

Mt. Pleasant Planning Commission
Minutes of Work Session
November 7, 2013

Present: Hoenig, Holtgreive (Vice-Chair), Kostrzewa, Lents, Smith (Chair).

Absent: Brockman, Cotter, Dailey, Shellady.

Staff: Bean, Mrdeza, Murphy.

Bean noted that he would like to continue the discussion on Neighborhood Priorities. In addition, Bean noted that he would provide a draft of where they are at right now in the Master Plan update process, noting that they are working on integrating *complete streets* into the Master Plan.

Commissioner Lents asked staff if the non-motorized transportation plan would be included in the Master Plan. Mrdeza reported that the Management team at the city has not recommended adopting the plan outright; however will include it as a reference and resource guide. As streets are being considered for reconstruction the plan will be consulted. Budget and available resources will need to be considered.

Commissioner Lents commented that the point of the plan was for all entities to be on board, and using the analogy of a donut, commented that without the donut hole (city) the rest of the plan is basically ruined. Commissioner Lents also noted that the plan doesn't say you have to adopt it completely, but to look at short-term; mid-term and long term plans. It also provides obvious reasons for the Planning Commission to either grant or deny sidewalk waivers when requested. Commissioner Lents also noted it would be easier to find grant funding if the plan was actually adopted. Commissioner Lents noted that even though the current City Commission and Management team have indicated they would use it as a resource guide, with staff and Commissioner turnover, there is no guarantee that this will continue and if not adopted, it sends the message that it wasn't important.

Mrdeza responded that he appreciates Commissioner Lents concerns, noting that the Management Team is not ignoring the recommendations in the plan. They will consider each project and consult the plan and determine what is in the best interests of the City. He further noted that although the plan was initiated by Union Township, 90% of it includes City Streets and noted that there are significant associated costs to consider and there may not be sufficient resources available.

Return to the M-2 Discussion.

Bean noted that from the notes provided from the joint meeting with Doug Piggott, Rowe Professional Services, Corporation, it appeared that the consensus of the group was that the M-2 process is working. He referred to the discussion that took place on a buffer zone separating the M-2 from the adjacent residential areas.

Mrdeza asked if the group's concept of a buffer zone was within the confines of the current M-2 zoning district or on the outside, as a boundary.

Vice-Chairman Holtgreive commented that he feels the line is the boundary and the buffer should start outside of that. Chairman Smith questioned whether that would put multi-family outside of the zone and if he was suggesting a separate zoning district. Vice-Chairman Holtgreive noted that it may, and also stated that we need to be realistic when looking at these areas as some will likely never revert back to owner-occupied. He would like to see owner occupied units ease into duplexes and then to the multi-family. Chairman Smith noted that most of the properties that currently abut the M-2 line are already rental units.

Commissioner Lents suggested that the Commission needs to actually walk the neighborhoods and look at the houses to determine what makes sense for the area.

Bean noted that for the Master Plan, we need to determine what the goal is - what is the desired buffer area and what steps are needed to get there. Bean asked if the Commission feels there should be a density transfer area and if they had any specific ideas on how to mitigate.

Vice-Chairman Holtgreive commented that we need to quit looking at "density" as a bad thing. It can work for us as well as against us. If you add density in one area, it can take the pressure off another area.

Smith questioned whether this type of a buffer zone, creating more multi-unit buildings with less occupants per unit, would create an economic burden on developers. Vice-Chairman Holtgreive noted that there may be additional costs to construct this type of building, but there may be an increase in the return as well. Commissioner Lents stated it may be useful to have a meeting with the developers to get their input.

Bean noted that he should be able to encapsulate some language for the Master Plan from what he has heard from the discussion.

Mrdeza noted that the area being discussed is not green space, but individually owned parcels and asked how the Commission would rectify that.

Commissioner Kostrzewa commented that the only way to introduce this into the residential neighborhoods is with significantly higher-quality buildings.

Bean questioned whether the M-2 codification is a separate issue. Both Commissioner Lents and Vice-Chairman Holtgreive stated they don't feel one piece can be done without the other.

Mrdeza noted that the City Commission's charge to the Planning Commission was to take the procedures that the Boards have been using, look at a pilot area (subsection of the M-2 District) and look at making a recommendation to the City Commission on how to codify the process.

Vice-Chairman Holtgreive noted that he is aware that is the City Commission's charge; however, based on the discussion at the Joint meeting, it was the consensus of both the ZBA and PC that they want to keep some flexibility in the procedures.

Bean provided handouts of sections of the draft Master Plan update, including the Introduction, Background, Goals & Strategies and asked that the Board provide feedback to him.

Bean noted that Complete Streets will be incorporated into the Transportation Section of the Master Plan.

Mrdeza noted that communities that have adopted the Complete Street Plans get more cooperation from MDOT, noting that this is a formalized way to get us to a point that we have a better working relationship with MDOT.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

bam