

CITY OF GRAND HAVEN  
GRAND HAVEN, MICHIGAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

September 14, 2021



A regular meeting of the Grand Haven Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Kevin McLaughlin at 7:00 p.m. at the Grand Haven Council Chambers. On roll call, the following members were:

Present: Ryan Galligan, Collin Beighley, Robert Grimes, Eric Inlaw, Tamera Owens, David Skelly, Magda Smolenska, Chair Kevin McLaughlin

Absent: Mike Westbrook

Also present was Jennifer Howland, Community Development Manager

**Approval of Minutes**

Motion by Grimes, seconded by Inlaw, to approve the August 10, 2021 minutes was approved unanimously by voice vote.

**Call to Audience – First Opportunity** *No comments*

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**Case 21-41: Final Development Plan for the Tribune Lofts Planned Development located at 101 N 3rd St (parcel #70-03-20-429-020).**

Howland provided an overview of the request. She explained that the Board of Light & Power will require a transformer to be installed next to the dumpster enclosure, which will affect the landscaping design slightly.

Denny Cherette was present to answer any questions.

Skelly verified with Howland that illumination of signage is permitted and that street tree planting to be coordinated with the Public Works Department.

McLaughlin asked for clarification on fire lane. Larry Hall said they changed the parking configuration to the north of the building to meet the fire marshal's requirements.

Motion by Skelly, seconded by Grimes, to APPROVE Case 21-41, a Final Development Plan for the Tribune Lofts Planned Development located at 101 N 3rd St (parcel #70-03-20-429-020), based on the information submitted for review, and subject to the following condition:

1. Water, sanitary sewer, and storm water management are subject to approval by the Public Works Department.

The motion carried unanimously on roll call vote.

**Case 21-18: Continued discussion about a proposed text amendment to allow electronic message boards on properties where religious institutions are operating.**

Howland reviewed the proposed text and map of eligible properties.

PAYMENT MUST BE MADE AT  
GRAND HAVEN CITY HALL  
THANK YOU

## - NOTICE -

### WATER SHUT-OFF

*MP Marine & Engine*  
This is to notify you that water will be shut off at:

Address	1709 AIRPARK DR
Date Due (by 4:00 P.M.)	10/25/2021
Account #	312190325
Amount Due \$	\$308.68

☒ Due to Delinquent Bill

Due to NSF check  
Payment must be in Cash or  
Money Order

*\$35.00 fee if not paid by due date.*

Guard against the collapse of tanks, boilers, or other fixtures and look out for fires and boiler as the Water Department assumes no responsibility for what may happen on the premises as a result of the water being shut off.

Your best protection against damage is to shut off the valve on your service pipe where it enters the house. This valve is located between the water meter and the wall of the house.

Draw water sufficient for your needs before shut-off.  
To avoid shut-off, pay at:

*City of Grand Haven*  
*City Hall*  
519 Washington Avenue  
Telephone 847-4895  
Hours: 8:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.



Owens wished to discuss the proposed hours of operation. Adrienne Guzman said that Grand Haven Christian School uses their sign mostly during school hours and a bit into the evening.

Skelly was concerned about the proposed hours of operation and asked about colors. Howland said the 2009 discussion included a suggestion to limit colors to a black background and amber lettering. That suggestion didn't carry forward in the ordinance.

Grimes asked about setbacks from residential uses. For example, if the Church of the Dunes on Sheldon Road meets the proposed setback, then 25 feet is too close. He likes that it must be as far from residential properties as possible, but he is concerned about light/brightness.

Guzman reminded the Planning Commission that these signs would require a special land use permit. The Planning Commission could consider lesser hours depending on the location and specific circumstances.

Inlaw was concerned about these signs operating in the winter and asked Howland about enforcement action. Howland explained that it would be complaint-driven and the code enforcement officer would contact the owner to adjust the settings or shut off the sign until it could be repaired. Howland also explained that some electronic message boards on Beacon Blvd were approved prior to the current ordinance and had some nonconforming aspects such as animation.

Galligan said the ordinance is ready for a public hearing, although he is skeptical about allowing electronic signs.

Smolenska asked about design parameters and wanted to see regulations to cover that. She suggested requiring a white background to be similar to changeable copy signs so it would mimic a static sign.

Guzman said that electronic signs have come a long way since 2009 when black/amber was the standard.

Howland clarified that nonresidential uses in residential districts do not permit illumination currently, so these signs would be the only illuminated signs in those districts.

Beighley said he is comfortable moving forward to a public hearing but has reservations.

