

**CITY OF BIG RAPIDS
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
June 15, 2016**

Chairperson Schmidt called the June 15, 2016, regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 6:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENT Sue Bean, Jennifer Cochran, Paul Jackson, Chris Jane, John Schmidt, Tim Vogel,

EXCUSED Renato Cerdena

ABSENT

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

There were 10 people in the audience.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Tim Vogel, seconded by Sue Bean, to approve the minutes of the May 18, 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: Construction of a 15,625 sq. ft. Warehouse Addition at 1005 Baldwin Street

Chairperson Schmidt opened the Public Hearing at 6:35 p.m.

Sweppenheiser introduced the Site Plan Review by saying the property is zoned Industrial where a fully enclosed warehouse is permitted. The plan includes the warehouse addition and parking with landscaping along the east edge of the property and a proposed fence on a portion of the

north property line. The parking plan for the west parking area does not show a landscaping plan but they would like to plant 25 Hawthorn trees along the west edge to screen the parking from the residential district. The plan dated May 12, 2016 shows the catch basin for the parking area. Sweppenheiser recommends approval per the Staff Report.

Applicant Statement

Gail Taylor, Wolverine World Wide, 7852 9 Mile Road, Big Rapids, stated that she has been a resident for 20 years. She introduced Scott French who acts as Wolverine's Facility Manager. Taylor stated that Wolverine is excited to be in Big Rapids providing jobs. The proposed warehouse will be a cost saving for their operation as currently they drive back and forth from Rockford for their materials.

Those Who Spoke in Favor

None heard.

Those Who Spoke in Opposition

Peggy Brennan, 1038 N. Fourth, Big Rapids, stated that she is pleased that Wolverine is growing but she opposes the addition. She has lived at 1038 N. Fourth for 49 years and has coexisted with Wolverine amicably. But now, things have changed.

She showed 3 pictures to the Commission:

1. Wolverine employees parking on City property.
2. Wolverine employees parking on grass, over curb and encroaching into neighborhood.
3. Unorganized employee parking in lot.

She also complained of employees eating their lunches in their cars and dumping their garbage and litter in the parking lot. She asked how many parking spots will be eliminated by adding the warehouse, to which Taylor answered, "50". They have no current plans to increase the parking area. She added that the corner of the parking lot will be paved and landscaped.

Peg stated that the community has worked hard to improve the east side of the City making the neighborhood more attractive. She sees Wolverine parking as detrimental and will oppose the warehouse addition until their parking situation is addressed. She added that Wolverine World Wide is located in a residential area, not the other way around.

Dan Moriarty, 1017 N. Fourth, Big Rapids, stated that he agrees with Peggy and is opposed due to the parking situation. Employee parking has encroached on City property and he complained about the trash accumulation. He also mentioned that bad language is heard from the employees and there are families with young children nearby. Wolverine needs to work to improve relations. He also noted that things have changed lately and is upset about the parking situation,

trash, and bad language. He feels Wolverine needs to provide 50 more parking spots to make up for those lost to the new addition.

Written Correspondence Received by Staff

None

Telephonic Correspondence Received by Staff

None

Applicant Rebuttal

Taylor commented that the parking has been difficult during the City's construction. Almost every day they have received a phone call concerning the construction making it difficult to instruct employees where to park as they came into work.

When asked about the parking, Taylor said that although smaller, they will restripe the area to make 75 parking spots. She added that the addition will be complete by November or December and the parking on the west will include a new storm water system, trees along the perimeter and then the paving will be done at a later date.

The current paved parking (near the addition) will be repaved and striped but the gravel area will remain gravel. They expect the warehouse addition to add 10 to 30 new jobs. Currently, the first shift has 350 to 400 employees and the second shift has 100 to 200 employees.

French added that due to snow removal, there is not a lot of curbing in the parking lot. They could add a pipe and rail system to help control parking.

Schmidt asked that with 60% currently paved, why couldn't they skim coat the remaining 40%.

French said the cost is prohibitive. He said that between the two parking lots there are 450 parking spots. Sweppenheiser added that 1 spot for every worker on the largest shift is required.

