

PLANNING COMMISSION

July 7, 2011

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of July 7, 2011 was called to order by Chairman Cheesebro at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Three citizens were in attendance.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bill Patterson, Jim Pearson, Miko Dargitz, Mark Siegfried, Paul Welch, Wayne Stoffer, Allan Reiff and Chairman James Cheesebro.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None.

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Rick Bosch

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chairman Cheesebro led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Cheesebro referred the Commission to the June 16, 2011 meeting minutes. A motion was then offered by Commissioner Welch, seconded by Commissioner Patterson, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was unanimously approved.

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

1. Valley Family Church-Kalamazoo, 2500 Vincent Avenue (Parking plan and request to exceed maximum parking requirement). Mr. Forth summarized the staff report dated July 1, 2011 regarding a request by Valley Family Church-Kalamazoo (VFC-K) to approve a parking plan that exceeds the maximum number of parking spaces allowed (734 spaces). VFC-K officials are requesting to increase the current number of existing parking spaces from 681 to 768, 34 more spaces than allowed by the Zoning Code. By way of background information, Mr. Forth indicated the original site plan was approved in May 2008 and included 681 off-street parking spaces. The site plan also included an additional 87 parking spaces designated for future use. VFC-K is now requesting to install the 87 spaces shown on the previously approved site.

Mr. Frank Mumford, representing VFC-K, was present to support the parking plan and request to install 87 additional parking spaces. Commissioner Dargitz asked if the 87 additional spaces will meet current needs and at what point in the future will more parking be needed. Mr. Mumford stated the 87 parking spaces are only needed a few times each year to accommodate larger than normal services and Mr. Mumford did not know when more parking might be needed. Commissioner Dargitz also asked if there were plans to change church services. Mr. Mumford stated there were no plans to alter the three weekly services.

There being no further discussion, a motion was then made by Commissioner Welch, seconded by Commissioner Patterson, to approve the parking plan and request to exceed the maximum number of off-street parking spaces by 34 allowing a total of 768 off-street parking spaces. The motion was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Final Report: Ordinance Amendment 10-E, Mixed-Use Zoning Ordinances. Mr. Forth summarized the July 1, 2011 final staff report regarding the three mixed-use ordinance proposals referred by City Council. Mr. Forth provided additional information regarding the ordinance provision requiring a minimum of 10% open space required in the City Centre Area district and summarized City Attorney and staff revisions made to the Work/Live Accommodations ordinance since the June 16, 2011 meeting.

Commissioner Pearson commented that he appreciates the changes made to the Work/Live Accommodations ordinance since the June 16th meeting. Commissioner Dargitz indicated that requiring a minimum of 10% open space in the City Centre Area district may not be enough. Mr. Forth indicated that 10% is a minimum and could be more; provides some guidance to the developer; Section 42-437(C)(6) requires additional yard (open) space if the project area is adjacent to natural features; the Standards of Review allow the Planning Commission and City Council to evaluate the amount of open space; and each project is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Commissioner Patterson concurred with an evaluation based on a case-by-case basis and referenced the Woodlands at Austin Lake as an example. Commissioner Stoffer asked for clarification on the size of the residential unit in the Work/Live Accommodations ordinance if located above or adjacent to the commercial use. Mr. Forth responded. Commissioner Reiff noted that employees from temporary agencies would be excluded from living in the residential unit since the definition of a business owner/employee requires the employee to receive a W-2 tax statement. The Commission discussed this issue and concluded no changes to the definition were necessary. Commissioner Dargitz noted problems could occur if one or more property owners involved in a City Centre Area development project decides to withdraw from the project after the project has been approved and construction commenced. Attorney Brown and Mr. Forth indicated this issue could be addressed in the agreement required between owners during review and approval of the development plan(s).

Chairman Cheesebro opened the public hearing. Mr. Thomas Rogers, 895 Treasure Island Drive, Kalamazoo, Michigan, was present to comment on the Work/Live Accommodations ordinance. Mr. Rogers stated the Commission should consider allowing temporary employees and contract workers to live in the residential unit. No other citizens spoke in support or opposition to the proposed ordinance amendments. The public hearing was closed. There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Welch, seconded by Commissioner Patterson, to recommend to City Council that Ordinance Amendment 10-E, Mixed-Use Zoning Ordinances, be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

PLATS/RESIDENTIAL CONDOS:

None

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Election of Officers. The Commission discussed election of officers for the upcoming fiscal year and nominations for the various positions. Commissioner Cheesebro indicated he would like to continue as the chairman of the Planning Commission. No other Commissioners expressed interest in the chairman position. The Commission recognized Commissioner Cheesebro as the chairman of the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Pearson stated he would like to continue as the vice-chairman of the Planning Commission. Commissioner Welch also expressed interest in the position of vice-chairman. Following an anonymous vote, Mr. Forth stated Commissioner Pearson was elected vice-chairman by a 5-3 vote. Chairman Cheesebro next asked for nominations for the position of secretary. Commissioner Welch stated he would like to continue as the secretary of the Planning Commission. Since no other nominations were received, the Commission recognized Commissioner Welch as the secretary.

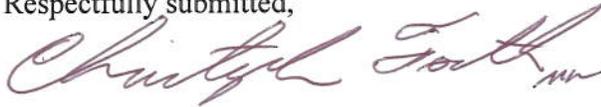
STATEMENT OF CITIZENS:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Christopher Forth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small "mm" at the end.

Christopher Forth, AICP
Deputy Director of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Services