

CITY OF IONIA
Planning Commission
December 19, 2016
Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER The Regular Meeting of the City of Ionia Planning Commission for December 14, 2016 was called to order by Chairperson Chris Young at 4:32 PM.

ROLL CALL Roll Call revealed Commissioners Dave Cook, Mark Jennings, Gordon Kelley, Tim Lee and Chris Young present. Commissioner Boomer Hoppough was excused.

City Manager Jason Eppler and Planning Consultant Jan Johnson were also present.

Members of the public present included Bob VanPutten and Stephanie Fox.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA Chairperson Young reviewed the agenda with the Commission. After review, it was moved by Commissioner Cook, seconded by Commissioner Jennings to approve the agenda for the December 19, 2016 meeting as presented. MOTION CARRIED.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES The Commission reviewed the minutes of the November 9, 2016 Regular Meeting. After review it was moved by Commissioner Cook, seconded by Commissioner Lee to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2016 Commission meeting as presented. MOTION CARRIED.

PUBLIC COMMENTS None.

OLD BUSINESS County Facility Project/Library Street:
Representatives of Ionia County and their consultants were present to continue their review of the proposed County facilities improvements with the Commission. The County is proposing an addition for the east side of the Court House and the future removal of the current Friend of the Court building on East Washington Street with the area currently occupied by this building being utilized for parking.

The City Manager reported that the County submitted an updated site plan dated December 2, 2016 for the

Commission's review. He stated that the latest version of the plan was reviewed by the City's Planning Consultant, Jan Johnson, who prepared a staff report dated December 14, 2016 which was included with the Commission's meeting packet. He further stated that the review of the site plan for this project is different than the review that the Commission would conduct for a "private sector" project. Specifically, he stated that the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (Public Act 33 of 2008, as amended) requires that the Commission review any plan for a public building and provide its reasons for approval or disapproval to the body having jurisdiction of the project (in this case the County Board of Commissioners). The approval body may override disapproval by the Planning Commission with a two-thirds vote of its entire membership. He further stated that case law has established that County buildings as well as ancillary land uses that are essential to a County building's operation are not subject to municipal zoning. However, the Planning Commission can offer suggestions to the County Board of Commissioners on ways to improve the site plan in order to ensure the public health, safety and welfare.

Chairperson Young requested that representatives of the County provide an overview of the latest site plan for the project.

The City Manager introduced Ms. Johnson and asked that she review with the Commission her staff report regarding the project dated December 14, 2016. Ms. Johnson stated that the proposed projects (both Court House addition and changes on the Friend of the Court property) comply with standards contained in the respective zoning districts. She reviewed in detail with the Commission the proposed parking configuration, number of spaces, location of handicap spaces, etc.

The Commission discussed various aspects of the project ranging from exterior finish options to lighting to landscaping.

After further discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Jennings, seconded by Commissioner

Cook to approve the site plan submitted by Ionia County and dated December 2, 2016 for the addition to the Court House, removal of the Friend of the Court building and utilization of the Friend of the Court building property for parking with the following suggestions for improving the site plan/project:

- 1) That a detailed exterior lighting plan for the project be developed which includes period appropriate lighting for the Court House addition and context sensitive lighting for the sally-port ramp;
- 2) That the County considering utilizing available space in the City Hall dumpster enclosure for a dedicated County dumpster;
- 3) Add landscaping where practical in available green spaces including in and around the Friend of the Court parking lot and along the north and east sides of the Court House addition;
- 4) Utilize either a concrete knee wall with brick/stone veneer that matches the Court House addition or decorative fencing to create a safe barrier between the public sidewalk along the west side of Library Street and the ramp to the sally-port.

MOTION CARRIED.

The City Manager then introduced discussions regarding the reconstruction of Library Street during 2017. Specifically, he asked the Commission to consider options for the parking configuration (angled versus parallel) along the east side of Library Street. He stated that an angled configuration would provide six to seven more parking spaces than a parallel configuration. Opting for angled parking, however, would result in the removal of two (apple and gingko) of the three trees growing along/behind the sidewalk on the east side of the street. He further stated that the Library Board has been asked to offer its thoughts regarding the removal of the trees although at the November meeting there was discussion about maximizing parking on Library Street considering possible future expansion of the Hall Fowler building.

