

**CITY OF BIG RAPIDS
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
APRIL 20, 2016**

Vice-Chairperson Cerdena called the April 20, 2016, meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 6:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENT Sue Bean, Renato Cerdena, Jennifer Cochran, Jane Johansen, Tim Vogel

EXCUSED Richard Griffin, John Schmidt

ABSENT

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

There were 4 people in the audience.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Tim Vogel, seconded by Sue Bean, to approve the minutes of the March 16, 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

None

GENERAL BUSINESS

Review of the proposed construction of a 15,625 sq. ft. warehouse to be located at 1005 Baldwin Street (Wolverine World Wide).

Sweppenheiser reviewed his Staff Report saying that the proposed building would be located north of the existing Wolverine World Wide (WWW) building. The new construction will be a 15,625 sq. ft. accessory building. Staff has requested that the parking lot to the west of the White

Pine Trail be paved and include storm water control. This is important as it would help control storm water run-off before it affects the new Baldwin Street Bridge located down the hill from WWW on Baldwin Street. WWW has stated that they would like to add 25 Hawthorn trees along N. Fourth Avenue to create a screen between the parking lot and adjacent residential properties. The trees currently growing within the parking lot need to be removed to create a more orderly parking area.

WWW personnel hope to gain insight as to what the City and the Planning Commission will require concerning the construction of their proposed building.

Gail Taylor, Scott French and Ron Waznyk from WWW were present as well as Architect John O'Brien. They explained a bit of WWW history and said that the WWW contract process has changed for them from contracts being awarded on a best value basis to contracts being awarded on a cost basis. It is a competitive business where 3 to 5 year contracts can be repriced and could be as much as 10% lower than the original contract.

They plan on using the building as a warehouse. Currently, raw materials are shipped to Rockford and then up to Big Rapids as needed. Having a warehouse in Big Rapids would be an economic benefit to them. They could win more contracts based on a lower operating cost and, in turn, could possibly create more jobs.

The plan is not approved by WWW yet and they would like to include requirements of the City before presenting the plan to their corporate offices.

They believe the Big Rapids warehouse would create 10 jobs and help retain others. The structure would be attached to the current building but will be a basic warehouse with no restrooms. Storing materials in the new structure would allow more space in the current building to bring in additional production machinery and enable them to meet their contract demands.

Recently they have added 150 people at the Big Rapids site. They would like to be good neighbors with the Big Rapids Community and make the neighborhood nicer for nearby residents.

Cerdena asked about the tree selection for the parking lot and Sweppenheiser explained that due to nearby overhead wires, Hawthorns were selected. They are also considered to be hearty in this environment. He asked if traffic in the area would be increased and WWW representatives stated that currently 4 big trucks come in and out. They would expect between 4 and 7 smaller trucks per day once the warehouse is in operation.

The architect explained that the proposed steel building will be 125' X 125' in size with 24ft high ceilings located to the north of the factory. It will not have any additional loading docks but will have two overhead rolling doors for delivery. The elevation matches the existing building. A racking system for storage will be installed inside.

The height of the building is allowed in the Industrial Zone. The building will be heated and sprinkled but will not be air conditioned.

Vogel was concerned about lighting and wanted to make sure outside lighting will not shine into nearby homes. The WWW architect said they will comply.

When asked about paving the parking area, Taylor said that the building construction and parking lot paving are two separate projects. The building expenses come out of a construction budget and the parking lot expenses come out of their operating budget. They would like to take 3 to 5 years to pave and line the parking lot. She explained that the military shoe business does not have a high profit margin.

Vogel asked if the proposed building will displace parking and he was told that it will, but employees will have enough parking spots. When asked about making provisions for storm water, the applicant said that they have hired Mid-Michigan Engineering for the parking plan off of Fourth but it is not yet completed.

The Commission discussed paving the parking area. Bean asked if the City is comfortable with WWW's plan to pave the parking lot within 3 to 5 years. Sweppenheiser said the City is comfortable with it. Vogel commented that they will need to guard the trees they plan to plant and the trees within the parking area should be removed as they are not of high value and have created a slight problem. The applicant said they would remove them at the time of paving.

