded that he owns a hardware store in Gregory and also does HVAC work; wants to eventually expand the business, sell the hardware store, and move everything to this site; and plans are for work and office space on the right side of the building with the remaining area as possible future tenant space. He added that he originally sought another space that fell through; therefore he contacted the Marcy's property owner and conducted a Baseline Environmental Assessment. At this time, he has no intention to use the space as a showroom as they do not generally work well in the heating and cooling business. Commissioner Lobur also asked about the type of sign planned for the building and Community Development Director Schmitt responded that the property owner may reuse the existing sign, which appears to be compliant with current standards.

Commissioner Spaulding inquired about the number of parking spaces and trucks expected on site. Mr. Bramlett responded that his employees drive their six trucks home daily, adding that someone will be on site at 6 a.m. and all vehicles will be gone by 8 p.m.

Mike Nicklowitz, Architect from Adrian Design Group in Adrian, showed the drawings to the Commission stating that plans are for a general facelift including new windows and doors; the bones of the building are strong, but lots of cosmetic improvements are needed; and the owner would like to eventually add a sloped roof.

Chairman Streng closed the public hearing at 7:16 p.m.

MOTION by Vukonich, SUPPORT by Proctor, "To the Special Land Use application (#17-19) for 920 East Grand River Avenue, parcel id number 4717-36-402001, to allow for a new heating and cooling business to open on the site, subject to the following conditions:

- 1. The proposed construction and use shall meet all applicable ordinance standards and permits shall be acquired for all work on the site.**
- 2. No outdoor storage is permitted on the site.**
- 3. No parking signs shall be installed on the east side of the building to prevent vehicles from blocking the National Street sidewalk.**
- 4. The operations on the site shall comply with all provisions of Article 8 of the Zoning Ordinance." MOTION CARRIED (7-0).**

NEW BUSINESS

REDEVELOPMENT READY COMMUNITIES – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Community Development Director Schmitt stated that staff kept the plan relatively simple and would welcome any input. There were no suggestions from the Commission.

2018 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE

MOTION by Spaulding, SUPPORT by Ambrose, “To approve the 2018 Planning Commission meeting schedule as presented.” MOTION CARRIED (7-0).

ORDINANCE TO WAIVE FEES FOR UNITS OF GOVERNMENT

Chairman Streng opened the discussion by stating his concern about charging fees to a unit of government, responsible for providing emergency services, for an addition to a building owned by the City of Howell. Vice Chair Vukonich noted her agreement in theory, but voiced her concern about costs to the City, such as inspections and site plan reviews, and their impact on the City’s budget. Community Development Director Schmitt remarked that that projects such as the addition for the Fire Authority building are not frequent; staff was aware of this project in advance and budgeted accordingly; and reminded the Commission that building departments are prohibited from becoming profit centers. Discussion followed regarding practices of other municipalities; as well as concerns about the City absorbing building permit costs, if fees are waived, for services that are also utilized by other municipalities. Mayor Proctor stated that he would not support the categorical waiving of fees and is seeking ordinance flexibility that would allow the discretion of the fee waiving as an incentive for economic development. Chairman Streng voiced his support and added that other municipalities, like the City of Detroit, provide incentives for development. Commissioner Spaulding stated that if fees were waived for the Fire Authority, the City would be incurring costs for some surrounding townships, and suggested that it may create an issue with other organizations that may not have received discounted building permit fees. Commissioner Ambrose voiced her support to provide options for fee waiving to City Council, but also noted her concern about setting a precedent. Mayor Proctor noted that he would not support waiving fees unless the project fit into the strategic vision of the City and based on redevelopment of specific areas; adding that the ordinance should allow some flexibility within the Guiding Principles and Vision. Chairman Streng added that City Council has the discretion to reduce taxes using a specific formula, and this would just be another tool that Council could utilize. Vice Chair Vukonich stated that text should be prepared and ready in order to provide City Council with power to negotiate when needed and appropriate.

**MOTION by Proctor, SUPPORT by Ambrose, “To adjourn the meeting at 7:44 p.m.”
MOTION CARRIED (7-0).**

Deanna Robson, Deputy City Clerk