

**CITY OF BIG RAPIDS
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
October 19, 2016**

Chairperson Schmidt called the October 19, 2016, regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 6:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENT Sue Bean, Renato Cerdena, Jennifer Cochran, Paul Jackson, John Schmidt, Tim Vogel, and Bill Yontz

ALSO PRESENT Mark Sweppenheiser, Neighborhood Services Director
Cindy Plautz, Neighborhood Services

There were 8 people in the audience.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Paul Jackson, seconded by Sue Bean, to approve the minutes of the September 21, 2016, meeting of the Planning Commission as presented. Motion passed unanimously with all in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT NOT RELATED TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

None

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Site Plan Review for new construction of a 3,480 sq. ft. office building at 127 S. State Street. (Big Rapids Welcome Center: Mecosta County Chamber and Convention and Visitors Bureau).

Chairperson Schmidt reviewed the Public Hearing procedure for the audience and opened the hearing at 6:34 p.m.

Keegan Brown from Steve Jones Construction represented the applicants, the Mecosta County Chamber of Commerce and the Mecosta County Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, saying they hired Steve Jones Construction to develop a design build for a new Welcome Center. An approved landscape plan has not yet been fully developed due to the Landscape Architect's absence, but a rough plan is available. It is the applicant's and Steve Jones' intent to meet the Landscape Ordinance regulations. He asked the Planning Commission for conditional approval

of the site plan so they will have time to get the foundation out of the ground and start new footers before it gets too cold. The approval would be conditional based on City staff's review and approval of the landscaping plan. If they could start the project now, they would hope to be complete by March 30, 2017.

Sweppenheiser added that the property is zoned C-2 and an office establishment is a principal use in the district. The storm water plan has been approved by Public Works Deputy Director Schneidt.

Staff recommends approval of the site plan review for 127 S. State Street with the condition that the landscape plan be reviewed and approved by staff before work begins.

Those Who Spoke in Favor: None

Those Who Spoke in Opposition: None

Written or Telephonic Communication Received by Staff: A favorable comment was received by Dick Hansen who believes it will be a nice improvement to the property.

Chairman Schmidt closed the Public Hearing at 6:38 p.m. and the Commission entered into Fact Finding.

When asked about the lack of a dumpster area Brown said they won't be using a dumpster. The owners will use poly-carts.

When asked about a plan for lighting, Brown explained that down-lighting will be implemented with the majority of the lighting located on the west side of the parking lot focusing east. They would like to create a pathway to the east and will work with the City for placement.

The sign will be located at the corner of State and Elm and will have a LED scrolling message area about 16 inches high. Orientation of the sign was discussed. Originally, two signs were planned but City Ordinance does not allow two signs. The Commission pointed out that it will be hard to read from both directions due to its 45 degree angle. They will look at changing the orientation to improve readability.

When asked about soil borings, Brown said that there was a hot spot on the property along the sidewalk that protrudes 30 feet inward. They changed the orientation of the building to eliminate a need to remediate the area.

The only curb cut to remain will be on Elm Street leading to the parking lot. Brown is in the process of applying for curb cut permits.

Vogel stated that he does not like incomplete plans and doesn't feel it is fair to rely on City staff for approval. Sweppenheiser said that in the past, staff has approved the landscaping plan and is comfortable with the task.

Brown said that design/build plans are a little different than normal site plans. They are done mainly to decrease upfront costs. Students from Ferris State University helped with the layout of the building. There is a budget for landscaping design.

Jackson stated that there is no real bus stop in town and asked if maybe one could be incorporated here. It could merely be a sign and a bench. Currently, bus riders are dropped off in the Save-a-Lot parking lot. It would be up to the applicant and the bus company. Brown added that the Indian Trails bus line has a stop in Howard City but they do not pull into the parking lot.

The stair case indicated on the building layout leads to a 700 sq. ft. basement where storage and utilities will be located. Vapor barriers can be used to eliminate any toxic fumes that may be present from the soil.

Jerry Scoby, FSU Administrator, stated that he is very happy that FSU students can be involved in community projects and he hopes that the collaboration will continue to move forward.