Vogel asked if paving is required by the City and said they could use a softer material. Sweppenheiser said that the ordinance is ambivalent concerning the need to pave. He added that the Carpet Gallery located down the hill on Baldwin floods due to storm water run-off.

Bean questioned that if this were a new business in the Industrial Park would they be required to pave the parking lot. Sweppenheiser answered: "potentially".

Vogel stated that he has no issue with the building but would like to make sure WWW addresses the lighting so it doesn't shine into nearby homes. Bean agreed saying that growth is good and she supports the project.

The applicant asked if they could go ahead and plant the trees along Fourth. Vogel thought it would be a good idea if they waited for the public hearing in May.

Vogel asked if there would be any hazardous materials stored on site to which WWW answered there won't be anything different than what is already stored on site – glues, isotopes and acetones. They will be stored in the existing building.

At this point the WWW attendees were advised to wait until after the public hearing to plant the trees and they left for the evening.

O'Reilly Sub-Committee

It was reported that O'Reilly will add 4 feet of brick to the exterior walls of the entire building. They also added 2 large trees to the landscape plan and widened the planting area on the south side to incorporate taller shrubs. They have satisfied the City's landscaping concerns.

Bean stated that she had heard the building would act as a ware house. It will be retail only.

WWW Project

The Commission discussed the WWW project again saying that 3 to 5 years is a long time to get the parking lot paved. If this were a new business, they would be made to pave the parking area. Sweppenheiser said that their willingness to plant the trees shows good faith.

Bean was not so sure about WWW's claim that they didn't have the money to pave the lot. She stated that WWW's claim of a \$1,000,000 investment is over exaggerated compared to other buildings of the same size and material. Paving would help the flooding issue of their neighbors.

Sweppenheiser said that WWW needs to take the White Pine Trail's proximity to the parking lot and the housing across the street from the parking lot into consideration.

Cerdena stated that the parking lot is large and perhaps their business can't support the cost of paving. He would like to be friendly to business expansion and suggested maybe the City could find a middle ground to lessen the requirement of paving while still accomplishing area improvements. Paving may be unreasonable.

Bean agreed that perhaps there could be a timeline to pave the parking lot but she thought that 3 to 5 years was too long. If they have money for a \$1,000,000 improvement they should be able to look at paving the parking lot. They have been in business a long time and should be able to pave it.

Cerdena thought that maybe the City could require them to regularly set aside a certain amount of money over a period of time to be used for paving, but Sweppenheiser said it was not the City's job to help them afford the City required improvement.

Vogel stated that they need to prevent the storm water runoff.

Surplus Property

Sweppenheiser stated that the City Commission is referring the property on N. Fourth Avenue to the Planning Commission again for determination of surplus property.

Vogel stated that the Planning Commission already declined recommendation of surplus property for this piece of land. He asked why they are asking the Planning Commission for determination again. Sweppenheiser said it was for the piece of land adjacent to Peg Brennen's property. The Mayor stated that the whole property should be considered without any conditions on it.

New State Farm Building

The Commission wondered if the owner was going to be completing the landscaping for the State Farm building located at the corner of State Street and Woodward Avenue. Sweppenheiser said that they should be.

Apartment Building on Chestnut

Sweppenheiser reported that the ZBA approved the variance for a 3 parking space variance allowing for a better designed parking area.

Park and Recreation Master Plan

Sweppenheiser reported that there will be a Public Hearing on May 12, 2016.

Old K-Mart Building

Sweppenheiser reported that Farm and Home will be occupying part of the old K-Mart building. The owners are still working with Joanne Fabrics for their possible occupancy of the building.

Thanks

This being their last Planning Commission meeting, the City and Planning Commission members wished to extend their gratitude to Jane Johansen and Richard Griffin for their dedication and service to the City.

There being no further business, Vice-Chairperson Cerdena closed the Planning Commission meeting at 7:48 p.m. with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia J. Plautz
Planning Commission Secretary