

CITY OF GRAND HAVEN  
GRAND HAVEN, MICHIGAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

APPROVED

NOV - 9 2021

CITY OF GRAND HAVEN  
PLANNING COMMISSION

October 12, 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, Eric Inlaw, Tamera Owens, David Skelly, Magda Smolenska, Chair Kevin McLaughlin

Absent: Robert Grimes, Mike Westbrook

Also present were Jennifer Howland, Community Development Manager, Rhonda Kleyn, Neighborhood Development Coordinator, and Pat McGinnis, City Manager.

**Approval of Minutes**

Motion by Inlaw, seconded by Beighley, to approve the September 14, 2021 minutes was approved unanimously by voice vote.

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

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**Case 21-43: A request from Jay Cutie of Blue Agate LLC to vacate Waverly Avenue right-of-way between 816 Waverly Avenue and the railroad tracks, pursuant to Ch. 32, Article IV of the Code of Ordinances.**

Howland provided an overview of the request.

Denny Dryer, 220 ½ Washington Ave, represented Mr. Cutie. The goal is to put in a roadway for private development as the City is unlikely to install a roadway in the future. The street vacation will allow development of the properties to the north and south. If the right-of-way isn't vacated, the project at 815 Verhoeks will follow the plan as originally approved.

Chair McLaughlin opened the public hearing. There were no comments.

Motion by Skelly, seconded by Beighley, to close the public hearing carried unanimously on roll call vote.

Motion by Beighley, seconded by Skelly, to recommend APPROVAL of Case 21-43, a request from Jay Cutie of Blue Agate LLC to vacate Waverly Avenue right-of-way between 816 Waverly Avenue and the railroad tracks, pursuant to Ch. 32, Article IV of the Code of Ordinances, based on the information submitted for review, and subject to the following condition:

1. A 33-foot-wide easement must be provided in the same location as the current right-of-way for the watermain.

The motion carried unanimously on roll call vote.

**Case 21-45: An amendment to the approved site plan for 815 Verhoeks Street, contingent upon the vacation of Waverly Avenue (see Case 21-43).**

Howland provided an overview of the request.

Denny Dryer stated that the proposed development is a really good use of contaminated land. A similar project was developed on North Ferry Street. He expects that three businesses are going to occupy the Phase 1 building. All units are spoken for.

Skelly asked about uses. Dryer said that there would be a landscaping business and a contractor establishment. Howland said that a mix of uses will require a special land use permit. The site plan being considered tonight is for a private warehouse use only. Other uses (contractor establishment, retail, etc) will require a special land use permit. The project on North Ferry Street was approved as a mixed use development via a special land use permit.

Motion by Inlaw, seconded by Beighley, to APPROVE Case 21-45, an amendment to the approved site plan for 815 Verhoeks Street, contingent upon the vacation of Waverly Avenue (see Case 21-43), based on the information submitted for review, and subject to the following conditions:

1. The Waverly Avenue right-of-way between the railroad tracks and 816 Waverly Avenue will be vacated.
2. An additional fire hydrant is required at the southwest corner of Building #1.
3. Signage for fire lanes is required along the access road.
4. The warehouse units must be owner-occupied and not leased so the project cannot be classified as a self-service storage unit.
5. Existing vegetation to the south of the shared driveway will serve as the required parking lot landscape screening.
6. The utility plan, including the storm water management plan, must be approved by the DPW Director prior to issuance of any permits.

The motion carried unanimously on roll call vote.

**Case 21-42: Proposed text amendments to the Zoning Ordinance related to the current 6-month moratorium on accepting applications for two-unit dwellings and lot splits in certain districts. The commission will also discuss the concept of merging the MDR District into the LDR District.**

McLaughlin explained that the public hearing was set at the September meeting, but he felt that the commission's intent was to include the proposed merging of the MDR and LDR districts. So, he cancelled the public hearing and brought the case back to the commission for further review to ensure everyone was on the same page.

Howland provided an analysis of what would happen if all MDR properties were rezoned to LDR. She does not recommend that this be done because of the widespread nonconformities that would be created.

Skelly asked if the rezoning could be done in phases. Howland said that was possible but that the City would need to reach out to those property owners and let them know.

Beighley asked if the nonconforming lots spread out? Howland said that they are throughout the MDR district and that minimum lot size appears to mirror the current boundary between MDR and

LDR, implying that the district boundaries were in part created based on lot size.

Inlaw supports maintaining the district boundaries as they are. He noted that people want to live here because of what it looks like today. To maintain the status quo would maintain the quality of life.

Smolenska does not support merging the districts. It sounded like a good idea until the research was done. Unless there is an area adjacent to LDR that could be folded in, there is no sense to change it.

Galligan noted that the MDR and LDR districts are quite different districts. He was never in favor of merging the districts. Galligan would support allowing two-unit dwellings throughout the MDR District but doesn't think that would be supported by the rest of the commission.

Owens likes the suggested amendments and does not support merging the MDR into the LDR district.

