Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

November 30, 2022

1. **Call to Order at 6:00pm**
2. **Roll Call –** Chairperson DeBoer, Commissioners Lyon-Jenness, Dean, Tecca, and Bliesener, City Manager Stoddard, and ZA Harvey.
3. **Approval of Minutes – October 26, 2022**
* DeBoer asked if Special Parking District had been added to the previous zoning map. City Manager reported that they had not been added. Harvey stated that it was a good idea and merit in doing it. DeBoer said that it should be added. Harvey agreed that it would tie it together.
* Bliesener stated a correction to Page 1 Old Business- Replace the words their selves with themselves.
* Motion by Tecca to accept the minutes with the correction, support by Bliesener - All ayes
1. **Citizen Comments**
* No comments
1. **Old Business**
2. Work Plan Item #4: Zoning Ordinance Amendments – Supplemental Standards

(Article 12 – Solar Energy Facilities)

Section 12.32 Solar Panels

* DeBoer asked Zoning Administrator Harvey to proceed
* Harvey looked over the Solar Panel language and created Draft #2 incorporating all changes. There was discussion to have the solar panels only attached/mounted to buildings. The Planning Commission (PC) discussion brought forth the desire to not have stand-alone solar panels. Harvey removed unwanted items and the draft restrictions. She stated that the draft restrictions represent the direction that the PC is going.
* Harvey stated that the language for Solar Farms is being put before the PC. The approach may not be from other communities but it will be what the PC wants.
* Bliesener questioned the no free standing units and wondered if the PC wanted to be as open as possible.
* Harvey’s notes from the previous meeting highlighted the restrictive items.
* Bliesener was thinking that they wanted a more unrestrictive use.
* DeBoer stated that he would not want to see them in front yards.
* Lyon-Jenness said that the PC agreed to not do the restrictions.
* DeBoer wanted to make sure of the final decision regarding restrictions.
* Lyon-Jenness affirmed that it was acceptable to attach solar panels to buildings, not free-standing placement.
* Harvey said that the design goal was to have them blend into the area.
* Tecca asked that if they built a better model, could the PC change the ordinance.
* Harvey stated that as technology has improved, solar panels look better now.
* Tecca asked if the PC could use language to prevent front yard use.
* Harvey said that whether they allow free standing or do not, the PC should not base the ordinance on the look.
* Tecca stated that the PC should be receptive to evolvement.
* DeBoer reiterated that the PC will not allow free standing solar panels.
* Lyon-Jenness brought up flush mounted solar panels on flat roof.
* DeBoer said that they could be screened (on commercial buildings). They could have the solar panel above the flat part of a roof. The panels should not project vertically on a roof. (B1)
* Dean asked if it would extend past the roof line/peak.
* Bliesener stated that it would have to extend past the roof.
* Lyon-Jenness wanted to know if it would impede the functionality (B1)
* Dean said that commercial users could use screening.
* DeBoer said that it was not cheap but can be done.
* Bliesener said that the language looks good for industrial use

Section 12.33 Solar Farms

* Harvey began with the property identified by the PC as the lagoon area for possible solar farming.
* DeBoer asked if the PC needed to add the PUD District to Page 3.
* Harvey said that she had two thoughts about the lagoon area. 1) It is a good idea for the property to be used in this way. 2) On the property with infrastructure, she would like to see language added to the Industrial District.
* DeBoer asked that if a solar farm could be placed on the lagoon area, which is in the PUD, would the PC need to take some action?
* Harvey said that she could make any changes that the PC wants and she will add it to the list for the Public Hearing.
* Harvey will present each item at the Public hearing. DeBoer will need to open and close each of the items at the hearing.
1. **New Business**
2. Updated Work Plan Review
* Harvey said that DeBoer could use the 2022 Work Plan and work from that list. She was not sure how long the Solar Panel and Farm conversation would be but if there was time, the PC can talk about the next section to review – Housing, Residential Amendments. The way they were written, makes for heavy lifting. Harvey stated that the PC wants to know what is next and they have picked meaty objectives, including what the PC would do to address each one.
1. WP Item #1 – Residential Districts
* Harvey stated that the January meeting with the Public Hearing would be a lot for one meeting. The PC could use December to think about which Work Plan item would be first. All five Residential Districts are about Housing Stock and Residential Portfolios. They talk about buildings and how they are arranged. Should they amend the ordinance or add some pizazz?
1. **Allow clustered residential subdivision design (SF-2F dwellings)**
* Harvey suggested that the PC let a developer toss out standard metrics and allow them to not be predictable by using something like clustering. What would this look like? It is a way of arranging homes for residential development within the community’s space. Metrics are designed for density control but it is not currently in the ordinance. Flexibility (outside of the Mill PUD) may allow for this clustering. Not a lot of space for it in Parchment. Maybe more attractive to communities with a lot of green space. This offers developers alternatives, without limits. This does not allow different housing, just arranging of the houses.