Vogel asked if they intend to have the west parking lot paved by 2020. Taylor said they would add the trees this year and pave as money became available. Vogel asked if posts or barriers could be used to delineate parking spots. French said they could add steel posts with cabling.

Taylor stated that they will address the parking by perhaps having the janitors direct parking at the start of each shift. They can also get notices to their employees concerning the trash. They need to train employees and make an effort to communicate their concerns to them.

Brennen stated that last week she noticed 53 empty parking spots and employees were parking on the street. She believes Wolverine employees are not respecting the neighborhood and management needs to communicate with them concerning their expectations.

Chairperson Schmidt closed the Public Hearing at 7:08 p.m. and the Planning Commission entered into Fact Finding.

Jackson asked about the number of parking spots. French stated that there are 450 spaces now. There may be less during construction.

Bean asked if this were a new plant, would the City require them to pave the parking lot. Sweppenheiser said that it would ultimately be a Planning Commission requirement. Bean believes that the parking is currently a mess and it needs to be addressed to help the neighborhood. She added that they need a better plan. Jane added that management communication with the employees might help the situation and relieve concerns. Vogel asked what assurances Wolverine could give them that the western parking lot would be paved by 2020. He asked about the longevity of their work contracts.

Cochran stated that she is in favor of Wolverine's growth but they must also respect the environment. She feels they need to address the trash situation and give some type of assurance that the western parking lot will be paved by 2020.

Jane said he is also on the side of growth.

Jackson feels that the parking is the hang up and he would like to see all the parking near the building (east parking lot) paved immediately. He would like to see the west parking lot paved sooner than 2020.

Bean thought that perhaps the building of the warehouse would give them the opportunity to have the entire parking area paved.

Vogel thought that barriers would help organize the parking and suggested that parking on City property could be an enforcement issue.

Sweppenheiser said that employees have parked off of Fourth Street for a long time. They have only been parking on City property since the construction project. The City has been lenient due to the construction.

Schmidt summarized the Planning Commission concerns as the following:

- There is parking mayhem – the lots need paving but it is costly.
- There is a problem with trash and litter.
- There is a problem with employee foul language.
- Wolverine is reluctant to immediately solve the parking problem.

- Bollards could be installed to align parking.
- Trash receptacles could be added and janitors could monitor.
- Wolverine needs to educate their employees.

Schmidt thought that Wolverine could lay a base coat for dust control and stripe the parking lots regardless of the addition.

MOTION

Motion was made by John Schmidt, seconded by Chris Jane, to table the site plan review for a 15,625 sq. ft. warehouse addition at 1005 Baldwin (Wolverine World Wide) for a special meeting giving Wolverine World Wide the opportunity to address issues of parking overflow/organization and come up with a parking plan and a policy to control trash and behavior.

Motion passed with Sue Bean, Jennifer Cochran, Paul Jackson, Chris Jane, John Schmidt and Tim Vogel in favor.

Public Hearing

Recommendation of Surplus Property at 318 S Third Avenue

Chairperson Schmidt opened the Public Hearing at 7:45 p.m.

Sweppenheiser introduced the request by saying that the City Commission has referred several City owned parcels to the Planning Commission to determine if these parcels should be considered surplus property. The recommendation is made back to the City Commission who ultimately has the authority to accept the recommendation.

Public Works has reviewed this property and due to an existing storm sewer drain, has determined that an easement would need to be created on this property if it is sold.

318 S. Third Avenue contains two parcels. One is .625 acres and is zoned C-3. The other is 3.427 acres and is zoned R-3. There is an existing 15” concrete storm drain on the property which would require an easement if sold. The City purchased the smaller property from Curries for \$30,000 for the placement of this storm drain. The VanDykes own the 8 acres to the north. The City does not currently have plans for this property but designation as surplus property now would expedite a sale if a developer were to be interested in the future.

Staff recommends designation as surplus property with an easement for the storm drain.

Those who Spoke in Favor

None

Those Who Spoke in Opposition

None

Written or Telephonic Communication Received by Staff

Sweppenheiser received a question from Adam Curtis who owns ABC Auto as to what is the next step. He may have a business plan.

Schmidt closed the Public Hearing at 7:50 p.m. and the Commission entered into Fact Finding.

