

PLANNING COMMISSION

September 17, 2020

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of September 17, 2020 was called to order by Chairman Corradini at 7:00 p.m. Pursuant to Michigan Governor Whitmer's Executive Order, this meeting was held in-person with a maximum capacity of 10 persons in Council Chambers, along with the continued option for Commissioners, staff and the public to participate remotely via a phone-in option. Five Commissioners, three citizens and two staff members were present in Portage City Hall Council Chambers at the start of the meeting.

IN ATTENDANCE

Christopher Forth, Interim Director of Community Development; Joseph La Margo, City Manager; Robert Thall, Assistant City Attorney; Sam Bower, Communications & Research Coordinator.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Forth called the roll: Joshi (yes, in person); Fries (yes, in person); Corradini (yes, in person); Pezzoli (yes, in person); Baldwin (yes, in person); Myer (yes, phone in); Youngs (yes, phone in); and Freiman (yes, phone in) Commissioner Schimmel (yes, phone in).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Corradini referred the Commission to the September 3, 2020 meeting minutes contained in the agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Joshi, seconded by Commissioner Baldwin, to approve the minutes as submitted. Upon a roll call vote: Pezzoli (yes); Youngs (yes); Freiman (yes); Myer (yes); Baldwin (yes); Fries (yes); Joshi (yes); Corradini (yes); Schimmel (yes), the motion was approved 9-0.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Preliminary Report: Ordinance Amendment #19/20-C, Tree Preservation and Replacement Ordinance. Chairman Corradini indicated the City Administration is officially withdrawing the proposed ordinance from further consideration. Chairman Corradini introduced City Manager La Margo. City Manager La Margo acknowledged that the proposed Tree Preservation and Replacement Ordinance has generated concern among many of the residents, Planning Commissioners and others that need to be addressed. These concerns have been heard and, as a result, City Manager La Margo advised the Commission further work on the ordinance has ceased and city staff would begin to research other alternative solutions that may be incentive based. Commissioner Freiman indicated he was disappointed additional discussion on the proposed ordinance would not occur at tonight's meeting but thanked the City Manager and staff for their efforts and would be glad to revisit this issue in the future.

Chairman Corradini reconvened the public hearing. James Thomas, Planning Commissioner for the Village of Marcellus, requested information regarding the city's experience with marijuana facilities. Mr. Forth asked for Mr. Thomas's contact information and would contact him next week to further discuss. Bob Hassing, 1821 West Milham Avenue, stated he supported the withdrawal of the proposed ordinance even though it would not impact him directly. Mr. Hassing believed the ordinance should only regulate developers. Bill Patterson, 5302 Bala Cynwyd, invited the Planning Commissioner members to his Woodlands at Austin Lake to see the challenges involving trees. Peg Giem, 10234 East Shore Drive, thanks the Commissions, staff and former City Attorney Brown for their efforts but was thankful the proposed ordinance was withdrawn and be given further consideration. There being no further public comment, a motion was made by Commissioner Baldwin, seconded by Commissioner Joshi, to close the public hearing. Upon a roll call vote: Pezzoli (yes); Youngs (yes); Freiman (yes); Myer (yes); Baldwin (yes); Fries (yes); Joshi (yes); Corradini (yes); Schimmel (yes), the motion was approved 9-0.

Commissioner Joshi stated it was unusual to have the City Manager and Deputy City Manager at the Planning Commission meetings. Mr. Forth indicated they are part of the City Administration and can attend Board/Commission meetings. Commissioner Pezzoli didn't appreciate the email that was sent to the Planning Commission members from city staff being posted to social media; Commissioner Baldwin stated she didn't appreciate a telephone call from the Deputy City Manager that she believed was trying to influence here. Commissioner Youngs also stated he received a call from the Deputy City Manager explaining the changes to the proposed ordinance that he believed made the ordinance better. Commissioner Youngs also indicated he believed the Chairman should have been contacted first. Commissioner Pezzoli concurred with Commissioner Joshi and Commissioner Myers concurred with Commissioner Pezzoli. Commissioner Frieman also stated he received a call from the Deputy City Manager and indicated it was very helpful receiving an explanation. Commissioner Frieman said he posted the city staff email to social media as a way to be transparent. Commissioner Fries agreed with the other Commissioner comments. Commissioner Fries believed the timeline for review was too short and didn't allow an appropriate amount of time for public input. He said he had been contacted by many citizens who didn't support the ordinance and it was an overreach by government. Chairman Corradini concurred with almost everything the other Commissioners had to offer. He thanked staff and the citizens for their efforts but didn't necessarily agree that developers are clear-cutting land. He agreed with the withdrawal and then pursue other options. Chairman Corradini indicated he didn't receive a call on Friday and would have appreciated receiving the agenda material sooner to allow more time to review.

SITE/FINAL PLANS

None.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

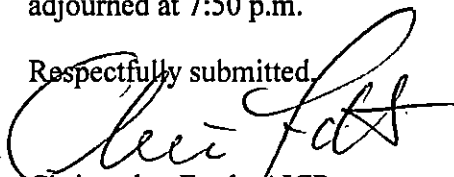
STATEMENT OF CITIZENS/COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Corradini asked the Commissioners if anyone needed to be excused from the October 1st or October 15th meetings. No Commissioners asked to be excused.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the regularly scheduled meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Christopher Forth, AICP
Interim Director of Community Development