



Andy Schor
Mayor

LANSING PLANNING BOARD

Regular Meeting

October 5, 2021

6:30 p.m.

Neighborhood Empowerment Center 600 W Maple St.

MINUTES – *Approved 11/3/21*

1. OPENING SESSION

Ms. Alexander called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

- a. Present: Katie Alexander, Marta Cerna, Tony Cox, Monte Jackson, Thomas Morgan, John Ruge
- b. Absent: Dr. Farhan Bhatti (excused), Josh Hovey (excused)
- c. Staff: Andy Fedewa, Andy Kilpatrick, Public Service Department Director

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – The agenda was approved by unanimous consent

3. COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS – None

5. COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE – None

6. RECESS – Not taken

7. BUSINESS

A. Consent Items

(1) Minutes for approval: June 1, 2021

The minutes from the June 1, 2021 Planning Board meeting were approved without objection.

B. Old Business – None

C. New Business

(1) Act-7-2021, Vacation of Schoolcraft Drive & part of N. Washington Avenue

Andy Fedewa, Planner, stated this is a request by Lansing Community College (LCC) to vacate Schoolcraft Drive and a section of N. Washington Avenue, located along the north property line of the college's main campus. Schoolcraft Drive is a one-way street that connects N. Grand Avenue and N. Capitol Avenue and serves as internal access between LCC's parking facilities. The City of Lansing has plans to convert N. Capitol and N. Grand from one-way to two-way streets which will eliminate the need for Schoolcraft Drive.

The section of N. Washington Avenue south of Schoolcraft Drive to W. Shiawassee Street was closed in the 1970s to provide better pedestrian circulation through the LCC campus and was officially vacated and conveyed to LCC in 2003. This vacation request would be for the remainder of the street north of Schoolcraft Drive to Saginaw Street. Mr. Fedewa stated that staff is recommending approval of the request.

Andy Kilpatrick, Director of Public Service said that as part of the vacation, access to

Schoolcraft Drive will be removed at N. Capitol and N. Grand to reduce vehicular conflicts. This work will be part of LCC's responsibility. The City agrees to provide new access to LCC's campus at Saginaw Street. All existing storm inlets and storm drains will become part of LCC's maintenance responsibility.

Chris MacKersie, Lansing Community College, said that the College agrees with the City's timeline and that the access points are already blocked for the ongoing Gannon Ramp reconstruction.

Chairman Ruge expressed concerns about the access from Saginaw Street and the vehicular speeds that are sometimes present. Mr. Kilpatrick said there will be an entrance and exit point to and from Saginaw Street to assist with the traffic flow. Mr. MacKersie stated that there will still be other access points from LCC to N. Capitol and N. Grand to keep the circulation network open, and thus, it is not anticipated that there will be traffic back-ups.

Mr. Morgan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Cox, to approve Act-7-2021, vacating Schoolcraft Drive & part of N. Washington Avenue. On a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously (6-0).

(2) Act-8-2021, Sale of City-Owned Property, Lot 50:

Mr. Fedewa stated this is a request by the City's Economic Development & Planning Department (EDP) to sell Lot 50 which is a City owned and operated parking lot at the southwest corner of E. Shiawassee Street and Pere Marquette Drive in the Stadium District. Lot 50 has generally seen a fair level of use by commuters and people parking during Lansing Lugnuts games, and was resurfaced in early 2020, but has experienced a sustained decrease in use during the Covid-19 pandemic. EDP had no plans to decommission the lot when it was resurfaced and has since been approached by a private party with an offer to purchase the lot. The Department recommends approval of the offer based upon its usage continuing to decrease and since the lot could aid in the redevelopment efforts of the block bounded by E. Michigan Avenue, N. Larch Street, E. Shiawassee Street, and Pere Marquette Drive.

Mr. Morgan asked if Lot 50 was appraised or marketed publicly. Mr. Fedewa answered that it was not appraised or marketed, but the Department felt it was an acceptable offer for an underutilized property. Chairperson Ruge questioned why there was not a bid process for public property.

Mr. Jackson requested a statement of how Lot 50 fits in with some sort of overall Parking Services Division plans.

Mr. Cox stated he would like to see more due diligence with a public bid process.

Ms. Cerna asked how the parcel would be marketed. Mr. Fedewa said he would have to confirm with Brian McGrain, Director of Economic Development, but usually city-owned lots are displayed on the State operated Redevelopment Ready Communities program and Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) websites.

Chairperson Ruge stated that he would like to see more concrete redevelopment plans as there is too much surface parking downtown and in the Stadium District.

Mr. Morgan agreed that he wants to see Lot 50 publicly marketed.

Mr. Morgan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jackson, to table Act-8-2021, to allow for an appraisal of the subject property, time for the property to be publicly marketed, and a brief review of how Lot 50 fits into the overall Parking Services plans. On a voice vote the motion passed unanimously (6-0).

8. REPORT FROM PLANNING MANAGER –

A. Solar Energy Systems and Zoning Ordinance Memo:

Mr. Fedewa stated the City's Sustainability Manager is going through the process of applying for SolSmart designation. This is a technical assistance organization that helps municipalities become ready and friendly for solar markets. A component of this process is to review the zoning code and its provisions for solar energy systems (SES). The Planning & Zoning Office has treated SES as an accessory in all zoning districts allowed by-right, but no text is explicitly stated in the current zoning code. Staff has included new language and provisions in the proposed Amendment Draft of the Form-Based Zoning Code that will be reviewed by City Council.

The purpose of SolSmart review is to guarantee zoning provisions are not overly restrictive of solar energy systems. The Planning & Zoning Office supports this goal, but also maintains that SES should be treated similarly to other accessory structures and mechanical equipment standards. Generally proposed Amendment Draft language requires that wall-, roof-, and ground-mounted systems not excessively infringe on required yard setbacks or height limits.

Chairperson Ruge expressed a concern about wall-mounted systems being allowed to project into the required side-yard setback if those minimums are 5' on one side of the house, 10' on the other. This reads that wall-mounted systems could be tilted within two feet of the property line. Mr. Fedewa agreed with the sentiment and stated generally in our most dense neighborhoods where this would be an issue that wall-mounted systems are not ideal because of the dense tree cover and that proximity to neighboring houses.

Board Member Alexander asked if there is a fund to subsidize the costs of solar installations. Mr. Fedewa replied that this program does not offer any funding or grants and that the City should look into removing permit fees or starting a fund for installations, but those options are just a discussion for now.

Board Member Jackson asked what benefits there are to designation. Mr. Fedewa replied that it is a way to comprehensively review the processes the City has in place and the City can market itself as open and able to handle solar systems city-wide.

9. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON – None

10. COMMENTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS – None

11. PENDING ITEMS: FUTURE ACTION REQUIRED – None

12. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.