**2. Provide for alternate, innovative housing types:**

* Harvey said that the Residential District provides for alternate housing types, not land division. The ordinance allows single and multiple homes. If the majority of land is for single family development, then that is the only type of market that will respond. The target market approach is for those that are looking for certain housing but may want something different. Communities do not have enough housing now. Manufacturers need homes for their employees.
1. **Allow a mix of housing types in new developments; discourage single family only developments**
* Harvey stated that the City needs to expand housing stock. Currently, we use a mixed housing in different environments. What do we do to get at this attainable housing for the community (middle class)?
* Harvey advised that if what the City is looking at in their Master Plan is to improve selection of housing types, then concentrate on these different housing types. You (PC) may consider adding some, like attainable housing. This can be a more effective use of property.
* Harvey suggested Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) which is being embraced by communities. ADUs allow a 2nd unit that comes with enough parameters that serve a need. The owner lives in one home and a parent, child, or renter lives in the 2nd dwelling. This intends to provide for an expanded type of housing unity that is affordable, walkable, and not impactful to the character of a property.
* Tecca asked if it could be done on a full size lot, such as the one on Parchmount.
* Harvey said that a house could be built, with the established character of the neighborhood in the front of the lot. The ADU could be built in the back of the lot; thus making it not noticeable from the road, subordinate in size to the original building and at a different price point.
* Tecca asked if 4 micro houses could be built on that lot.
* Harvey stated that it would be considered a Cottage Development with the placement of tiny homes. These are not placed like regular homes. 4 tiny homes = a cottage development, in which all homes face a courtyard, with a variety of arrangements.
* Harvey should think about the following questions:
* Should the PC look at a mix of housing sizes and the need of residents?
* Would they be able to design a Cottage Development?
* What is the PC trying to do; offer more choices?
* Is this the driving force for these decisions?
* The PC may be able to solve these questions with these alternate choices
* Harvey mentioned short term rentals. Some communities hate them; some think they are lucrative. The housing discussion is sucking up the middle housing availability. Family housing is limited, which affects schools, tourism in downtown areas. It’s possible that within the next year not much will be done about it. Lansing realtors have a strong lobby. They will try to prohibit a community from short term rentals based on a certain percentage of housing stock (not more than 30% can be short term housing stock). 10% short term housing can cause damage to the community’s housing stock, schools, etc.
1. **Use density bonuses to incentivize clustered residential subdivision design and mixed housing development.**
* Harvey said that the PC should think about expanding housing options. They could incorporate it into the ordinance at any time.
1. **Examine the possibility of dividing the R-M District into two districts based on the scale of the building. Create one district for lower density multifamily housing such as townhouses, row houses, and duplexes; and another district would be for larger multifamily facilities.**
* Harvey explained that the PC could expand the choices or provide more housing. Doing anything to the R-M District will be the most comfortable to work on. She believes that it is important to preserve the sanctity of the neighborhood character. Tinkering with the R-M District could be used as a model. The PC may be able to put ADU structures into a district that has that density mandate, creating a 4th zoning district. There are 3 districts locked into R-M, which makes it hard to accommodate a variation. The use of a varying district may provide more to think about. It’s just a matter of what the PC would be interested in doing.
* DeBoer asked what is the PC trying to accomplish and how to do it. He gets a little concerned over tinkering with these ordinances.
* Bliesener said that the City of Parchment is such an anomaly. It’s difficult to see all items being included.
* Tecca stated that some changes in the R-M would be able to happen or in the new residential district by Wilson. Are grandma or garage houses allowed? I don’t think it changes the character of a neighborhood.
* Bliesener said that there will be more cars with multiple dwellings.
* DeBoer said that grandma and grandpa may each have their own cars; paving may be needed in the backyard.
* Bliesener stated that the ordinance addresses parking on lawns/yards.
* DeBoer mentioned camper storage on these properties.
* Bliesener said that what would be good about it, is that a small unit may help with downsizing, without having to leave the City of Parchment. Not any options like this in the City. We should be open minded.
* Harvey said that she has seen the life cycle of the ADU. Eventually the parent ends up in the ADU. The ADU may be used as a source of income. It can be at the top of the Accessory Building, too.
* Tecca said that there was a house on Parchmount that sat vacant for 20 years. It was a small house of about 600 square feet, and it fit into the neighborhood.
* Bliesener stated that small homes fill a need.
* DeBoer said that the Public Hearing is in January. The PC should think about what is next.
* Harvey stated that the PC has put in all their work on the text amendments. Maybe a brief conversation can be held at that meeting to work on another part of the zoning ordinances. In January, the PC will work on their 2023 Work Plan, Annual Report, and the Meeting Schedule.
* DeBoer stated that this is important and would like time to talk about it. He asked if Harvey would be present, to which she replied yes. We will think about these options in December and will vote on them in January.
* Harvey stated that the statutes require those reports..
* DeBoer said that he will write a report draft for January 2023 and get it to the City Manager.
* **Next Meeting** – The next meeting will be on Wednesday, January 25, 2023 at 6pm.
1. **Adjournment** – Motion by Tecca, supported by Dean. All ayes. Meeting ended at 7:15pm.