

PLANNING COMMISSION

March 6, 2014

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of March 6, 2014 was called to order by Vice-Chairman Felicijan at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Approximately 45 citizens were in attendance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Vice-Chairman Felicijan led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Christopher Forth, Deputy Director of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Services; Michael West, Assistant City Planner; Muhammad Arif, Traffic Engineer and Randy Brown, City Attorney.

ROLL CALL:

Mr. Forth called the roll and the following Commissioners were present: Patterson, Stoffer, Felicijan, Bosch, Dargitz, Reiff, Schimmel and Somers.

Vice-Chairman Felicijan indicated Chairman Welch requested to be excused from the March 6, 2014 meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Schimmel, to approve the roll and excuse Chairman Welch. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Vice-Chairman Felicijan referred the Commission to the February 20, 2014 meeting minutes contained in the agenda packet. Commissioners Schimmel and Bosch both stated they were not present at the February 20th meeting and would not be voting on the minutes. A motion was made by Commissioner Dargitz, seconded by Commissioner Patterson, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was approved 6-0-2 with Commissioners Schimmel and Bosch abstaining.

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

1. Specific (Site) Plan for Hilton Homewood Suites, 420 Trade Centre Way. Mr. West summarized the staff report dated February 28, 2014 regarding the final plan submitted by TMI Hospitality to construct a four-story, 86,083 square foot hotel building and associated site improvements at 420 Trade Centre Way. Mr. West stated the Hilton Homewood Suites project represents the second hotel development under the amended conceptual plan submitted by Trade Centre Holdings LLC and approved by City Council in August 2012. Mr. West indicated the Hilton Homewood Suites project has been designed in substantial conformance with the approved amended conceptual plan.

Mr. Todd Hurley of Hurley & Stewart (applicant representative) was present to support the development project. Commissioner Dargitz asked for clarification on the MDEQ wetland/floodplain permit. Mr. Hurley stated the MDEQ permit was for the entire 20 acre site and activities would be completed, consistent with the approved permit, as development projects are approved. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Somers, to approve the Specific (Site) Plan for Hilton Homewood Suites, 420 Trade Centre Way. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Special Land Use Permit: Great Lakes Convenience, 710 and 732 East Centre Avenue. Vice-Chairman Felicijan referred the Commission to a letter from the applicant requesting the public hearing be adjourned to the March 20, 2014 meeting. Commissioner Reiff asked how many times granting an

adjournment is appropriate and whether the applicant needs to provide a reason for the requested adjournment. Attorney Brown stated there was not a specific or maximum number of adjournments and the Commission should consider the specific circumstances of each request. Attorney Brown indicated that staff provided a recommendation in the final agenda packet on how to handle the requested adjournment and he supports this recommendation. After additional discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Stoffer, seconded by Commissioner Patterson, to deny the applicant's request for an adjournment to allow for a staff presentation on the application and to receive public comment. The motion also included a reference to the previous two applicant requests for adjournments that were granted by the Commission. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

Mr. Forth then summarized the staff report dated February 28, 2014 including changes to the development proposal made by the applicant since the original submittal. Mr. Forth discussed the staff analysis section of the report including previous meetings and discussions with the applicant regarding the intensity of the use, traffic generation, access, neighborhood issues and Zoning Code provisions applicable to the gasoline station project. Mr. Forth stated a gasoline station/convenience store represents one of the most intensive land uses in the B-3 zoning district in regard to traffic volumes, outdoor related activities and possible noise disturbances. Mr. Forth summarized the staff analysis of the Zoning Code standards of review for special land uses in regard to compatibility with adjacent land uses, consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, traffic generation, outdoor activities and related impacts on adjacent residential properties to the west, south and north and the Otis Montessori child day care/preschool to the east. Mr. Forth indicated staff was recommending denial of the special land use permit with a finding that the proposed gasoline station project 1) is not consistent with the Future Land Use Map or Land Use/Development and Housing goals and objectives contained in the Comprehensive Plan; 2) is not consistent with the Zoning Code general standards of review for special land uses in regards to promotion of the public health, safety and welfare, compatibility with adjacent land uses, traffic generation and associated adverse impacts to adjacent properties and safety on East Centre Avenue; and 3) that various aspects of the use will generate adverse external effects including noise that are likely to extend beyond the property line. Finally and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, Mr. Forth indicated that staff was also recommending, in an action separate from the special land use permit application, that the Commission consider initiating a rezoning of the several properties located along the south side of East Centre Avenue, east of Lakewood Drive, from B-3, general business to OS-1, office service. Mr. Forth stated initiating a rezoning could be considered by the Planning Commission after receipt of a more detailed report by staff.