The City Manager reported that an arborist (Pam Blough) was hired to conduct an assessment of the three trees in terms of condition. In her November 29th letter, Ms. Blough offered the following comments concerning the trees if angled parking is utilized along the east side of the street:

Apple Tree: She recommends removal of the tree if angled parking is utilized. She states that the proposed sidewalk location (next to the street) will be very close to the base of the tree. The proximity would likely result in root damage to the base of the tree which could affect both the health and overall stability of the tree. She also noted that existing branch structure would arch and extend over the proposed sidewalk and parking spaces dropping fruit on the sidewalk. Further she stated that the proposed location, imperfect condition of the tree, potential root damage due to construction and the existing large fruit size are all concerns for the proposed development. She thought it prudent to remove the tree and replace it with a tree on the Library lawn that would provide shade and be attractive within the context of the library building.

Ginkgo Tree: She recommends removal of the tree if angled parking is utilized. She stated that the new sidewalk would be located at the base of the tree. She stated that although Ginkgo's are known to survive adverse growing conditions, this tree is already not in specimen condition. The tree appears to have sustained numerous breakages and removals from large branches of the tree. This includes the most important central leader of the tree which has broken from the tree. She further stated that the overall trunk of the tree leans to the east due to either root damage or from initial tree planting. Based on the deformities and proximity of the sidewalk to the tree, removal is recommended.

Black Walnut Tree: She recommends retention of the tree since it is a greater distance from the street than the other two trees and appears to be in much better health. The tree's crown has a regular shape, there is no evidence of disease or insect damage nor damage from previous storms.

Commissioners stated that although they believe parking should be maximized along Library Street, they will refrain from taking final action on the parking configuration until the Library Board is provided a couple of months to comment.

NEW BUSINESS

Sidewalk Network Review - 2017 Street Reconstruction Projects: The City Manager provided an update on the preparation of the engineering plans for the 2017 street reconstruction projects which include the following:

Bid Package A

Brooks Street

Hackett Street (Harter Street to State Street)

Harter Street

Taylor Court

Bid Package B

Library Street

Rich Street (Main Street to Lafayette Street)

Washington Street (Kidd Street to Jefferson

Street)

He further stated that at the July 2009 meeting, the Planning Commission prepared and recommended to the City Council (which subsequently accepted the recommendation) a "Sidewalk System Priorities Policy" which established the following sidewalk system priorities:

- 1) Maintenance of the existing sidewalk network;
- 2) Constructing sidewalks in "gap" areas of the City - high priority areas being around schools and parks;
- 3) Install a sidewalk on at least one side of every street.

The policy further stated that "As part of the planning process for reconstructing the City's street and utilities systems, the Commission recommends that on those streets with a sidewalk on only one side of the street an engineering analysis be completed to determine if a sidewalk should be placed on both sides of the street as part of the project. Again, in some instances topography limits the ability to install a sidewalk on both sides of the street however, this determination should be made as part of the analysis completed when plans for the reconstruction are developed."

He further stated that the City's project design engineers are currently designing the reconstruction plans for the subject streets. As a result of several site visits and a review of the survey/topographic information obtained as part of developing the

reconstruction plans, FTCH has recommended the following in terms of the sidewalk network:

Bid Package A:

Brooks Street:

West Side of Street - Replace the existing sidewalk with a new 4' wide sidewalk (M-21 to Branch Street).

East Side of Street - Due to the narrowness of the Brooks Street right-of-way (30'), there is not adequate width to install a sidewalk along the east side of the street.

Harter Street:

West Side of Street - Replace existing sidewalk with a new 5' wide sidewalk.

East Side of Street - Replace existing sidewalk with a new 5' wide sidewalk.

Hackett Street:

North Side of Street - Replace the existing sidewalk with a new 5' wide sidewalk.

South Side of Street - Replace the existing sidewalk with a new 5' wide sidewalk.

Taylor Court: Do not install a sidewalk on either side of Taylor Court due to the narrowness of the Taylor Court right-of-way (33'); the fact that the street is a dead-end street; and considering the difficulty of tying in a new sidewalk along Taylor Court with the sidewalk along the north side of Hackett Street (grade changes by 618 Hackett Street and location of houses on either side of Taylor Court at this location).

Bid Package B:

Remove and replace the sidewalks along both sides of the East Washington Street, Library Street and Rich Street.

It was moved by Commissioner Jennings, seconded by Commission Lee to approve to accept the recommendations regarding the sidewalk network associated with the 2017 reconstruction projects.

MOTION CARRIED.

The City Manager stated that based on this input, engineering plans will be finalized.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS None.

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Commissioner Cook seconded by Commissioner Lee to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 PM.
MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jason Eppler
City Manager
Recording Secretary for Dave Cook, Secretary