Bean asked if there was enough frontage on S. Third for the property to be developed to which Sweppenheiser answered he didn't know at this point.

Vogel added the easement should be established all the way to the Muskegon River.

Motion

Motion was made by Tim Vogel, seconded by Paul Jackson, that the property at 318 N. Third be recommended to the City Commission as surplus property with the condition that the easement be taken all the way to the Muskegon River along the north property line.

Motion passed with Sue Bean, Jennifer Cochran, Paul Jackson, Chris Jane, John Schmidt and Tim Vogel in favor.

Public Hearing

Recommendation of Surplus Property at 1002 Catherine

Chairman Schmidt opened the Public Hearing at 7:55 p.m.

Sweppenheiser introduced the request by saying that the City Commission has referred several City owned parcels to the Planning Commission to determine if these parcels should be considered surplus property. The recommendation is made back to the City Commission who ultimately has the authority to accept the recommendation.

Public Works has reviewed the property at 1002 Catherine and has determined that there is no current or potential Public Works use for this property.

Sweppenheiser stated that the utility that was on Wolverine World Wide property was moved to this property to make room for their proposed addition. The lot size is 50' by 158' and requires an easement for the pole. There is a possibility that it could be sold to the neighboring property.

City Staff recommends designating this property as surplus.

Those Who Spoke in Favor

None

Those Who Spoke in Opposition

None

Written or Telephonic Communication Received by Staff

None

Chairperson Schmidt closed the Public Hearing at 8:00 p.m.

Motion

Motion was made by Tim Vogel, seconded by Chris Jane, to recommend to the City Commission that 1002 Catherine be designated as surplus property.

Motion passed with Sue Bean, Jennifer Cochran, Paul Jackson, Chris Jane, John Schmidt and Tim Vogel in favor.

Public Hearing

Recommendation of Surplus Property for 701 N State Street

Chairperson Schmidt opened the Public Hearing at 8:01p.m.

Sweppenheiser introduced the request by saying that the City Commission has referred several City owned parcels to the Planning Commission to determine if these parcels should be considered surplus property. The recommendation is made back to the City Commission who ultimately has the authority to accept the recommendation.

Sweppenheiser explained that this property is in the C-3 zone and is an irregular shape of 150' by 150' and is 0.577 acres. It was once used as the Dial-A-Ride bus location. It is considered buildable.

Public Works has reviewed this property and has determined there is no current or potential Public Works use for this property.

City Staff recommends a determination of surplus property.

Those Who Spoke in Favor

None

Those Who Spoke in Opposition

None

Written or Telephonic Communication Received by Staff

None

Chairperson Schmidt closed the Public Hearing at 8:02 p.m.

Schmidt asked if this property was used as a pathway. Sweppenheiser said that people think it's an alley. The property owners were given notice of this proposed action.

Motion

Motion was made by Tim Vogel, seconded by Paul Jackson, to recommend to the City Commission the designation of 701 N. State Street as surplus property.

Motion passed with Sue Bean, Jennifer Cochran, Paul Jackson, Chris Jane, John Schmidt and Tim Vogel in favor.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The City received a letter from Mary Ryan, President of the Good Neighbors Association, whose members expressed a concern about flashing signs that seem to be getting brighter and moving faster. They believe they pose a hazard on State Street. They suggest getting the opinion of professionals to address the issue of fast moving or blinking signs.

The City is currently working on the problem and is seeking an expert's opinion.

The owner of the River Bend Veterinary Clinic is looking at 745 Water Tower Road as a possible location for their business. Currently the property is zoned Residential and has a Special Use Permit. Rezoning to C-3 would be needed to operate a veterinary clinic, but the City is considering rezoning to C-1 and passing a Text Change in the C-1 to allow a veterinary clinic.

Currently Perry Street is zoned C-1 which is the most restrictive in the commercial area to retain the most control.

The O'Reilly Auto Parts project is still moving forward.

The owner of the State Farm building on State Street said landscaping will be complete in the next 60 days.

The Bonner Group has presented its sketch plans to the City. There is a request for proposals.

There being no further business, motion was made by Jennifer Cochran, seconded by Tim Vogel to adjourn.

Chairman Schmidt adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m. with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia J. Plautz
Planning Commission Secretary