

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
PLANNING-CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMISSION
CITY OF LOWELL, MICHIGAN**

For the Regular Meeting of the Planning-Citizen Advisory Commission August 27, 2007 at 7 p.m.

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair LaPonsie and the Clerk called the Roll.

Present: Commissioners, Berry, Dimmick, Doyle, Hodges, Jahnke, and Chair LaPonsie.

Absent: Commissioner Noall.

Also Present: City Manager David Pasquale, City Clerk Betty Morlock, DPW Director Dan DesJarden, and Building Inspector Doug Hopkins.

IT WAS MOVED BY BERRY and seconded by JAHNKE to excuse the absence of Commissioner Noall.

YEA: 6. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 1. MOTION CARRIED.

IT WAS MOVED BY JAHNKE and seconded by BERRY to approve the minutes from the regular meeting of July 23, 2007 as corrected.

YEA: 6. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 1. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #1. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA.**

IT WAS MOVED BY JAHNKE and seconded by DIMMICK to approve the agenda as written.

YEA: 6. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 1. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #2. **PUBLIC HEARING.**

- A. Advertising signs in parks – ballfields – recommendation to the City Council. As reviewed by the Commission at the last meeting, City Attorney Richard Wendt drafted an ordinance amendment regulating signs located at athletic fields or other facilities within City parks. It was noted “the back of sign must be white in color” should be added to the ordinance under “Item C”.

Commissioner Berry inquired if the signs would be placed toward the field of play. He questioned if this should be added to the ordinance and state “the signs shall be orientated toward the field of play”.

Toby Alterink of 13393 Grand River Drive representing Lowell Little League, referred to “field of play”. If this is in the definition, field of play would also consist of the third base line, facing the fans. He believed none of the signs would face the road at Creekside Park, unless fields are

built closer to the road.

Alterink noted Digital Image did a very good job with the signs this year.

IT WAS MOVED BY JAHNKE and seconded by DIMMICK to recommend to the City Council adoption of the ordinance regulating advertising signs in city parks and facilities as presented including the additional requirement that the back of the signs be white.

YEA: 6. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 1. MOTION CARRIED.

- B. Regulations of temporary storage units ordinance – review, consider public hearing (9/24). The proposed ordinance as drafted by the City Attorney which regulates temporary storage units was presented. This was based upon a similar ordinance from the City of East Grand Rapids.

Chairman LaPonsie questioned if the Commissioners were satisfied with the way the ordinance was written, noting it states the units are allowed for 30 days.

Commissioner Jahnke referred to Section 2.19A – Definitions:

“Temporary Storage Unit A transportable unit, or container or structure designed and used primarily for temporary storage for personal property, household goods and other such materials for use on a temporary basis.” Jahnke believed “and used” was unnecessary and should not be included.

Also, under Section 4.08 A, Requirements for Placement of Temporary Storage Units – Paragraph D should read:

“A temporary storage unit may not exceed eight (8) feet in height, eight (8) feet six (6) inches in width or sixteen (16) feet in length.” LaPonsie stated she would check into this further.

By general consensus, the Commissioners agreed with the changes.

IT WAS MOVED BY JAHNKE and seconded by DIMMICK to set a public hearing regarding regulations of temporary storage units ordinance for the September 24, 2007 meeting.

YEA: 6. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 1. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #3. **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. SITE PLAN REVIEW – None.
- B. VARIANCES – RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS – none.

Item #4. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS/ON GOING BUSINESS**

- A. Business recommendations for temporary signs. Rodger Garner from Good Chevrolet contacted several area businesses regarding changes to the temporary sign ordinance. Many requested additional days and items.

Building Inspector Doug Hopkins commented on the violation letter which was sent to Garner explaining the issue with the sign located near the back of the dealership. If a sign is lettered and is facing a driving area, it is still considered to be advertising.

Commissioner Jahnke believed the ordinance would make the signs difficult to keep track of. If this will be viable and include the township, the City needs to provide some way in which the property owner or business owner can keep track of the records. When the business owner changes, the signage needs to be submitted to the City or Zoning Administrator. A violation would occur if the zoning officer sees a new sign without it being submitted to the City.

Garner suggested a perpetual bond. City Manager Pasquale explained the City has requested bonds which usually have a specific life term. He suggested the bond be effective for one year at a time, with the option of renewal. Jahnke believed if this was done, it would have to be between the Zoning Official and City staff, which would allow for uniformity.

