



LANSING PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
March 5, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.
Neighborhood Empowerment Center
600 W Maple Street, Lansing, MI

MINUTES – *Approved 5/8/2024*

1. OPENING SESSION

Mr. Hovey called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

- a. Present: Katie Alexander, Tony Cox, Josh Hovey, Monte Jackson, Shane Muchmore (arrived at 6:43), Ted O'Dell & John Ruge
- b. Absent:
- c. Staff: Sue Stachowiak Zoning Administrator, Barb Kimmel EDP Development Division Manager, Andy Fedewa Principal Planner

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

3. COMMUNICATIONS

Emma Henry, Executive Director of Capital Area Housing Partnership, email regarding the need for continued funding through the CDBG, HOME, and ESG to support its programs.

Mitch Rice, member of the Lansing Board of Zoning Appeals, email in support of the draft Sign Ordinance.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS & ITEMS FOR ACTION

A. City of Lansing Annual Action Plan, Citywide Needs Hearing and Proposed Funding Allocations FY 2024-2025

Ms. Kimmel introduced Jason Smith on behalf of Wade Trim. Mr. Smith stated that Wade Trim has worked with Lansing as a consultant for the last three Annual Action Plans as well as the 5-year Plan in 2022. These plans detail the City's funding strategy with the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership (HOME), and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) programs through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) each year.

Mr. Smith reviewed the estimated funding amounts for various projects under each program such as, but not limited to, homeowner housing rehabilitation, rental unit rehabilitation, down payment assistance, housing construction, homelessness prevention, and shelter operations. Mr. Smith explained the timeline for the public comment period, public hearing at City Council, and City Council's adoption.

Mr. O'Dell asked for clarification on the \$1,000 amount for blight removal and if neighborhood clean-ups were a form of blight removal. Ms. Kimmel explained that neighborhood clean-ups are conducted in CDBG Eligible neighborhoods by established neighborhood groups with the city department of Neighborhoods, Arts, and Citizen Engagement (NACE). Blight removal, i.e. demolition, is conducted one of two ways, either through partnership with the Ingham County Land Bank or with FEMA funds to remove houses from the floodplain. Because of these other methods the department does not anticipate conducting demolitions using CDBG funds.

Mr. O'Dell asked how funding is allocated to shelters. Ms. Kimmel answered that the funding is allocated by the local Continuum of Care after an application process.

Mr. Muchmore asked if applicants applying for homeowner downpayment assistance have challenges obtaining mortgages because lenders think 80% of the area median income in Lansing is too low to offer mortgage products. Ms. Kimmel answered that they have not experienced that with lenders. Ms. Kimmel stated that there were four applicants for downpayment assistance so far, this fiscal year.

Ms. Alexander asked how residents and community groups apply to access program funds. Ms. Kimmel answered that the City works through partner organizations and other City departments in established processes and that all information is available on the city website.

Mr. Hovey stated that the Planning Commission understands that it reviews estimated allocations and questioned how far the funding amounts are off each year. Ms. Kimmel replied that the department always bases their numbers on the previous allocation amounts and variations of the final funding amounts are usually less than 5% from the proposed amounts. She explained that the budget is adjusted proportionally.

Mr. Hovey opened the public hearing.

Randy Dykhuis, N Sycamore St., asked the Planning Commission what type of projects are funded through the homeowner housing rehabilitation program. Ms. Kimmel replied that there is a hierarchy of considerations with prioritization of more serious repairs.

Angela Pruitt, Executive Director of Closing the Digital Gap, spoke in support of its programs and for increased funding for the 'economic development and business technical assistance' program.

David Stone, Chester Rd., spoke in support of funding for Closing the Digital Gap.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak, Mr. Hovey closed the public hearing.

Mr. O'Dell made a motion, seconded by Mr. Cox to recommend approval of City of Lansing Annual Action Plan, Proposed Funding Allocations FY 2024-2025.

On a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

5. COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Fred McLaughlin, W Holmes Road spoke about how the placement of signs and art can be a distraction and safety hazard for bicyclists.

6. RECESS – Not taken.

7. BUSINESS

A. Consent Items

(1) Minutes for approval: January 17, 2024

The minutes from the January 17, 2024 Planning Commission meeting were approved without objection.

B. Old Business – None

C. New Business – None

8. REPORT FROM PLANNING & ZONING OFFICE

A. Introduction of the Draft Sign Ordinance

Ms. Stachowiak introduced the draft of a new Sign Ordinance that would repeal and replace the existing ordinance. She explained that the existing ordinance is outdated with references to former zoning districts and conflicts with current case law in regard to free speech. Ms. Stachowiak briefly reviewed some of the main sections of the draft ordinance included in the agenda packets, including maintenance and enforcement, temporary signs, wall, freestanding, and window signs.

Mr. Ruge asked about signs that cover windows and how they are enforced. Ms. Stachowiak answered that City Council established a standard that signs cannot cover more than 20% of a window and that restriction will carry over to the new ordinance. She explained that the Commercial Corridor Specialist is responsible for enforcing the sign ordinance.

Mr. Muchmore asked if the city investigates the phone numbers listed on temporary signs placed within the rights-of-way for enforcement and court action. Ms. Stachowiak replied that the City has absolute authority to remove those signs and does so daily, but it is difficult to establish who actually placed the sign there or if those phone numbers are valid or traceable to real people.

Mr. Fedewa stated a public hearing on the draft ordinance will be held at the April 2, 2024, meeting, after which staff will be requesting that the Commission vote on a recommendation to the City Council. Mr. Hovey requested a presentation of the draft ordinance for the Commission's review and the source materials that the proposed rules were based upon.

B. Form-Based Zoning Code, Second Amendment

Mr. Fedewa explained that the Form-Based Zoning Code was originally adopted March 2021 and that a first amendment fixing technical errors was adopted in January of 2022. He stated that planning and zoning staff has continually reviewed how the new zoning code has impacted proposed development and how its provisions have been enforced and saw a need for another set of amendment to address the issues that arose. Mr. Fedewa briefly revised some of the more significant changes which include eliminating and consolidating several zoning districts and the uses allowed thereunder.

Mr. Fedewa stated that there is a citizen advocacy group that is requesting changes to the ordinance to permit increased density, and more flexible housing options such as rooming houses, cooperatives, cottage courts, and accessory dwelling units.

Mr. O'Dell asked if a prohibition on use of ADU's for short-term rentals is being considered. Mr. Fedewa answered that they did consider regulations requiring homeowner occupancy of one unit on the lot and prohibiting short-term rentals but ultimately decided against recommending them to allow more flexibility for property owners and because Lansing does not have the same tourist market as other communities that have a much greater demand for short-term rentals.

Mr. Fedewa stated that review materials and the full proposed draft will be forwarded to Planning Commission members in the coming weeks.

9. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Mr. Hovey reminded commission members that two major developments are being proposed for the City and that the opportunity for residents to become more involved in supporting the state funding currently being considered by the City Council.

10. COMMENTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mr. Muchmore spoke on his background in broadband installation for 'last-mile internet' and the necessity of universal digital literacy to take advantage of that work. Mr. Muchmore expressed his support for increasing types of funding that assist digital literacy programs.

11. PENDING ITEMS: FUTURE ACTION REQUIRED – None

12. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.