

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

For the Regular Meeting of the Planning-Citizen Advisory Commission May 22, 2006 at 7 p.m.

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

Present: Commissioners Berry, Dimmick, Grimm, LaPonsie, Mundt, Teelander and Chairman Jahnke.

Absent: Commissioner Hall

Also Present: City Manager David Pasquale, City Clerk Betty Morlock, DPW Director Dan DesJarden, Councilmembers Jim Hodges and Jeanne Shores, Mayor Charles Myers and Building Inspector Doug Hopkins.

IT WAS MOVED BY LAPONSIE and seconded by BERRY to excuse the absence of Commissioner Hall.

YEA: 7. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 1. MOTION CARRIED.

IT WAS MOVED BY TEELANDER and seconded by LAPONSIE to approve the minutes from the regular meeting of April 24, 2006 as written.

YEA: 7. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 1. MOTION CARRIED.

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

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

YEA: 7. NAY: 0. ABSENT: 1. MOTION CARRIED.

Item #2. **PUBLIC HEARING.** – None.

Item #3. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **SITE PLAN REVIEW** - None.

B. **VARIANCES – RECOMMENDATION TO THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS** - None.

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

A. **Review of the Off Street Parking Lighting Section of the Zoning Ordinance – Committee Update.** Chairman Jahnke indicated there has not been much progress since the last meeting

regarding lighting standards. One commercial patron has indicated their interest in participating with the committee. Jahnke stated he wishes to have one more additional business owner involved with the committee.

- B. District regulation for single family dwellings in the R-3 Residential District. During the April 24 meeting, the Planning Commission was informed that single family dwellings are allowed by right in the R-3 district, but no district regulations are given.

Chairman Jahnke stated the Commission needs to establish an ordinance amendment which will outline the R3 District for single family dwellings. Jahnke wished to review lot sizes during the same process. Commissioner LaPonsie questioned if lot sizes were the same for both districts. It was noted there are some differences.

Jahnke and LaPonsie agreed to provide recommendations as part of a committee.

- C. Master Plan Update. Jim Breuckman and Sue Thomas with McKenna Associates were present to discuss the demographics and existing conditions of the Master Plan. An existing land use and natural features map was also provided, as well as sample surveys.

Breuckman indicated he will attend the Planning Commission meeting in July to discuss the utilities and community services and review the survey results.

Thomas stated the 1990 and 2000 census has been reviewed and compared with Vergennes and Lowell Townships. The City of Lowell is comparable to the averages for both County and State of Michigan for almost every demographic. Thomas noted there has not been much increase in population over the ten year time frame.

The median age within Lowell is 34 years of age. This is consistent with both the townships, County and State. The population under the age of 18, essentially preschool and school age children, is approximately 30 percent of the population within the City and is consistent with State averages. The population over the age of 65 within the City is slightly larger than the State average of 14 percent.

The household size compares with County and State averages of 2.73 persons per household.

The median household income for the City of Lowell in 1999 was approximately \$42,000. This is very close to County and State averages.

Between 1990 and 2000, the City of Lowell did not receive much population growth while most of the surrounding communities experienced a steady increase. Vergennes had the greatest amount of growth.

The City of Lowell offers a wide variety of housing to its residents.

Home values within the City prove to be a relative bargain when compared to the surrounding area.

City Manager Pasquale noted Schneider Manor adds to the increase of the elderly population.

Breckman stated the existing land use survey is completed as well as the natural features analysis. He reviewed the existing land use map. The City contains approximately 1,615 acres.

Single family residential homes are the largest category of land uses. Highway commercial covers about 3.2 percent of the City's land area, while the downtown area covers approximately two-tenths of a percent. There are also industrial and recreational parks which are significant land uses. The vacant land category refers to floodplain parcels and undeveloped land.

Breckman discussed land use patterns. There are large single family neighborhoods to the northeast and northwest of the downtown area and the Flat River area. Main Street has a varied character west of downtown with varying types of land uses.

Much of the City is within the 100 year floodplain and there are many wetland areas within the floodplain.

Breckman stated the wellhead protection area will be incorporated into the map.

Chairman Jahnke believed the floodplain topographical maps could be incorporated into one as well as the wellhead protection area. He suggested this information be separate from the existing land use.

Commissioner Berry suggested the color of the maps be more distinguished.

Breckman noted there can be a merge of the three natural features maps, while the existing land use map would remain separate.

Jahnke said Ridgeview Drive does not stop at Sibley as indicated on the map. It continues into a development. There is also a designated wetland map. Pasquale mentioned Ridgeview is not a designated street north of Sibley. However, the City intends to eventually extend Ridgeview to Gee Drive. It is a public street, however the street is not designated in terms of the Act 51 maps. Breckman asked if the Commission wishes to have the street shown on the maps. Pasquale commented it is a future street. Jahnke believed the right of way to Gee Drive would show up on other maps.

Jahnke referred to private streets. Would this normally be on these maps? Breckman stated it depends. Normally, the company receives the base map data from the City. Some cities decide to show private streets and some do not.

