

PLANNING COMMISSION

June 18, 2015

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of June 18, 2015 was called to order by Chairman Welch at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. No citizens were in attendance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chairman Welch led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Christopher Forth, Deputy Director of Planning, Development & Neighborhood Services; and Michael West, Senior City Planner.

ROLL CALL:

Mr. Forth called the roll and the following Commissioners were present: Patterson (yes), Stoffer (yes), Welch (yes), Felicijan (yes), Dargitz (yes), Somers (yes), Schimmel (yes) and Richmond (yes). A motion was made by Commissioner Felicijan, seconded by Commissioner Richmond, to approve the roll excusing Commissioner Bosch. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Welch referred the Commission to the June 4, 2015 meeting minutes contained in the agenda packet. A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stoffer, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

None.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Election of Officers. Chairman Welch asked for nominations for the position of Chairman for the upcoming fiscal year. Commissioner Felicijan nominated Chairman Welch, supported by Commissioner Patterson. No other nominations for Chairman were provided. The Commission then voted unanimously 8-0 to appoint Chairman Welch as Chairman for the upcoming fiscal year. Chairman Welch asked for nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman for the upcoming fiscal year. Commissioner Stoffer nominated Commissioner Felicijan, supported by Commissioner Patterson. No other nominations for Vice-Chairman were provided. The Commission then voted unanimously 8-0 to appoint Commissioner Felicijan as Vice-Chairman for the upcoming fiscal year. Chairman Welch asked for nominations for the position of Secretary for the upcoming fiscal year. Commissioner Dargitz nominated Commissioner Stoffer, supported by Commissioner Patterson. No other nominations for Secretary were provided. The Commission then voted unanimously 8-0 to appoint Commissioner Stoffer as Secretary for the upcoming fiscal year.

7:05 p.m. - The Commission took a short recess.

7:08 p.m. - The Commission reconvened the meeting in City Hall Conference Room No. 1

2. Complete Street Policy (DRAFT). Mr. Forth provided a Powerpoint presentation that discussed the complete street concept with the focus on three main elements: 1) Complete Street; 2) Safe Routes to School and 3) Context Sensitive Solutions. Mr. Forth indicated complete streets policies vary based on the needs and characteristics of the community (urban, suburban, rural). Mr. Forth provided examples of “incomplete” streets and reviewed statistical data on pedestrian/bicycle crashes with vehicles in the City of Portage and statewide. Mr. Forth then provided examples of complete streets and discussed the benefits of complete streets policies and implementation. Mr. Forth summarized efforts made by the City of Portage to improve non-motorized methods of transportation over the past few decades and also discussed upcoming capital improvement projects involving sidewalk, bikeway and pathway extensions/connections, along with traffic improvement projects. Mr. Forth summarized the June 12, 2015 staff report and draft Complete Street Policy that was prepared by the Departments of Community Development and Transportation & Utilities. Mr. Forth indicated the draft policy was not an ordinance or mandate, but rather a city policy to guide future decision making. Mr. Forth stated the draft policy was based on model policies developed by the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) and Michigan Department of Transportation. Mr. Forth reviewed various sections of the draft policy and asked for Commission comments.

Commissioner Richmond discussed bus stop locations in the City of Portage (Meredith – south of Sprinkle and Brown Avenue) where pedestrian access can be difficult at times due to standing water and/or muddy conditions. Commissioner Dargitz asked why the term “traffic calming” is not utilized throughout the policy document. Commissioner Dargitz also asked whether the 85th percentile utilized to establish speed limits is a legal requirement or an industry standard/guideline. After additional discussion, the Commission agreed to table additional consideration of the Complete Streets Policy to the July 16, 2015 meeting.

3. Urban Planning Discussion Topics (June 5, 2015 email from Commissioner Dargitz). The Commission reviewed and discussed the various planning topics identified in Commissioner Dargitz June 4, 2015 email communication. Commissioner Dargitz clarified that it was not her intent to create additional work for staff, but rather have individual Commissioners select a topic of interest and present the topic to the full Commission at the end of a regularly scheduled meeting. Commissioner Felicijan suggested the Commission bring up these various planning topics/issues under New Business. Commissioners Felicijan and Dargitz stated they would provide a brief discussion of “tiny house zoning” at the next schedule meeting.

4. Planning Commission Attendance (discussion). Chairman Welch summarized the City Council direction provided to him regarding Planning Commissioner attendance and asked that each Commissioner make every effort possible to attend regularly scheduled meetings so that development applications can be considered in a timely manner. Mr. Forth discussed two recent site plan applications that had to be tabled and the meetings cancelled due to a lack of a quorum at the Planning Commission and the tight schedules for real estate transactions, financing and site construction.

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