

PLANNING COMMISSION

March 5, 2015

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of March 5, 2015 was called to order by Vice-Chairman Felicijan at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Six 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 & Neighborhood Services; Michael West, Senior City Planner; and Randy Brown, City Attorney.

ROLL CALL:

Mr. Forth called the role and the following Commissioners were present: Patterson (yes), Bosch (yes), Felicijan (yes), Dargitz (yes) and Stoffer (yes). A motion was made by Commissioner Dargitz, seconded by Commissioner Bosch, to approve the role excusing Commissioners Welch, Somers, Richmond and Schimmel. The motion was unanimously approved 5-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Vice-Chairman Felicijan referred the Commission to the February 19, 2015 meeting minutes contained in the agenda packet. A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Dargitz, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was unanimously approved 5-0.

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

1. Specific (Site) Plan for Southern Michigan Bank & Trust, 531 West Kilgore Road. Mr. West summarized the staff report dated February 27, 2015 regarding the specific (site) plan submitted by Southern Michigan Bank & Trust to construct an approximate 2,500 square foot bank building and associated site improvements at 531 West Kilgore Road. Mr. West stated the bank development represents the second project submitted under the previously approved CPD, commercial planned development submitted by Jereco LLC and 5024 South Westnedge LLC for a 5.3 acre tract of land located near the southwest corner of South Westnedge Avenue and West Kilgore Road. Mr. West indicated the Southern Michigan Bank & Trust project has been designed in substantial conformance with the conceptual plan/narrative that was approved by City Council on April 14, 2014.

Mr. Jeremy Gump of Southern Michigan Bank & Trust (applicant) and Mr. Rich MacDonald of Jereco LLC and 5024 South Westnedge LLC (property owner) were present to support the development project. Mr. Gump stated the bank building would be the first, freestanding LEED certified bank building in the Portage/Kalamazoo area. Vice-Chairman Felicijan stated that based on observations he made while visiting the recently constructed Earth Fare project, traffic flow to/from the commercial planned development appears to be functioning as planned. Commissioner Dargitz asked whether any pedestrian walkway from West Kilgore Road into the development would be incorporated with the bank project. Mr. West and Mr. MacDonald stated an internal pedestrian walkway would be incorporated along the west side of the driveway from West Kilgore Road and through the internal parking lot with design and construction of the next phase of the CPD, along the northwest portion of the property. After additional discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Patterson, to approve the Specific (Site) Plan for Southern Michigan Bank & Trust, 531 West Kilgore Road. The motion was unanimously approved 5-0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Final Report for Ordinance Amendment #14/15-A: Auto Repair and Vehicle Fueling Station Regulations. Mr. Forth summarized the staff report dated February 27, 2015 regarding proposed changes to Zoning Code regulations pertaining to auto repair stations and auto service stations (gasoline stations). Mr. Forth summarized the proposed ordinance amendments. Mr. Forth also discussed previous Planning Commission review of the ordinance language and changes that were made since the February 19th meeting concerning abandonment. Commissioner Patterson asked if an existing vehicle fueling station that did not meet the locational standards and was closed for an extended period of time, would it be allowed to reopen. Mr. Forth discussed the abandonment clause of the nonconforming use regulations and indicated the burden of proof to determine abandonment falls on the city. Attorney Brown concurred and expanded on the abandonment provisions of the ordinance and discussed the criteria for determining whether a use has been abandoned. Attorney Brown also stated there must be an intent to abandon the use by the property owner.

Vice-Chairman Felicijan reconvened the public hearing. No citizens were present to speak regarding the proposed ordinance amendment. A motion was made by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Dargitz, to close the public hearing. The motion was unanimously approved 5-0. A motion was then made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bosch, to recommend to City Council that Ordinance Amendment 14/15-A, Auto Repair and Vehicle Fueling Station Regulations, be approved. The motion was unanimously approved 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Historic District Modification, 3821 West Milham Avenue. Mr. Forth summarized the staff report dated February 27, 2015 regarding a request pending before the Historic District Commission from Patrick and Lisa Lynch to remove approximately 16.5 acres of land from the existing Van Riper historic district property. Mr. Forth stated the proposed historic district modification would facilitate the construction of an approximate 180,000 square foot senior living facility along the western portion of 3821 West Milham Avenue, adjacent US-131. Mr. Forth discussed the Local Historic Districts Act related to the role of the Planning Commission to review the preliminary report from the Portage Historic District Study Committee and provide a recommendation. Mr. Forth stated the Historic District Commission has scheduled a public hearing to consider this matter on March 11, 2015 and the Planning Commission recommendation will be provided in advance of the public hearing.

Commissioner Dargitz stated she knows the owners of the historic property, however, does not have any financial or other conflict of interest in the property that would prevent her from voting on the proposed modification. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Somers, to recommend that the Historic District Modification, 3821 West Milham Avenue, be approved as detailed in the Department of Community Development report dated February 27, 2015. The motion was unanimously approved 5-0.

7:25 p.m. - The Commission took a short recess.

7:30 p.m. - The Commission reconvened the meeting in City Hall Conference Room No. 2

2. 2015-2025 Capital Improvement Program. City Manager Schaffer was in attendance for this agenda item and introduced himself to the Commission. Mr. Forth referred the Commission to the 2015-2025 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that was included in the agenda packet as a separate document. Mr. Forth summarized the February 23, 2015 memo from City Manager Schaffer that provided an overview of the FY 2015-

2025 CIP with emphasis on the upcoming FY 2015-2016 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 19th meeting. City Manager Schaffer discussed the traditional way the City Administration has prepared the annual CIP by developing the CIP project profiles then presenting the document to the Planning Commission for review and comment. Beginning next year, City Manager Schaffer indicated a new approach would be taken with citizen and Commission input being solicited earlier in the process so that comments and prospective projects could be considered by the City Administration prior to preparation of the CIP document. City Manager Schaffer also discussed additional neighborhood stabilization efforts such as enhanced street lighting, speed and traffic control, pedestrian amenities, etc. that would be considered for inclusion in the next CIP.

The Commission, City Manager Schaffer and staff briefly reviewed and discussed the various categories and projects of the CIP document including those related to overall roadway quality and maintenance, the Lakeview Drive/Portage Road realignment project, continued debt services reduction efforts, investments in the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) area and associated economic development/job creation, public safety facility improvements and equipment purchases, among others. City Manager Schaffer stated the city desires to hear the “wants” of the community (citizens, business owners, Planning Commission) and that staff would determine appropriate project prioritization and funding mechanisms. City Manager Schaffer stated a full CIP presentation could be provided to the Commission at the March 19th meeting, if desired. Mr. Forth asked that the Commission email him any additional questions regarding the CIP document prior to the March 19th meeting, if possible, so the responses could be prepared.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher T. Forth, AICP

Deputy Director of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Services