Jahnke noted Godfrey Court is missing from the map as well as the private street off of Gee Drive and the street off of Ridgeview. Clarke Street is also not named on the map. Jahnke went on to state the map indicates single family residential at the end of Clarke Street. This is incorrect as there is a boat launch and designated as park property.

Jahnke referred to Memorial Park on the east side of the river along Main Street. He believed the area should be called downtown parking rather than park area.

Breuckman noted such changes will be incorporated into the plan.

Breuckman questioned which sample survey the Commission preferred. Jahnke asked which format he favors. Breuckman indicated the Cassopolis format.

Commissioner Mundt was also in favor of the Cassopolis survey. He believed the taxpayers should be the ones to be surveyed. They are the ones who have investments within the community.

Mundt questioned if a small donation from the Lowell Area Community Fund could be used to assist with the cost of the survey. Pasquale stated the Lowell Area Community Fund Committee does not meet until September. However, funds from the Look Fund could be considered.

Breuckman stated community surveys are rarely done with master plans. Mundt questioned the idea of surveying renters, as opposed to taxpayers. Jahnke believed the City needed to survey the residents with the ability to discriminate one side or the other. Essentially, a resident who is paying rent also pays the taxes. He noted a landlord could even live out of State.

Commissioner LaPonsie suggested the survey be placed in the Lowell Light and Power bills.

Mundt stated he would not be in favor providing a section where one assumes their name is being requested.

Mundt suggested the idea of a skate park and dog park be placed on the survey as well as rating the services of Lowell Light and Power and Cable TV.

Commissioner Dimmick agreed that people should not be required to give their names. However, this is voluntary if one wishes to become more involved with the City.

Commissioner Teelander favored the Cassopolis format because it was shorter. Commissioner Berry also agreed. He did not believe it was necessary to include Showboat issues.

The Commissioners reviewed the 1994 Community Survey Results and discussed possible changes.

The Commission discussed the distribution of the survey. Breuckman believed the best way to distribute the survey is to send it out with the utility bill. Jim Hodges of 422 N. Jefferson stated this is an important document and did not believe it should be included in a water bill.

Berry suggested placing the survey in the local paper, in addition to a mailing. Breuckman

stated the survey could be made available online with results being sent directly to City Hall. However, this is expensive. It is less to have one download the document, print it and then mail it to City Hall.

Jahnke questioned the dollar amount planned for the survey. Pasquale stated a particular dollar amount has not been established. There is \$20,000 which can be used for professional planning.

Jahnke suggested Commission review the distribution process and provide suggestions at the next meeting.

DPW Director DesJarden questioned how the last survey was distributed and what was the response. City Clerk Morlock stated it was sent by mail. She was unsure of the response, but believed it was small. DesJarden suggested the survey be sent the same way. Morlock said she would review what was previously done.

Brueckman mentioned he would be present during the July, 2006 meeting.

- D. Planning Commission tour. Commissioner Mundt thanked the Commissioners for attending the tour. The City of Lowell is a wonderful community with many attractive homes. However, there are some individuals who do not comply with the City's ordinances. Mundt questioned what has been done with the list of problems. Morlock stated she would compile a list and determine which issues need to go to the police and which issues should be enforced by the City.

Commissioner Dimmick believed this process would allow the Commission to emphasize its desire to make the City more attractive and livable.

Commissioner Grimm agreed with Mundt.

Commissioner Berry enjoyed the tour. He questioned why some lingering problems have not been corrected.

Commissioner LaPonsie stated the tour was very educational. Ninety percent of the City looks great. She believed individuals would clean up their property if the regulations are brought to their attention.

Commissioner Teelander enjoyed the tour. It was very interesting.

Chairman Jahnke also enjoyed the tour. He wanted to see something come from it beyond what was noted on the list. He suggested such regulations be placed in the Lowell Ledger, based upon the time of year. Mundt suggested the City place a column in the Ledger regarding issues which need to be followed throughout the City as well as information from other civic organizations. He noted such issues regarding mowing, shoveling sidewalks and junk vehicles could be included. This information can also be placed on the website.

- E. Capital Improvements Plan 2006 – 2011 - preliminary. City Manager Pasquale provided last

years copy. There are several commissions which are limited in terms of their priorities. At the next meeting, a final draft will be provided for review. The plan concerns such items as streets, utilities, airport and parks. Any comments can be forwarded to Pasquale and a list will be provided at the next meeting.

Item #5. **BUILDING INSPECTOR'S REPORT.** No comments were received.

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

Item #7. **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS.** Commissioner Mundt stated the Planning Commission tour throughout the City produced a comment from Commissioner Dimmick who stated he can not drive through any community without having an eye for zoning violations.

Chairman Jahnke requested two Commissioners volunteer for the Joint Signage Committee with Lowell Township regarding the M21 corridor. Commissioner Berry volunteered. Chairman Jahnke stated he would check with Commissioner Hall to see if he would be interested in serving on the Committee. Commissioners Dimmick and LaPonsie stated they may be available at times.

IT WAS MOVED BY LAPONSIE to adjourn at 9:35 p.m.

DATE:

APPROVED:

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Clark K. Jahnke, Chairman

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Betty R. Morlock, City Clerk