McLaughlin stated that he heard that some council members want to revert back to requiring a minimum 66-foot-wide lot throughout the city. After looking at staff's analysis, there is no sense in merging the two districts because it would not protect neighborhoods.

Rhonda Kleyn, City of Grand Haven Neighborhood Development Coordinator, reviewed the Affordable Housing Task Force Report, which was adopted by the City Council in 2018. Howland informed her of the proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance related to residential density. Kleyn acknowledged that many of the commissioners were not on the Planning Commission in 2018 when the City Council directed staff to create the task force. Kleyn reviewed the task force ideals (people who work here should be able to live here, you should be able to live here as you age, and there should be a variety of housing options). Using those ideals, 10 recommendations were adopted. Those recommendations drive the work that Kleyn and her staff do every day. The 2021 Zoning Ordinance changes came as a result of the task force recommendations. Kleyn is not advocating for big apartment complexes with hundreds of people. She advocates for people who work here every day to be able to live here because it's good for the economy and good for the community.

Kleyn reviewed the Robinson Landing development and the creation of the community land trust. To date, we have over 220 people inquiring about 16 affordable units at Robinson Landing. People who already live here are moving to Robinson Landing. They are spending way too much on housing elsewhere in the City. They want to stay here, keep kids in schools, and retire here. We made some good steps forward to support housing of all varieties in the City. If you start to peck away at those changes, based on a few people asking for change, the positive changes that were made could be eroded.

McLaughlin noted that the Planning Commission has recently approved 15-20 units for short term renting. Each of those dwellings was considered affordable before being converted into short term rentals. We can't really deny them if they meet the special land use criteria. He encouraged Neighborhood Housing Services to discuss limiting short term rentals with the City Council.

Skelly asked for details on the text amendment process. Howland confirmed that public comments will be collected at the November meeting and the Planning Commission can make a

recommendation to the City Council that night or consider changes to the proposed amendments based on community input.

Motion by Beighley, seconded by Owens, to set a public hearing for November 9, 2021 carried unanimously on roll call vote.

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

Sandi Gentry's request to have wall signage on the second story of her building at 133 Washington Avenue, which would be located outside of the sign band, was denied.

### **Community Development Manager's Report**

Howland informed the commissioners that the electronic message board text amendment case has been closed because staff discovered a 2012 text amendment that was approved by the City Council that essentially provides for the same ability for large public assembly uses to have an EMB.

Howland informed the commissioners that the RFP for the master plan update has been posted and responses are due by October 20<sup>th</sup>. The scope of work matches what the Planning Commission approved earlier in the year. Any commissioners interested in reviewing the proposals may contact Howland. Selection of the consultant will be an administrative function, with approval made by the City Council.

Skelly asked Howland how firms were made aware of the RFP. Howland invited 11 firms to submit a proposal, and it is also on the City's website. Inlaw asked about how the process will support diversity. Howland said that the City does not have a minority-owned firm list. In terms of the planning process itself, the Human Relations Commission would be a great resource to ensure diversity issues are addressed and the minority population is represented. McGinnis said that We could ask the firms how they would apply the filter of racial equity to their planning approach.

Smolenska asked how the City can require that a development include affordable housing. Howland said that two districts require that 10% of units be affordable, but we don't have anything else in the Zoning Ordinance other than the incremental changes that were adopted in January. McLaughlin advocated for a comprehensive plan on affordable housing. Smolenska noted that access to public transportation is a critical issue related to housing affordability.

McLaughlin encouraged commissioners to review the master plan proposals with Howland. He would like Howland to present the proposals to the Planning Commission prior to going to the City Council but that may not be in the works.

### **Call to Audience – Second Opportunity**

Bob Monetza (945 Washington Ave) thanked the Planning Commission for recognizing that short-term rentals effectively remove affordable dwelling units from the City's housing supply. The 2017 revision of the short term rental regulations was a balancing effort. It may be time to revise it. He noted that there is still pending legislation at the State to prevent cities from regulating short term rentals differently from other homes. He encouraged listeners to reach out to their state representatives with the message that short term rental regulations are best enacted at the local level.

Pat McGinnis (1335 Oakes Ave/519 Washington Ave) said he was grateful for the Planning

Commission's interest in short term rentals. He noted that improving housing affordability takes an effort of many partners and resources. One example of it working is the developments that the Reenders family has constructed. Everyone has to be vigilant and work together to bring resources to a project. As long as the City retains local control over short-term rentals, maybe we should consider some caps in some neighborhoods. He noted that at a recent realtors meeting, he learned that they are working on a more balanced legislation.

Related to the master plan RFP, McGinnis said that there is no rush to select the firm and get started on the project. There is time to bring staff's recommendation to the Planning Commission at the November meeting before taking it to the City Council for approval.

**Adjournment:**

Motion by Skelly, seconded by Inlaw, to adjourn was unanimously approved by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.



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Jennifer Howland  
Community Development Manager