McLaughlin is also ready for a public hearing and believes the special land use process should address remaining concerns. A public hearing will be set for October 12, 2021.

**Case 21-38: A proposed text amendment to Sec. 40-201.19 and Sec. 40-413.D of the Zoning Ordinance, to change sign band regulations in the Central Business District.**

Howland reviewed the proposed text amendment.

Howland confirmed for Skelly that illumination is allowed. Howland also reviewed the support from the MSDDA and Historic Conservation District Commission for the proposed amendment.

Grimes wanted to have more discussion before the ordinance moved forward. He was not present at the August meeting.

Smolenska is not in favor of the expanded height of the sign band because it may be out of proportion; 4 feet seems too tall.

At Grimes' request, Howland provided background on Sandi Gentry's request for an amendment. When applicants request something that doesn't meet the ordinance, and they push back and ask for a change, Howland is open to considering it because the zoning ordinance is a living document.

Inlaw asked if a compromise could be reached for Ms. Gentry's building. Howland explained that the Zoning Board of Appeals will consider her specific request at their meeting the following night.

Galligan asked if the ordinance specifies separate dimensions for the sign band and for wall signs. This led to a discussion about the distinction between a sign band as an architectural feature, which is separate from the dimensions of a sign that would be attached to the sign band. Signs can be taller than the sign band.

Smolenska was not in favor of changing the sign band nor in favor of allowing wall signs on upper stories.

Beighley was supportive of continuing to allow wall signs to be larger than the sign band, as long as they are above the first floor windows.

McLaughlin agreed with other comments. He does not want to change the character of the downtown. He asked if we would move forward with the text amendment if Ms. Gentry's variance is approved by the ZBA. Howland said that the ordinance has been interpreted over the years to allow wall signs that are bigger than the sign band, as long as they are mounted to the building between the first floor and second floor windows. The commissioners agreed that was a reasonable interpretation. The consensus was to not move forward with a text amendment at this time.

**Case 21-42: At the direction of the City Council, the Planning Commission will consider possible amendments to the Zoning Ordinance related to the current 6-month moratorium on 1) acceptance of new applications for two-unit dwellings in the LDR, MDR, S, E, OT, and OS districts other than those that propose to divide an existing single-family dwelling into a two-unit dwelling, and 2) acceptance of new lot split applications for residential lots in the MDR, MFR, S, E, OT, NMU, and OS zoning districts**

Howland provided an overview of the suggested amendments to address concerns raised by the community, which responded to the 6-month moratorium put in place by the City Council.

Smolenska and Beighley support the suggested amendments.

Galligan stated that a 5,800 sq. ft. lot is not too small and would support continuing to allow that minimum lot size.

Inlaw asked why the ordinance was being considered for amendment. McLaughlin provided some history about how some community members and city council members were pushing back on the increased residential density resulting from the 2021 zoning ordinance update, so the City Council directed the Planning Commission to review the ordinance. He also stated that the MDR

District should be merged with the LDR District to maintain the charm of the city, and that the City should do everything it can to preserve neighborhoods. Inlaw said he shares McLaughlin's vision.

Grimes said that he has always been vocal about being opposed to increased density without expanding streets. He supports low density but also supports nice condos and apartments when they are right downtown because they are needed.

Skelly agreed with Grimes.

Howland reminded the commissioners of the zoning ordinance amendment process and how the changes made were based on significant public engagement. She cautioned the commissioners against undoing all changes but instead recommended that they consider the six suggested amendments as proposed in the staff report.

Owens was comfortable with a minor course correction, because it is not an overreaction to what the public and City Council has said. The language is reasonable and it is ready for public comment.

Grimes expressed his concern about increasing density and expecting it to result in more affordable housing. Developers often build units and then flip them for a profit, and then the development deteriorates over time.

Skelly said that the two-unit development at First and Howard was a red flag/alarm. It helped community members realize how the ordinance amendments lead to changes, which shortly thereafter led to the temporary moratorium.

The commissioners agreed to set a public hearing for October to consider the suggested amendments.

#### **Zoning Board of Appeals Liaison Report**

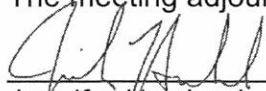
There was no meeting in August, so there was nothing to report.

#### **Approval of 2022 Meeting Dates**

Motion by Beighley, seconded by Skelly, to approve the 2022 meeting dates was approved unanimously by voice vote, with the correction that October, November and December would be 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday.

#### **Adjournment:**

Motion by Grimes, seconded by Owens, to adjourn was unanimously approved by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.



Jennifer Howland  
Community Development Manager