Mr. Don Ziemke Jr., Great Lakes Convenience (applicant/owner), was present and apologized for the requested adjournment. Mr. Ziemke stated he recently retained legal counsel and needed additional time to discuss various issues. The public hearing was then reconvened by Vice-Chairman Felicijan. A total of 12 citizens spoke in opposition to the proposed development: Michelle Theodore, 8140 Kingston; Kathy McConnell, 8340 Bruning; Dennis Laskowsky, 1814 Thrushwood; Rich Hutchins, 8137 Kingston; Melissa Ottesen, 8124 Kingston; Jamie Krenkshaw (Otis Montessori), 810 East Centre; Leslie Schero, 8119 Kingston; Kaitlan Litjens, 704 Prosperity; Patty Noel, 1002 Pasma; Gary Kunis, 801 Pasma; Nancy Centers, 8038 Lakewood; and Ginger Calleward, 720 Pasma. Concerns voiced by these citizens included the high traffic generation and related impacts, incompatibility of the commercial use adjacent to the residential neighborhood and Otis Montessori school, environmental and safety concerns, outdoor lighting and noise impacts.

The Commission and staff then discussed various aspects of the proposed gasoline station development including the intensity of the use, compatibility with adjacent land uses and Zoning Code general standards of review for special land uses. Several Commissioners expressed concerns regarding the intensity of the proposed gasoline station development at this location and associated impacts to surrounding properties. After additional discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Stoffer, to adjourn the public hearing involving the Special Land Use Permit for Great Lakes Convenience, 710 and 732 East Centre Avenue, to the March 20, 2014 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Texas Township Master Plan Amendment. Mr. West summarized the staff report dated February 28, 2014 and referred the Commission to a communication received from Texas Township regarding a proposed Master Plan Amendment. Mr. West stated the proposed Master Plan Amendment involves a 5-acre parcel of land located at 7569 South 8th Street, which is situated approximately two miles west of the City of Portage corporate boundary. Consistent with the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Mr. West indicated Texas Township was providing notification to surrounding communities requesting comment. Mr. West stated staff had reviewed the proposed amendment and did not have any comments. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Dargitz, seconded by Commissioner Reiff, to receive the Texas Township Master Plan Amendment with no specific comments offered. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

8:25 p.m. - The Commission took a short recess.

8:35 p.m. - The Commission reconvened the meeting in City Hall Conference Room No. 1

2. 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update, Goals and Objectives: Mr. Forth referred the Commission to the draft Goals and Objectives portion of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update which was included in the agenda packet as a separate document. Mr. Forth stated the Goals and Objectives document would not be a separate chapter in the Plan, but rather would be included in the beginning of Community + Quality of Life, Land Use + Character and Transportation chapters. Mr. Forth indicated specific strategies intended to implement the Goals and Objectives would be developed and included in the Implementation chapter of the Plan.

Commissioner Dargitz suggested that a reference to the Lake Centre Business Area be included in Objective LU2.2. Vice-Chairman Felicijan and Commissioner Bosch agreed. Commissioner Dargitz also suggested that a reference to live/work provisions and home occupations be included in Objective LU2.5. The Commission did not have any further comments regarding the draft Goals and Objectives. Mr. Forth indicated the recommended changes would be incorporated into the Goals and Objectives section of the Plan.

3. 2013 Recreation and Open Space Plan Amendments: Mr. Forth summarized the February 28, 2014 staff report regarding the several minor amendments to the 2013 Recreation and Open Space Plan intended to add the property donated to the city for the Eliason Nature Reserve and the city's purchase of 1614 West Osterhout Avenue. Mr. Forth stated the Recreation and Open Space Plan is a component of the Comprehensive Plan and is updated every five years and amended, as necessary, to provide a valuable planning tool and fulfill Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) requirements for park acquisition and development grants. Mr. Forth indicated the amendments to the 2013 Recreation and Open Space Plan are being processed concurrently with the 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update. The Commission did not have any comments regarding the proposed amendments.

4. 2014-2024 Capital Improvement Program. Mr. Forth referred the Commission to the 2014-2024 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that was included in the agenda packet as a separate document. Mr. Forth summarized the February 24, 2014 memo from City Manager Evans that provided an overview of the FY 2014-2024 CIP with emphasis on the FY 2014-2015 budget year. Mr. Forth discussed the timeline for Planning Commission review of the CIP and indicated a recommendation to City Council was needed by the March 20th meeting.

The Commission and staff briefly reviewed and discussed the various categories of the CIP document. Commissioner Dargitz asked about the location of the proposed Dog Park under the Parks & Recreation category. Mr. Forth stated that he believes the dog park is planned for Lakeview Park, however, would check with Director Deming. After a brief conversation, the Commission agreed to continue discussion of the CIP document at the March 20th meeting. Mr. Forth asked that the Commission email him any additional questions regarding the CIP document prior to the March 20th meeting, if possible, so the appropriate departments could be contacted for appropriate answers.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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