

CITY OF GRAND HAVEN
GRAND HAVEN, MICHIGAN
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

March 16, 2021

A regular electronic meeting of the Grand Haven Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Bill Ellingboe at 7:01 p.m. via Zoom. On roll call, the following members were:

Present: Collin Beighley, Robert Grimes, (Dallas, Texas), Kevin McLaughlin (Ormond Beach, FL), Tamera Owens, Mike Westbrook, Ryan Galligan, Kirsten Runschke, Chair Bill Ellingboe (all other members were located in Grand Haven, MI)

Absent: none

Also present were Jennifer Howland, Community Development Manager, Ashley Latsch, Assistant to the City Manager, and Pat McGinnis, City Manager.

Call to Audience – First Opportunity Howland referred the commissioners to the emails collected prior to the meeting and shared with the Planning Commissioners.

Beyond the Pier Waterfront Master Plan

Howland reviewed the major elements of the draft Beyond the Pier Waterfront Master Plan.

Ellingboe said there is economic uncertainty about the Chinook Pier Shops. He was interested in considering the County lot for infill, as well as the public lot west of the library.

Beighley was happy that Lot H was no longer being considered. He supports the concept of moving development toward the courthouse. He also supports the waterfront being used for eat/shop/play elements and an anchor restaurant. He suggested moving the Eco-Oasis to the short term priority list because the engineering for that will take a long time.

Ellingboe referenced the parking analysis and he thought development of the city parking lots was worth moving forward as a discussion item – not necessarily a 5-story parking deck but some mixed use. The concept of Lot H with additional parking users and less overall parking might work in a parking lot further out from the core downtown.

McLaughlin said that the plan was supposed to focus on the waterfront. He encouraged the City to allow the private sector to tell us what to develop, based on what they can afford to build. He suggested publishing an RFQ with all of the citizen comments attached and see what responses we receive. The Farmers Market could be moved, as could other elements. He said that the tenants at the Depot probably want to stay there because the foot traffic is better.

Grimes asked how much the City paid for the study. Howland stated that it was a \$61,000 project, of which the City paid \$11,000. The rest was grant-funded.

Skelly asked if we must develop public parking lots to fund the waterfront improvements. He stated that Chinook Pier is a gateway to the riverfront. The majority of survey respondents want Chinook

Pier shops back. He likes McLaughlin's idea of leaning on developers to propose a project on the waterfront based on the community's vision. Once we collect responses, the community can review the proposals.

Grimes prefers to keep the site of the Chinook Pier shops open space.

Ellingboe stated that a significant portion of the community wants public input and control over what happens, so a public/private partnership could be a good fit.

Skelly stated that we should provide solid parameters for development intensity and use.

Runschke supported the idea of bringing in developers to provide fresh ideas for the multi-use market. A public/private partnership would maintain the property for public use.

Howland explained the expectations of soliciting RFQs for a development site. Before we publish the RFQ, we would work with the community to create parameters for the development site. We'd provide parameters on things like site size, land uses, maximum building height, and elements such as maintaining public access to the waterfront, outdoor dining, etc. We'd provide the zoning regulations for the property, and share the overall schematic plan for the waterfront.

Galligan supports maintaining public access from the Wharf to the Pier. He suggested considering Lot D in the northeast corner of Washington and Harbor as an RFQ site.

Ellingboe said that poor wayfinding can make people feel like parking is limited, so that should be enhanced to help people navigate the downtown and waterfront area.

Beighley said that converting Franklin Ave to two-way traffic will improve accessibility. Ellingboe wants to see more stop signs on Columbus and Franklin.

Runschke supports broadening the development site to include the area between the City marina building and the coal tipple to give developers flexibility.

McLaughlin agreed with Runschke. He is concerned about how much we can support as taxpayers; we can't afford everything. He suggested considering paid parking in some areas to generate revenue, as well as other ideas that generate additional income from visitors rather than taxpayers. Ellingboe said we'd likely get pushback from locals if we start charging for parking. McLaughlin suggested that locals get a parking pass.

Grimes supports McLaughlin's ideas. More parking means more congestion.

Beighley said to look at the north end of the study area for the RFQ development site to generate revenue, and he re-stated to move the Eco-Oasis to the short term priority list to get started on engineering.

Westbrook asked about the intentions for the coal tipple; it needs some TLC. Howland stated that it would remain in place in the proposed schematic design. Ellingboe stated that it could be enhanced but he likes the coal tipple and locomotive.

Runschke supports moving the Eco-Oasis to the short term priority list but allow developers to

propose elements of the waterfront that work for theirs design concepts. She doesn't want to over-engineer the design parameters before publishing the RFQ.

McLaughlin encouraged the City to take its time vetting the plan and RFQ on the Planning Commission's schedule; the City Council is in no hurry to approve the plan.

Skelly said that we need to be very diligent and upfront with community engagement. He wants to ensure we have meaningful representation from the residents of Grand Haven. He desires an iterative process, but recognizes the research is challenging.

In terms of future steps, Howland is seeking support from the Planning Commission for the schematic design, action plan, and ultimately the RFQ site and process.

Beighley said that he'd support the plan if there was no development on the city parking lots.

Galligan suggested moving it to the long term priority list.

Skelly wants the references to parking lot infill removed from the plan. He stated that there will soon be two major projects underway in the study area that will change the feel of the area (Peerless Flats and The Trib).

McLaughlin asked what the DDA's opinion is of parking lot infill.

Mayor Monetza said that the DDA has expected infill development for a long time; it was in the 2004 downtown plan. The DDA said that infill needs to be on a big enough scale to work. Lot H was supported as a location because that is what was presented to them. Monetza said that the support of the Planning Commission is important because this is a planning document. He encouraged the commissioners to keep the process moving but to be deliberate.

Runschke doesn't support dumping the concept of parking lot infill. She supports moving it to the long term priority list.

Ellingboe supports keeping parking lot infill development in the plan, but with modified language.

Motion by McLaughlin, seconded by Runschke, to bring the plan back to the Planning Commission after staff has made all requested changes, passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Call to Audience – Second Opportunity

Mike Dora, 501 Friant St, thanked the commissioners. He is in no hurry to see the plan at City Council. He'd like to see 2-3 additional meetings and lots of public input to ensure a good fit. He asked the commissioners to bring it to the City Council when it is right.

Via Facebook: Gail Parmlee, 215 Howard Ave, asked to please not sell public land.

Via Facebook: Jean Constantine, 307 S 4th St, appreciated the commissioners being thoughtful with timing and public input.

Adjournment:

Motion by Runschke, seconded by Beighley, to adjourn was unanimously approved by roll call

vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.



Jennifer Howland

Community Development Manager