City Clerk Morlock clarified the procedure would be for the business owner to pay a \$200 deposit, complete a form and notify the City of when the sign is in place. Morlock noted red tags are placed on signs which have received a permit. A log book was suggested for the dealerships to maintain. Morlock indicated there is also a \$25 filing fee, while the bond is returned, if rules and regulations are followed. Jahnke suggested an annual registration fee. LaPonsie mentioned the idea of an honor system. Public Works Director DesJarden did not recommend this.

Hopkins wanted clarification as to what Jahnke was suggesting. He asked if \$25 would be charged every time the log is changed. Jahnke responded yes. Hopkins stated the dealership would still need to come to City Hall each time or process the administration fee through the mail prior to the sign being placed. Another suggestion to consider is any events known of in the beginning of the year could be provided on one application with a full payment. Any time the sign or log is changed, an additional \$25 fee would be charged.

Morlock suggested the Commissioners also consider how to handle non profit organizations, such as churches and schools. Both have minimal budgets.

LaPonsie believed this was something in which the Commission can continue to consider. She asked if the Commissioners had any thoughts regarding a 90 day allowance or a maximum of two weeks a month. Commissioner Berry thought 90 days was too generous. After checking with cities across the State, it appears most are more generous than 21 days with an average of approximately 28 days. Garner appreciated what Berry was saying. He did the same research and found the same results. However, it seems the City of Lowell is really the only City who enforces their ordinance. Berry believed changing the ordinance from 21 to 90 days was a dramatic increase. He suggested doubling the amount of days.

By general consensus, the Commission agreed to increase the amount of the days to 60.

Pasquale stated the idea is to give more latitude to the business owners. This would require more responsibility on the part of the business owners, such as maintaining logs and keep the City informed. The City is making a dramatic change and recognizes the need for the business owners to attract more business.

LaPonsie questioned banners and signs which are attached the inside windows of businesses. Pasquale explained such signs do not require permits. Commissioner Hodges believed only 25% of the glass space should be covered. Hopkins was unsure, but would check into. Hopkins wanted the Commission to keep in mind that signs placed on the outside of buildings become weathered and torn.

LaPonsie suggested the issues discussed tonight be presented during the September meeting for further review.

- B. Joint Signage Ordinance with Lowell Township. Commissioner Berry indicated the Zoning Enforcement Officer at the Lowell Township has been replaced. Berry also noted there appears to be other pertinent topics of discussion at the township which has placed the signage issue as a low priority.
- C. Master Plan Update. As required by State Law, adjacent planning agencies were given the opportunity to comment on the Master Plan by August 20. Vergennes Township has supplied the only comments.

According to the State Enabling Act, there needs to be a public hearing before the Planning Commission may adopt the Master Plan. According to the Act, public hearing shall not be less than 15 days before the hearing by one publication in the newspaper of general circulation.

IT WAS MOVED BY JAHNKE and seconded by DIMMICK to set a public hearing for October 22, 2007 regarding the Master Plan Update.

YEA: 6. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 1. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #5. **BUILDING INSPECTOR'S REPORT**. Commissioner Doyle commented on the semi truck sitting in the Dollar General parking lot. Chair LaPonsie suggested Doyle speak with Commissioner Noall. She is also very interested in this issue. LaPonsie explained because it is commercial property, such a truck is allowed.

Commissioner Dimmick stated he noticed there has been no permit issued regarding the renovation of Huntington Bank. Building Inspector Doug Hopkins explained a site plan review has been completed. The interior is all that is being renovated.

Item #6. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**. No comments were received.

Item #7. **COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS**. Commissioner Dimmick was happy to see the sign issue progressing. He does not visit a dealership because of all the signs and balloons. He does not like items which are moving or flashing and wanted to stay as conservative as possible.

Commissioner Doyle understood why the dealerships were requesting this.

Commissioner Berry stated he agreed with Dimmick.

Commissioner Jahnke believed this was an important part of our community. The dealers are the ones who bring people to this town to buy cars. He applauds what the dealerships have done as far as their ability to attract the car buyers.

Councilmember Hodges understood trying to run a business and working at a car dealership. He believed standards do need to be established and have something which will work for our business people, but still have a community in which we can be very proud of.

Chair LaPonsie questioned if the Planning Commission budget can be used for continuing education. She asked if any Commissioners would be interested in the Natural Connection summit in Hudsonville in October. City Manager Pasquale believed such training would be very helpful.

IT WAS MOVED BY JAHNKE to adjourn at 8:36 p.m.

DATE:

APPROVED:

Maryalene LaPonsie, Chairman

Betty R. Morlock, City Clerk