

CITY OF GRAND HAVEN  
GRAND HAVEN, MICHIGAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

November 9, 2021



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

Present: Ryan Galligan, Eric Inlaw, Tamera Owens, David Skelly, Magda Smolenska, Mike Westbrook, Chair Robert Grimes

Absent: Collin Beighley

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

**Election of Vice Chair**

Eric Inlaw offered to serve as Vice Chair. Motion by Smolenska, seconded by Skelly, to elect Eric Inlaw as Vice Chair was approved unanimously by voice vote.

**Approval of Minutes**

Motion by Westbrook, seconded by Owens, to approve the October 12, 2021 minutes was approved unanimously by voice vote.

**Call to Audience – First Opportunity**

Emily Nail, 1001 Arlington Ave, stated that the addition of two-unit dwellings as a special land use and allowing smaller lot sizes are more conducive to affordable housing. By rolling back changes, we are chipping away at changes made to help make Grand Haven more affordable to people who live here.

Lori Vieau, 201 Woodlawn Ave, opposes changes to the MDR District. She believes in affordable housing but some parts of the MDR District are not suitable for affordable housing. Lots are being sold for \$300,000; everything is expensive in her neighborhood. There are other places in Grand Haven that people can move to and live in this community. Not every area has to be affordable. It will destroy certain areas.

Kevin McLaughlin, 407 Ohio Ave, congratulated Grimes and Inlaw on their new leadership positions. He stated it was a pleasure serving on the Planning Commission. The commission serves a huge need in the community and he looks forward to working closely with the Planning Commission in his new role on the City Council, and he welcomes people to contact him.

Nicole Vandenberg, 1203 Fulton Ave, asked if there was an appraisal or broker price opinion done on the diesel plant property. She acknowledged that environmental issues affect the value. Public comments collected supported that the community does not want residential condos but she heard that the proposal is to add 5 condos to the plan. Her biggest issue is the prices on the offers and the lack of public comment collected on the price differences. The difference between bids was \$1 million, which is hard to raise publicly. She advocated for allowing the community to review the appraisal and suggested that sharing the appraised value with developers can

generate more offers. She believes the developers made their bids to match what the City requested (\$1 million).

Steve Miller, 1840 Pennoyer Ave, hoped that the changes to the zoning ordinance would not be approved. He supports allowing accessory dwelling units in the City. He believes the concerns about parking in Grand Haven are way overblown. He hasn't heard a coherent argument about prohibiting two-unit dwellings. The scale of residential development should be considered on a case by case basis. He questioned how many people opposing density are informed of the issue. Shrinking population, lack of affordable housing, aging in place, and environmental issues are major concerns in Ottawa County. We need to address these through our zoning rules. He noted that we have citizen experts in Grand Haven who can share valuable knowledge about these topics.

### **Presentation by Rhonda Kleyn, Neighborhood Housing Services**

Kleyn presented an overview of Neighborhood Housing Services, including financial counseling, homeowner repair grants, and the Grand Haven Area Community Land Trust. She also offered some suggestions for what the Planning Commission could do to support affordable housing. These included advocating for a certain level of affordability in Planned Developments, encouraging general public engagement to ensure we are hearing from all populations, keeping the zoning ordinance changes intact, and advocating for developer concessions to encourage affordable units.

### **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:**

1. **Reverse the addition of two-unit dwellings as a special land use in the LDR District, thus prohibiting two-unit dwellings in the LDR district. This would affect Sec. 40-402.01 and Sec. 40-403.02 of the Zoning Ordinance.**
2. **Reverse the reduction in minimum lot area and minimum lot width in the MDR, MFR, and OS Districts. This would bring the minimum lot area back to the former 5,900 sq. ft. (currently 5,800 sq. ft.) and minimum lot width back to the former 45 feet (currently 44 feet). This would affect Sec. 40-402.02, Sec. 40-404.02.C, Figure 4.2, Sec. 40-405.02.E, Figure 4.4, Sec. 40-412.C, and Figure 4-16 of the Zoning Ordinance.**

Howland provided an overview of the proposed text amendments.

Chair Grimes opened the public hearing.

Kara Hines, 315 Woodlawn Ave, stated that she supports affordable housing, but she is against cramming more into our little downtown area. Traffic has increased over the last few years. Other areas in Grand Haven and Grand Haven Township are accessible to grocery stores and other daily services. Grand Landing, Peerless Flats, and the Tribune were missed opportunities for requiring a percentage of affordable units. She noted that restaurant workers walk a great distance to go to work. Bringing in more people and housing doesn't make sense. It doesn't have to be right downtown and degrade our older neighborhoods. She believes that only developers and investors are benefitting from the recent zoning ordinance changes.

Lori Vieau, 201 Woodlawn Ave, said that the property at 824 Lake Ave is proposed to be split into 3 lots and they are selling them for high prices. That is not affordable. Many people buy property for summer homes. Areas outside of the City are affordable for teachers, police officers, and

plumbers.

Mark Bancuk, 810 S Hopkins St, has noticed increases in traffic, especially on Beechtree and Ferry from manufacturers and schools. He asked if a traffic study has been done.

