

Mt. Pleasant Zoning Board of Appeals & Planning Commission
Minutes of Joint Work Session
October 21, 2013

I. Call to Order 6:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call: Mrdeza called roll.

ZBA Members Present: Kulick, Palm, Lents.

ZBA Members Absent: Berkshire, Fokens, Orlik, Raisanen.

PC Members Present: Brockman, Cotter, Hoenig, Holtgreive, Kostrzewa, Lents, Smith.

PC Members Absent: Dailey, Shellady.

Staff: Mrdeza, Murphy

Rowe Professional Services: Doug Piggott

III. Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Kulick, support by Holtgreive, to approve the agenda.

Motion approved.

IV. Introduction:

Mrdeza reviewed the purpose of the meeting, noting that the City Commission has asked the PC and ZBA to look at codifying the M-2 Redevelopment procedures that have been used as guidelines in recent redevelopments. Mrdeza noted the challenge is to find a way to continue to get the types of developments we have become accustomed to with standards developers are able to meet.

Mrdeza noted that a RFP was sent out and Rowe Professional Services was awarded the contract to work on this project. They will ultimately provide a recommendation, which will be reviewed by the PC and ZBA. The PC will hold a Public Hearing and will make a recommendation to the City Commission, either for or against codifying the process. Following the recommendation from the Planning Commission, the City Commission will hold another public hearing and will made the ultimate decision.

Mrdeza also noted that there will be some stakeholder meetings and interviews taking place to get additional public input as well.

Mrdeza introduced Doug Piggott, from Rowe Professional Services, to provide an update on the process.

V. Joint Meeting

A. Discussion on M-2 Codification Process:

Piggott noted that he would like to talk about concepts and alternatives and get some input on what Board members feel is an appropriate approach.

Piggott reviewed the current process and noted that although there are established standards, they are not codified in the Ordinance. Some of the concerns with this include the lack of limitations (type and area) and whether the procedures are transparent enough. There could be some confusion on what the ZBA is granting - they are not granting a variance, they are making an administrative decision on whether the applicant has met the standards.

Piggott referred to the inventory of the target area, noting that there are several non-conformities in the area. Piggott reviewed five different options for the Board to consider, noting advantages and limitations on each of the options (see attached document).

Lents asked what problem we are trying to solve - and whether the goal is to reduce the number of Boards looking at a project.

Smith commented that he didn't think we are we are looking to change the process - just to put it into written format.

Kulick noted that if we created an overlay district, similar to the one on Mission Street, it would cut the ZBA out of the process.

Piggott noted that the scope of the RFP indicated there was interest in codifying the process.

Hoening commented that she feels it would be helpful to have clear, concise guidelines, which would offer some predictability. Lents commented that if we had done that initially, we wouldn't be as far as we are now - noting that each project that comes before the Boards gets better and better. Kulick agreed, noting that staff has done an excellent job of working with the applicants and noted that if you put in stringent guidelines, developers will bring in projects meeting the bare minimum, which you would be obligated to approve.

Piggott also noted that the Boards would need to discuss other issues, such as whether they wish to include any property with a non-conformity to be eligible; only properties in the M-2 District; or a subsection of the M-2 district. Piggott noted that if the project focuses on the M-2 zoning district or a certain target area, future changes could be handled through a text amendment; whereas creating an overlay zone would include a zoning change. Although both would include public hearings, a text change doesn't involve notifications to be sent out to everyone within 300' of the property. He further noted that he is looking for input from the Boards on whether they wish to only include RSOs and Rooming dwellings, as that has appeared to be the scope so far.

Lengthy discussion ensued on the area that should be included in the redevelopment processes. It was noted by several board members that creating a "buffer" zone separating the M-2 Rooming Dwellings/RSO's from the Residential district would be desirable, with some transitioning from the higher density homes to duplexes/townhouses, etc. and then to the Residential zones would help create that buffer. Lents noted that she does not feel it is a density issue as much as the higher occupancy in a single unit that is the problem.

Comments also noted that a buffer zone has really already created itself, with most of the homes that abut the M-2 district becoming rental homes. Smith noted that he is okay with the buffer zone idea, provided the M-2 boundary line is not moved.

Cotter commented that there are a lot of homes in rough shape that will remain that way unless we give some sort of redevelopment incentive. He agreed that a buffer of townhouses/duplexes etc. would be desirable and would give developers a different type of client.

Discussion also took place on the fact that most of the homes that have come before the Boards up to this point have been old, rundown homes; however, there is a request coming before the ZBA this month that includes an older historic home, which many Board members indicated would be a tough sell. It was noted that the Historic District Commission has put together a document noting which homes they feel have historic significance, even though they are not included in a defined Historic District - it might be worth looking at.

Holtgreive commented that the area needs to be defined before we can solve the problem and he feels like this needs to be resolved rather than to keep revisiting it. Holtgreive suggested Cotter provide a map (from a developer's standpoint) for the Board to consider what really makes sense.

Piggott commented that perhaps the first step would be to create language and codify the process for M-2 housing redevelopment and then to outline additional language on how to create a buffer zone. A two-step process. Holtgreive noted he would be okay with that if the two were tied together.

It was the consensus of a majority of the Board members that the two-step process is working and they would like to see both Boards be part of the process. It was agreed that they have made significant progress working to get better developments. The majority of the group also indicated they prefer to keep some flexibility in the standards to allow them to request more from the applicants. It was also the consensus of the group that the process should be limited to the M-2 zoning district.

Piggott indicated he has enough information to move forward with his recommendation and noted that he would be holding interviews with stakeholders and developers in the near future to get their input.

Board members were asked to provide Murphy with any names/contacts that they would like included in the notification process.

Meeting adjourned 7:34 p.m.

bam

Attachments: Handouts from Rowe Professional Services Inc.