

PLANNING COMMISSION

March 18, 2010

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of March 18, 2010 was called to order by Chairman Fox at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Approximately four citizens were in attendance.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Cory Bailes, James Cheesebro, Miko Dargitz, Paul Welch, Jim Pearson, Rick Bosch, Wayne Stoffer, Bill Patterson and Chairman Thomas Fox.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None.

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

None.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Christopher Forth, Deputy Director of Planning and Development Services and Randall Brown, City Attorney.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Planning Commission, staff and the audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Fox referred the Commission to the March 4, 2010 meeting minutes. Commissioner Dargitz requested the first sentence of the last paragraph on page 2, be amended by adding "expressing concerns about trespassing" immediately following "MDNR-E e-mails." Commissioner Dargitz also requested the first sentence of the last paragraph on page 3 be amended by adding at the end of the sentence "...to allow the MDNRE staff to attend the meeting and explain their concerns expressed in their e-mails." A motion was made by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Stoffer, to approve the minutes as submitted as amended. The minutes were unanimously approved.

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Height Modification Request, Centre meadows Senior Apartments, 1405, 1419 and 1503 East Centre. Mr. Forth summarized the staff report dated March 12, 2010 regarding a height modification request by the Milham Group to construct a three-story, 36-foot high multiple family residential apartment building with one architectural feature (cupola) that will extend to a height of 49 feet. The 122 apartment unit building will be age restricted to persons 55 years and older. The south 450 feet of the site is zoned OS-1, office service and the north 837 feet is zoned RM-1, multiple family: The building and parking lot will be located in the RM-1 zone.

The applicant, Mr. Tim Woodhams, was present to explain and support the project. The Commission members discussed with the applicant and staff the footprint of the building, elevation differences between the proposed building and surrounding residential homes, screening/landscaping, maximum number of units

permitted, amount of off-street parking needed and the 2010 project compared to the 2007 project. The public hearing was opened by Chairman Fox. No other citizens spoke in support or opposition to the height modification request. A motion was offered by Commissioner Welch, seconded by Commissioner Bailes, to close the public hearing. The motion was unanimously approved.

After a brief discussion, a motion was offered by Commissioner Pearson, seconded by Commissioner Bailes, to approve the Height Modification request for Centre Meadows Senior Apartments, 1405, 1419 and 1503 East Centre Avenue, to construct a three-story, multiple family residential building to a height of 36 feet with an architectural feature/cupola on top of the building that will extend to a height of 49 feet subject to installation of landscaping treatments along the west, south and east sides of the building that soften and break-up the expanse of the three-story building walls. Specific details regarding landscaping treatments will be reviewed as part of the formal site plan consideration. The Planning Commission also recommends that City Council approve the Height Modification for Centre Meadows Senior Apartments subject to the same condition and submittal of a site plan. The proposed building location/orientation, setback distances, natural topography, preservation of mature trees and supplemental landscaping will help mitigate potential adverse impacts on adjacent single family residential districts. The motion was unanimously approved.

PLATS/RESIDENTIAL CONDOS:

None.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS:

None.

7:30 p.m. The Commission took a short recess and reconvened the meeting in Conference Room 1 at 7:35 p.m. to discuss the 2010-2020 Capital Improvement Program.

2010-2020 Capital Improvement Program. Mr. Forth indicated an overview of the 2010-2020 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) was provided during the March 4, 2010 meeting. Mr. Forth also indicated a letter was included in the final agenda from several business owners along Cooley Drive requesting installation of a traffic signal at the West Centre/Cooley Drive intersection as part of the 2010-11 capital improvement projects. Mr. Forth noted that installation of a traffic signal at this intersection was discussed as part of the Greenspire PD, planned development rezoning application. A signal warrant study had been recently completed for this intersection and concluded installation of a signal is not warranted at this time. However, city staff will monitor the intersection as development of the proposed Greenspire expansion project progresses, if approved by City Council.

Chairman Fox suggested the Commission review each section and comment on projects as necessary. With regard to the Streets category, the Commission briefly discussed signalization of the West Centre/Cooley Drive intersection and rollover of CIP funds from one year to the next. Commissioner Dargitz mentioned she thought the cost for the Street Infrastructure Improvement project for Portage Public Schools traffic signalization project appeared high. Mr. Forth indicated the traffic signalization equipment (mast arms, poles, signal heads, etc.) are expensive. Portage Public Schools is also contributing money to fund the projects. Commissioner Cheesbro asked for additional information on the West Milham/12th Street intersection improvement project. Mr. Forth further explained the project.

The Commission next discussed the Sidewalks and Bikeways category. Although not part of the 2010-2020 Capital Improvement Program, Chairman Fox reiterated his concern about the location of the sidewalk that was installed near Lake Center Elementary school. Chairman Fox believed it to be too close to the travel lane of Portage Road. Commissioner Dargitz asked what the city-share portion is for the Portage Public Schools sidewalk project. Mr. Forth stated per City Charter, the city-share is 50 percent.

The Commission had no major comments regarding the Water, Police and Fire categories. With regard to the Sanitary Sewer category, Commissioner Cheesebro noted the Barberry sanitary sewer project was not in the 2009-19 CIP and added to the 2010-20 CIP. Mr. Forth explained it was added to the proposed CIP to address potential ground water contamination.

Discussion involving the Public Facilities category included leasing vs. purchasing computer equipment, demolition/sale of the former PCOC building, Comprehensive Plan Update and City Centre Area improvements. Commissioner Dargitz suggested a CIP project for the city to begin acquiring property in the City Centre Area as a method to encourage and control (re)develop activities. The Commission and staff discussed the proposal including market-driven efforts by the private sector, city regulations as a means to control land use and site development, budgetary constraints, among others. Commissioner Bosch didn't agree the city should acquire property as a means to control land development in the City Centre Area. Commissioner Stoffer emphasized the need to encourage City Centre Area (re)development activities. Mr. Forth indicated the city has been actively involved in City Centre Area (re)development activities such as brownfield and site reclamation redevelopment efforts, infrastructure improvements, municipal facility improvements, property acquisition/sale and partnership with Portage Public Schools.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Forth indicated he would prepare the FY2010-2020 Capital Improvement Program Planning Commission transmittal to City Council. Chairman Fox requested the draft transmittal be forwarded to him.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher T. Forth, AICP
Deputy Director of Planning and Development Services