Nicole Vandenberg, 1203 Fulton Ave, expressed her concern about allowing lots to be combined and then split into 3 lots could encourage elimination of historic homes that still have a lot of value. She said that rezoning property can have a similar effect. She noted that allowing two-unit dwellings as a special land use turns previously nonconforming two-unit dwellings into conforming uses, which mortgage lenders will support. She suggested allowing existing nonconforming residential uses to be conforming via a special land use but not necessarily allow new ones.

Steve Miller, 1840 Pennoyer Ave, is in support of smart growth. Suburban sprawl in Ottawa County will affect quality of life. Higher density is wise socially and ecologically. He hopes people will pay attention to these issues in Grand Haven.

Rhonda Kleyn of Neighborhood Housing Services said that a lot of time and effort was put into the new zoning ordinance. The changes made support a variety of housing options in Grand Haven at various price points and support people who already live here who want to live more affordably. Walking back regulations could look like there was not true support for affordable housing.

Kara Hines, 315 Woodlawn Ave, stated that the City is already dense. Changes to the Zoning Ordinance were made pre-pandemic or during the pandemic. Things have changed. People are moving out of cities and want to live in more rural areas. Developers are making a ton of money and real estate companies and Wall Street firms are buying up homes for rentals. People want to get out of the city.

Steve Miller objects to statement that GH is already dense without a definition for density.

Mark Bancuk, 810 S Hopkins St, said that we need to keep the residents' safety in mind, especially near schools, if we increase residential density.

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

Galligan supports the proposed text amendments. He is not sure that increasing the minimum lot size to 5,900 is necessary because not all lots are 132 feet deep. He also noted that the MDR District could probably work to have two-family dwellings as a special land use everywhere.

Owens supports the proposed amendments; there are currently no two-units in the LDR District, so the change will match the character of the district. Lot width/area changes will avoid splitting lots. If the changes made in January had shown a trend of creating more affordability, that would be interesting, but it's actually making homes more expensive.

Skelly appreciated the public comments shared. Based on feedback from Council (moratorium) and public comments collected, and new people on council, he'd like the subject to be reviewed again by the new council.

Smolenska is concerned that it took 16 months of public input to make the amendments and now we are going back to the original. However, she supports the proposed changes. She doesn't want to see historic homes torn down. Density and walking don't scare her; some areas of the community may need more density, but in other areas it is not appropriate.

Inlaw said he grew up in New York City. Grand Haven is a different world. He loves the look and eclectic nature of the downtown. People want to live and work here, but it's expensive. We don't have a cure for all of that, but he supports the Planning Commission's efforts to find a sound resolution to make this work. Money finds its way, and there must be a balance. He asked for the community's patience as we try to find a way to make that happen with limited real estate.

Westbrook supports the amendments as written. All homes in the LDR District are single-family and the Planning Commission should protect the character of neighborhoods. The changes to the minimum lot size will hopefully avoid unintended consequences of tearing down homes. He supports allowing two-unit dwellings in the MDR district only on key street segments.

Grimes summarized that focus areas include affordability, lot splits, and historic homes. He supports affordable housing. His concern has always been that whenever we have conversations at public meetings, it's focused on half of the community. The community is larger than the city limits; Grand Haven Township has a lot more land than we do. You can live in neighboring communities and still have a short commute. Lot splits in certain areas will not create affordable housing. We must recognize that some areas make sense to allow affordable housing, some areas make sense to keep existing character, while allowing other categories like vacation/summer homes. It's appropriate to pull back in changes as proposed.

Howland clarified that the City Council will be involved in the discussion by reviewing the Planning Commission's recommendation once it is made. If the Council is uncomfortable with any changes, they can send it back to the Planning Commission for further consideration.

Motion by Galligan, seconded by Smolenska, to recommend APPROVAL of the proposed text amendments was approved unanimously by roll call vote.

### **Public Participation Plan**

Howland reviewed the Public Participation Plan and asked commissioners for feedback. Westbrook recommended that staff review the new Grand Rapids website for public engagement. It covers all city departments' activities. All commissioners were in support of the changes made. The document will be updated and posted to the City's website.

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

There was no ZBA meeting in October.

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

Howland reviewed the master plan scope of work and process for soliciting proposals. She asked the Planning Commission for their support in hiring Progressive AE to update the master plan. Westbrook wanted to make sure that they have experience with communities similar in size and scale to Grand Haven. Smolenska said that she formerly worked at Progressive AE; they do an excellent job in the planning division. Skelly noted that 130 hours doesn't sound like much. Smolenska said it's not a lot of hours and is likely low to meet the City's budget and would likely result in more unbilled hours spent by Progressive AE.

Motion by Smolenska, seconded by Owens, to support the hiring of Progressive AE to assist the City with the master plan update was approved unanimously by voice vote.

Howland presented a proposed change to the west elevation of the remodel at 1103 Washington Ave, which would eliminate second story windows. Motion by Smolenska, seconded by Skelly, to approve the revised building elevations for 1103 Washington Avenue was approved unanimously by voice vote.

Howland reminded the Planning Commission that proposals for the Chinook Pier redevelopment are due on November 12th.

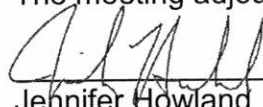
**Correspondence**

Grand Haven Charter Township sent the Planning Commission a notice of master plan public hearing.

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

**Adjournment:**

Motion by Galligan, seconded by Westbrook, to adjourn was unanimously approved by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.



Jennifer Howland  
Community Development Manager