

**CITY OF MASON
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 11, 2020**

Sabbadin called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. in the Sycamore Room 1st floor at 201 West Ash Street, Mason MI.

Present: Droscha, Howe, Perrault, Sabbadin, Vercher, Waxman, Wren
Absent: Barna (Notice given), Shattuck
Also Present: Elizabeth A. Hude, AICP, Community Development Director; Deb Stuart, City Manager

OATH OF OFFICE

MOTION by Waxman second by Howe, to move the Oath of Office to March 17, 2020, meeting.

Yes (7) Droscha, Howe, Perrault, Sabbadin, Vercher, Waxman, Wren
No (0)
Absent (2) Barna, Shattuck

MOTION PASSED

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Waxman second by Wren, to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes from January 14, 2020.

Yes (7) Droscha, Howe, Perrault, Sabbadin, Vercher, Waxman, Wren
No (0)
Absent (2) Barna, Shattuck

MOTION PASSED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. 75th Anniversary of City of Mason Planning Commission in 2020

Director Hude wanted to check in with the Commissioners to see if there was any more thought to forming a subcommittee or if anyone was willing to volunteer time to help with projects. Sabbadin asked if there was a need for a subcommittee at this time. Hude was open to suggestions but didn't think one was needed right now. Waxman would like to involve the state legislature as they have given the Planning Commission the power to do their jobs.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Draft Capital Improvement Plan Discussion

Sabbadin acknowledges City Manager, Deb Stuart being present and reminded the Commissioners that this is a discussion and time for questions, not a debate on the actual budget. He also explained how questions would be answered. There will be a Public Hearing on the Plan at the March 17 meeting.

Director Hude noted that the tracked changes were in red in the Plan but there was one clarification she wanted to make on page 14, Project number 2017-S22, the W. Elm improvements, McRoberts to Henderson, that what is listed is correct, it will go all the way to Henderson St.

Waxman asked about the Franklin Farms extension to Kipp Rd. as to whether or not the viability of the project has been strengthened in its need from the City as it has been successfully challenged in the past. Hude replied that going back through the records, there were some residents that were opposed to the project but she has spoken with the property owner and there is nothing conclusive. She noted that there are about 300 households in there and there is only one way in for fire and police to get in and out of the neighborhood. There is an ordinance now that states no more than 25 households can be served by a single means of egress so this becomes a safety issue also considering that the US 127 bridge has been closed on and off in the past. If neighbors are concerned about traffic they can try to work with them and possibly put a gate up on that access point that is only open during emergencies. Waxman said that the road should be open access all of the time if it is going to be built and that it seems it would slow down the fire department if they had to open a gate. Sabbadin shared that the fire department has done it before and it doesn't take them long to do that.

Waxman asked if the DPW/Wastewater treatment project that would be possibly converted to public use would be a wise move as the needs of the City will change over time and they may need to eventually reclaim the space. Hude deferred to City Manager Stuart. Stuart shared it is being held as a placeholder for the time being and will not be turned into a park but may be an access or connection point for the trail, what is critical is that the project is completed and that the space is not just left there holding whatever is left over. It may just be green space with no public use, but they want to have a plan so something is done with it.

Sabbadin asked if the new Wastewater Treatment plant would be able to handle greater capacity if someone bought Wyeth and started manufacturing at the level Wyeth was, is the new plant expandable? Stuart responded that the new design is expandable and a new treatment tank can be added. The plan was done that way due to agriculture processing which is a growing business in this region. The new plant is not being built with agriculture processing in mind, but if Mason gets an agriculture processing business the plant design will allow the accommodation of the business.