MOTION

Motion was made by Tim Vogel, seconded by Paul Jackson, to recommend approval of the site plan dated September 27, 2016, for construction of a 3,480 sq. ft. office building at 127 S. State Street (Big Rapids Welcome Center: Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitor's Bureau) with the following condition:

The landscaping plan will need to be submitted to staff and approved prior to final approval.

The motion was amended to add that work on the footings may begin prior to landscape plan approval.

Motion passed with Sue Bean, Renato Cerdena, Jennifer Cochran, Paul Jackson, Tim Vogel, and Bill Yontz in favor.

Site Plan Review for the construction of a 4,060 sq. ft. building addition at 500 N Bronson Avenue. (NOCTI)

Sweppenheiser reviewed his Staff Report saying that the property is zoned Industrial and an office space is an accessory use in the district. The storm water plans have been approved. The landscaping currently exceeds zoning requirements. Furthermore, the proposed addition is on the back side of the building and additional landscaping is not required. He recommends approval of the site plan dated September 28, 2016.

Chairperson Schmidt opened the Public Hearing at 6:57 p.m.

Kevin Defever, Contractor, represented the applicant as he lives out of state. This addition has been in the planning stages for a couple of years and one year ago the land was purchased.

Those Who Spoke in Favor: None

Those Who Spoke in Opposition: None

Written or Telephonic Communications Received by Staff: None

Chairperson Schmidt closed the Public Hearing at 6:58 p.m. and the Commission entered into Fact Finding.

Vogel asked if parking requirements were being met given the additional space. Sweppenheiser said that they are met.

MOTION

Motion was made by Sue Bean, seconded by Renato Cerdena to recommend approval to the City Commission for the site plan dated September 28, 2016, for construction of a 4,060 sq. ft. building and conference space addition at 500 N. Bronson Avenue (NOCTI).

Motion passed with Sue Bean, Renato Cerdena, Jennifer Cochran, Paul Jackson, John Schmidt, Tim Vogel, and Bill Yontz in favor.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Budget Review

The Commission discussed the Planning and Zoning Budget and felt there should be a larger budget to cover training for the Commission. It was suggested that the fees charged for site plan review go into this account to help with training costs. Schmidt also added that some states charge a surcharge on fees to be used by the Planning and Zoning Boards. Sweppenheiser said that MAP will come to us if we asked them for a training session. He added that Eric Williams could also do a training session as he has done them in the past.

Alley Clean-Up Report, by Jennifer Cochran

Cochran reported that an alley clean-up was organized by the FSU Student Government and the Bulldog Sustainability Alliance and was held on October 15th. Seventy volunteers showed up and 50 blocks of alleys were cleaned. The clean-up was very successful. She said that alley adoptions are in the works and they would wish to schedule clean-ups several times a year.

Their next course of action will be to focus on creating the signs that will designate which group has adopted which particular alley.

The group would like to target incoming freshman to introduce them to recycling and sustainability with the thought that the practice would continue. They would also like to get the international students involved.

The Commission and Sweppenheiser thanked Cochran for a job well done.

Election of Officers

Motion was made by Tim Vogel, seconded by Sue Bean to nominate John Schmidt as the Planning Commission Chair.

Motion passed with all in favor.

Motion was made by Renato Cerdena, seconded by Tim Vogel, to nominate Jennifer Cochran as Vice-Chair.

Motion passed with all in favor.

Motion was made by Sue Bean, seconded by Paul Jackson, to nominate Tim Vogel as Secretary.

Motion passed with all in favor.

Cindy Plautz was appointed Recording Secretary.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Dunham's interest in the Gate site.
- The old Gate site is still for sale.
- JoAnn's Fabrics' coming to the old Kmart building has fallen through.
- Peebles has signed another year lease.
- Olive Garden needs 100,000 people within a 15-minute drive to establish a new location.
- Culver's plans on being open by the end of the year.
- Staff has not heard about the proposed housing development on Chestnut.
- Plans for the Hanchett site have not been developed at this time.

There being no further business, Chairperson Schmidt closed the Planning Commission meeting at 7:40 p.m. with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia J. Plautz
Planning Commission Secretary