

**CITY OF BIG RAPIDS
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 2, 2016**

Chairperson Schmidt called the March 2, 2016, special meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 6:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENT Sue Bean, Renato Cerdena, Jennifer Cochran, John Schmidt, Tim Vogel

EXCUSED Richard Griffin

ABSENT Jane Johansen

ALSO PRESENT Mark Sweppenheiser, Neighborhood Services Director
Cindy Plautz, Neighborhood Services

There were 3 people in the audience.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Sue Bean, seconded by Jennifer Cochran, to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2016, Planning Commission meeting as presented.

Motion passed unanimously with all in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT NOT RELATED TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

None heard.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Chairperson Schmidt outlined the public hearing process for the audience.

Site Plan Review for the Construction of a 7,225 sq. ft. Auto Parts Store at 630 S. State Street (O'Reilly Auto Parts)

Sweppenheiser introduced the request for site plan review saying that the property is located in the C-3 District and is 1.211 acres. The proposed auto parts store is a principal use. He noted that a revised landscape plan was submitted for approval as it originally did not meet

requirements. The storm water plan has been approved. Staff recommends approval of the site plan dated 1-27-16 using the 2-10-16 revised landscape plan.

Chairperson Schmidt opened the public hearing at 6:33 p.m.

Patrick O’Leary, 30450 Forest Drive, Franklin, MI 48005, represented the applicant. He stated that the property has been for sale for a long time and he, as a developer, tried to market it as a prime restaurant location and couldn’t get any interest. O’Reilly had been looking for a location and liked this one. The developer believes that the plan is advantageous to the area as they will be replacing a lot of pavement with green space.

Those Who Spoke in Favor

None

Those Who Spoke in Opposition

None

Written or Telephonic Communications Received by Staff

None

Chairperson Schmidt closed the public hearing at 6:38 p.m. and the Planning Commission entered into Fact Finding.

Developer O’Leary will own the property and lease to the O’Reilly Auto Parts store owner.

Vogel pointed out that the design of this building is not as attractive as some others. He presented a picture of a new O’Reilly’s located in Tecumseh. O’Leary commented that this site plan is the O’Reilly prototype and it is what the owner wanted.

Cochran asked if there were any other ideas for the location. O’Leary marketed to national retailers that would complement Ferris State University and didn’t get any viable interest.

Vogel wondered how they determined another auto parts store in town would be viable as there are a number of them already established in town. O’Leary answered that the retailer determined they wanted a share of the market and they normally do a lot of business with car dealers and garages.

The Planning Commission members agreed that the design of the building doesn’t fit the State Street location. Their job is to improve the community and believe the plain sided building could be made to look a lot nicer to fit into the community.

O'Leary stated that he sees a lot of the same type of building material used in the City and this plan is a high grade, paintable surface. The front of the building will be EIFS with red trim and a large sign. O'Leary compared the building to others nearby such as the Easy Mart to the south which has three batten board sides and Cranker's to the north which is metal siding. The O'Reilly plan includes trees and green space to the rear for a transition to the residential area and will have landscaping along the building to soften it. The steel pilings in the front are for safety.

The business is strictly retail and doesn't involve a machine shop.

The retention pond to the rear of the lot was discussed. O'Leary and Exxel engineer Bob Berends, 5252 Clyde Park S. W., Grand Rapids, MI 49509, explained that the retention pond is sloped and includes a control structure made up of filter fabric and rocks that drains water to the outlet structure where it is released over a 12 hour period until the retention pond is dry. The depth of water may get to 2 feet in the middle before it fully drains. This plan will be a relief to the City storm sewer system as water will no longer drain to the catch basin at Clark and Fuller.

The landscaping plan was discussed.

Sweppenheiser explained that a canopy tree is required at 30 foot intervals along the street frontage. This property has 167 feet along State Street and requires 5 trees. Three trees are planned. Schmidt asked if they are willing to do something different with the landscaping plan to meet the ordinance. The Tree Credit Program is being used for this project.

O'Leary said that the retaining wall on the Wendy's side will stay as nothing else could be done there. The property will be green from the rear of the building to the edge of the property. There is an earthen berm and 8 trees will be planted. They plan to take out the ties on the east side and lessen the 3 foot berm to 1 foot.

O'Leary met with MDOT and they will keep the same ingress/egress locations but will widen the radiuses and bring them up to current standards.

Vogel asked about the delivery area on the south side and the need for it to be screened per the ordinance. In defense, O'Leary said that there is a gas station to the south and it is 100 feet to the Clark Street residences. The gas station has metal out-buildings and heating and cooling apparatus on the roof that are equally offensive.

Vogel said there are 3 Norway Maples on the plan that are on the list of undesirable trees. They need to be 20 feet from the sidewalk and these are only 10 feet. Sweppenheiser said they can be included in the Tree Credit Program. There are 3 existing trees and 7 Tree Credits.

Vogel wondered if the area will be irrigated. It is not shown on the plan but O'Leary said it will be irrigated.

The front of the building includes landscaping and O'Leary was asked to see what he can do about the east side of the building.

Sweppenheiser said the City has not received a sign permit application as yet. O'Leary will submit applications for the maximum amount of signage.