Waxman asked Stuart if she could address the City's strategy in dealing with the increases in population as it may not be just manufacturing that comes into Mason, but there could be 1500-2000 more residences. Stuart replied that the current plan is meant to deal with residential build out but it is not prepared to deal with a large processor coming in that will be using a lot of water and creating a large amount of wastewater. The plan can handle normal residential and industrial growth. Waxman asked if Dart Container is using the City water and sewer. Stuart answered no on water, yes on sewer. Dart has their own wells that they take care of and their own treatment of water and Mason meters them separately than how they meter within the City limits. Waxman is concerned with the amount of corporate growth outside of the City limits. Stuart said that Dart has a set maximum that they can go to before they

need to renegotiate their agreement and the set maximum is for an entire district, not just Dart, but it includes part of Vevay Township. They can continue to grow, without approval from the City, until they reach the maximum and when they do, she will not negotiate without a 425 where they will become City property. She acknowledged that currently the City is subsidizing Dart's use of the sewer plant. Waxman shared he isn't concerned about the budget side, he is concerned with the capacity side. Stuart replied that they are nowhere near the capacity level they had when Wyeth was open due to the nature of their business.

Waxman asked if there were 5 police cars in the fleet. Hude noted on page 40 of the CIP, the Fleet Summary and Replacement Schedule, they did make a change, there are four patrol cars with a lifespan of four years each, and then detective car/admin car, there are two with a lifespan of ten years. Waxman followed up wondering if the narrative then changes because why would you need to purchase two cars in one year, wouldn't it make more sense to stagger them? Stuart responded that as they were looking at the motor vehicle pool they realized there are some large equipment replacements that they can't do other replacements with that year so you may have to double up a police car replacement because the motor vehicle budget can't handle those large purchases. Hude noted on page 43 that she added a line to the narrative for vehicle number 86 replacement after speaking with DPW that the purchase will be at the end of year three and will follow the four year replacement cycle. Purchase in that fiscal year is necessary to accommodate purchase of large equipment number 26 in fiscal year 2025-26.

Waxman asked about the new park signage/wayfinding plan and how the evaluation process will work for replacement down the road. Hude asked for clarification if he was asking about the park signs and how they rotate through replacing them. Waxman nodded in affirmation and then added that he was including the signs downtown also. Hude noted they would begin with Laylin Park this year as they are completing work there and then start with the Historic District downtown. There will be some possible changes as they finalize the wayfinding plan and start finalizing locations, determining content and specifications, and get quotes on the actual cost of the signs.

Waxman asked about the \$1.5 million dollar price tag on the library and is that viable as there are options to move the library out of that building which would seem more economical. He believes that building to be a money pit and Mason seems to be the only community that is required to maintain a library for the library. Stuart answered that it will be up to the Planning Commission to determine if the project should be moved further out. Staff believes it to be a vital asset to the community as do the residents when surveyed. The Mason Library is one of the highest use libraries in the CADL system and Mason has greater contribution of volunteers and donations than any other in the system. Mason is not the only municipality that maintains the building, the downtown branch in Lansing is the only non-municipality owned facility. Stuart acknowledged that it is an older building, but she feels it fits the character of Mason. The feasibility study revealed that it is able to be used as a current footprint and grow in the future. She believes that City and staff are committed to the first floor renovations, beyond that there is less support for that being funded by local tax dollars. It is embarrassing that the library is not accessible as it entertains significant use by young children and there are not accessible bathrooms and space for their programs. Hude added that the library brings traffic and spending to the local stores and if it is moved, it could harm the downtown. Sabbadin shared that they have put a significant amount of money into the library already so to move it would be throwing that money away. He thinks they should get the first floor compliant. Wren agreed that as a business owner she hears it two or three times a week that people, especially those with children, are in the store because they have been to the library or are going to the library afterwards. Stuart shared that there are two things that have to happen before they make the investment, first, they will clear the deed so the City owns the building outright and there are no restrictions and second, the

first floor improvements are necessary no matter what business is in there.

Wren asked about the light at Jefferson and Maple and realizes that it is not fixable and that there is going to be a traffic study but she already sees many near accidents at Jefferson and Ash, will there be more with a four way stop due to people driving through the stop signs? Stuart said that intersection was discussed in great detail at the last Downtown Development Authority meeting and there was a lot of support for it going to a four way stop as they thought it would be safer for pedestrians if everyone had to stop but they thought there should still be a light there due to visibility with the buildings and site lines being able to see the stop signs. Another thing they thought should be included in the CIP, which won't be in this year's, but may have to be amended for next year, is tree replacement. Many of the trees are overgrown for the space they are supposed to inhabit and the business owners are not happy about the fruit and odor from the trees. Sabbadin commented that the trees are 20 years old and have fared really well, he didn't realize they were overgrown. Howe mentioned that 20 years ago they were told those trees would not reach that height as that was discussed when they put them in.

Sabbadin reminded the Commissioners to be prepared for the Public Hearing in March. Howe asked what the process would be if the Planning Commission needed to propose an amendment to change the CIP, would that require a special meeting to meet the City Council deadline for the CIP? Sabaddin responded that they would need to send the amendment to staff and they would have to schedule a special meeting because they are up against a strict deadline. Hude commented that the current meeting was the opportunity to share any issues or proposed changes so they can have those ready by the March Public Hearing. Howe replied that he was thinking if someone from the public brings up something they didn't think about. Hude answered that the Planning Commission could take that public comment and send it as a recommendation to City Council and they could take that and adopt it with the amended changes or not. Stuart added that if a resident did bring something that was a valid consideration, the CIP could still go before City Council while there is a pending recommendation being worked on as it allows the budgeting process to begin.

Howe thanked the City Manager and Director Hude for their work that was presented and noted this was the smoothest CIP process since he has been a Commissioner.

NEW BUSINESS

Sabaddin noted that the MSU Citizen Planner training that was supposed to be starting was cancelled due to lack of participants.

LIAISON REPORT

Droscha shared that City Council passed the Parks, Recreation and Non-Motorized Plan and that is moving on to the State. They have also been working on the CIP. The last meeting they had they received quite a bit of input from the community, and information from the State and Jordan Drilling about the oil well. If Commissioners have any questions he will do his best to answer. Council is in process of drafting a letter to the State that opposes the oil drilling and Council members were to submit their reasons for opposing. He stated that it is a State decision so the City is powerless and it will not smell good but they don't have any say in it.

Howe noted it is important what they are doing with the letter because if the school and Vevay Township are also sending comments someone may look at it and it could change their mind to change the location.

Perrault asked what the factors for consideration were, are they taking any of the letters they receive truly into consideration or have they made their decision already? Droscha said that they supposedly have not made a decision yet. Perrault asked if they say what they are basing their decision on. Droscha replied that the State's criteria are - has Jordan Drilling followed all of the application rules for the well, and that they are hampered by State law because if they deny the well they have to give cause to deny or they can be liable to the company to be sued for denial. Waxman noted that it is similar to the Planning Commission having specific findings of fact to deny a site plan and it probably the same for the State that they have to have findings of fact that the project is not in compliance with some State or Federal law. Droscha agreed. Perrault asked if there isn't a law that states they need to be a certain distance from a well populated area. Droscha replied that the distance right now is 750 feet. Stuart shared that the crux of the issue is that cities and villages have the ability to provide ordinances and restrictions within their jurisdictions and townships do not so you end up seeing a lot of these wells in townships but in close proximity to cities and villages. The resolution that Council is crafting contains some solid arguments based on finding of fact which one of those is that the property is surrounded by City property and this well would be a violation of our ordinance as far as distance from a property line. EGLE also has a rule on their books regarding setback for burning from a densely populated area due to odor and that is 1400 feet so Mason is citing that reason but she also concludes that for this well it may already be too late because there is no legislation the State can point to and there is no requirement for public comment or feedback. The hope will be that the State can pass legislation to increase distance from densely populated areas with these types of wells.

Director Hude thanked the Commissioners for their work on the Parks Plan and shared that she is finalizing everything and will get the plan to the DNR by the end of the week.

Sabaddin noted the City Manager's report from January 31st and encouraged the Commissioners to read it.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:15 p.m.

Anne Klein Barna, Secretary