Again the Committee expressed a desire for the building to fit into the area a little better. They would like to see it with a softer, more appealing look to fit State Street. Sweppenheiser agreed that per Chapter 9.6:2 of the Zoning Ordinance, the character must meet that of the adjoining property.

O'Leary commented that these would be big design changes if they were asked to look like the Tecumseh store. The store owner wants to control the look to comply with the prototype. They thought they were meeting the Ordinance. He stated that the gas station is not attractive. He will not be able to mimic the Tecumseh look on the given budget. Landscaping can do a lot for the attractiveness of the building. He noted other buildings do not have the required landscaping and he feels the requirement of one tree every 30 feet on a retail street is aggressive.

Sweppenheiser stated that we are not that far off.

The Committee thought it would be a good idea if a sub-committee was formed to approve the improved site plan once it is submitted. Sue Bean, Renato Cerdena and Tim Vogel will serve on this sub-committee.

MOTION

Motion was made by Tim Vogel, seconded by Jennifer Cochran, to approve the site plan for construction of a 7,225 sq. ft. auto parts store at 630 S. State Street (O'Reilly Auto Parts) with the following conditions:

A new full set of site plans with the engineer's seal must be submitted for review and is to include adjustments to the landscaping plan, addition of irrigation, and enhancements to the building's south façade. This new set of plans will be reviewed and approved by a sub-committee of the Planning Commission.

Motion passed with Sue Bean, Renato Cerdena, Jennifer Cochran, John Schmidt and Tim Vogel in favor.

Recommendation on the FY 2016/2017 Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Sweppenheiser explained that the CIP Committee, a sub-committee of the Planning Commission made up of Renato Cerdena, Jennifer Cochran and Tim Vogel, met with City staff for the purpose of identifying which projects should be funded for FY 2016/2017. They also ranked the

projects in order of importance. This year, the City Treasurer attended and let the committee know how much money was available in each fund. It was very helpful.

Per Sweppenheiser's report, he has added two projects that were not funded by the Committee: \$25,000 for surveillance cameras on the new Baldwin Street Bridge, and \$10,000 to replace hazardous trail areas along the Riverwalk. It is very likely that these projects could be funded out of the Mecosta County Community Foundation Riverwalk and Swede Hill funds.

Staff would encourage the Planning Commission to recommend final approval of the CIP Committee's recommendations to the City Commission.

Chairperson Schmidt opened the Public Hearing at 7:40 P.M.

Vogel reviewed the CIP Committee's recommendations (please refer to the CIP list).

General Fund – only \$180,500 is available for \$1,564,550 of proposed projects.

DART - \$200,000 is requested for construction of the DART garage at the Depot site. There are also \$150,000 available that was going to be used for new garage doors at the current site. This and grant funds would enable development of the new site at the Depot.

Motor Pool – there is enough money in this fund to cover the requests.

Local Streets - \$106,300 was recommended and prioritized by staff.

Major Streets - \$140,000 was recommended for project funding for the FY 2016/17.

Waste Water - \$100,000 was recommended by the Superintendent as this project is needed for their permit.

Sewer Replacement – based on the Superintendent's recommendation, all requests were recommended for funding in the amount of \$310,000.

Water Fund – based on Department Head recommendations, all \$220,000 worth of projects were funded.

Water Replacement - \$300,000 was reserved to go towards the projected \$1,976,000 total projects.

Airport – no funding recommended.

Those Who Spoke in Favor of the CIP

None

Those Who Spoke in Opposition of the CIP

None

Telephonic or Written Communication Received by Staff

None

Chairperson Schmidt Closed the Public Hearing at 8:05p.m.

MOTION

Motion was made by Tim Vogel, seconded by Jennifer Cochran, to recommend approval of the FY2016/17 Capital Improvement Program to the City Commission. Approval is to include the addition of Surveillance Cameras (\$25,500) at the Baldwin Street Bridge, and \$10,000 for replacement of hazardous Riverwalk trail segments.

Motion passed with Sue Bean, Renato Cerdena, Jennifer Cochran, John Schmidt and Tim Vogel in favor.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Recommendation of Surplus Property: 114 N. Warren Avenue (City Owned Parking Lot North of the Post Office).

Sweppenheiser explained that the agreement between the City and the Post Office concerning 114 N. Warren does not exist anymore. Therefore, the reason to postpone the approval of surplus property for additional information has been satisfied.

Vogel stated that there is enough opportunity for businesses to locate downtown and it doesn't make sense to declare this property as surplus at this time. Bean agreed with him that the parking lot is valuable to the Post Office and if they leave, there may be value to the new owner as well.

Renato wondered what would be different if it were declared surplus. Sweppenheiser answered that it could be sold.

MOTION

Motion was made by Tim Vogel, seconded by Renato Cerdena, to recommend to the City Commission the designation of 114 N. Warren Avenue (City owned parking lot north of the Post office) as surplus property.

Motion failed with Sue Bean, Jennifer Cochran, John Schmidt and Tim Vogel in opposition.

Renato Cerdena was in favor.

Bean reported that 3 houses have been sold in Woodward Estates off of Woodward.

Motion was made by Tim Vogel, seconded by Jennifer Cochran to adjourn the meeting. There being no further business, Chairman Schmidt adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.m. with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia J. Plautz
Planning Commission Secretary