

**CITY OF MASON
REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES OF April 10, 2018**

Sabbadin called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. in the Council Chambers at 201 W. Ash Street, Mason, Michigan.

Present: Commissioners: Barna, Droscha, Feintuch, Hagle, Howe, Reeser, Sabbadin, Waxman (8)
Absent: Commissioners: (0)
Also present: Elizabeth A. Hude, AICP, Community Development Director

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Howe, second by Waxman, to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes from March 13, 2018.

Yes (8)

No (0)

Abstain (0)

MOTION PASSED

PUBLIC HEARING

A. Pat McCaffrey, President, Mason Hospitality Group LLC is seeking approval of a Special Use Permit and Preliminary Site Plan Review for permission to construct a private road with access to a new four-story, 44,376 sq. ft., 84-room hotel and conference center on vacant property located on the north side of West Kipp Road and west of US-127. The parcel is zoned C-2 General Commercial District.

Howe disclosed that his employer, DART Bank, had a financial interest in the project and asked if he should abstain. Sabbadin asked commissioners if there were concerns and for a motion asking Howe to abstain. No concerns were raised and no motion was offered. Howe remained as a voting member.

Chair Sabbadin opened the public hearing at 6:40 p.m.

Pat McCaffery, applicant, gave a brief introduction to the project and how it came about. He was approached by Ron Fors after a feasibility study was done demonstrating a hotel could be supported in the area. Choice hotels had also approached him with interest in building hotels. He felt this was a good location and is proposing the hotel in Mason as presented in the application materials.

Fred Fruehauf, 1005 Franklin Farm Drive stated his opposition to the project and concerns about lower property values as a result of the hotel. He is concerned that the project will wreck the whole neighborhood due to the lights, noise, car doors slamming and fights in the parking lot.

Steve Hubbard, 608 S. Lansing Street, asked if the city would have capacity with water/sewer plant to support the hotel, and if the fire department had sufficient apparatus to reach the 4th floor.

Mr. McCaffery responded that he had confirmed the answer to be yes to both questions in preparing the submittal. Mr. Hubbard also asked what happened to the connection through on Franklin Farm Drive? Reeser explained that it did not move forward due to issues with DEQ permits over the creek. Mr. Hubbard stated that Lansing and South Street were more congested as a result of traffic coming from the subdivision that would have otherwise used the road.

Jack Schripsema, President, Greater Lansing Convention & Visitors Bureau, spoke in support of the hotel project. He noted that the region has seen an explosion in demand for lodging. The Greater Lansing Area is now at the top of the list of areas in demand. Mason is underserved and will benefit from the project.

Fred Fruehauf, 1005 Franklin Farm Drive, repeated his opposition and cited the old hotels in Lansing that are full of drugs and prostitution. Debate took place as to the subjectivity of his statement. Sabbaddin gave him a warning regarding foul language.

Susan Naird, 1761 Tuttle, stated that she had moved here from Sterling Heights where she served as a zoning commissioner for eight years. She stated that commissioners should be careful in setting precedents as their decisions affect the future of the community.

Dennis Bradley, 570 Beacon Lake, Lifelong resident of the area, stated support for the hotel. Mason needs this project to support local businesses and restaurants. DART and other employers currently use hotels in Lansing and Okemos.

Kelly Sairls, 656 Kipp Road, grew up in Dansville, worked in Mason, recently moved from south side of Holt to Mason so her kids could go to schools here. She is opposed to the hotel in that location, behind her house. She asked why it couldn't be 2 stories instead of 4, that the traffic would be right next to her house. She is concerned about the clientele and the future management, citing Causeway Bay as an example. There are already several accidents on the curve. She asked if there would be 72 or 84 rooms, both were noted in the application. There is significant flooding in the lot, full of wildlife and ducks. She feels it is not a feasible location due to the wetlands and residential area.

Dorey Brown, 636 Kipp Road, stated opposition to the project. She is concerned about the noise and traffic. Kipp Road is dangerous, at least one car a month ends up in her driveway and she already has many other incidents of undesirable activity that she deals with on a regular basis there. When the field across the street is planted with corn, it reduces visibility. The flooding and drainage create icy conditions in the winter.

Fred Freuhauf, 1005 Franklin Farm Drive, stated concern about the city's lack of follow through on his street regarding sidewalks and trees. There are three to four vacant lots and no sidewalks in front of those.

Keith Hein, 1002 Eugenia Drive, stated when he moved to town he looked at the master plan and zoning and the Franklin Farms development of 300+ units was designated as greenspace/park. He is concerned about the through connection to Franklin Farms Drive north of the creek. He led the initiative to prevent that road from going through previously and would fight it if it came up again. He asked if there were adequate emergency services to serve the hotel now, does not want to see this as an excuse to connect the road. He believes the precedent for the 4-story hotel manipulates the commission to get the road. The city picked that location for the hotel to push the road.

Mr. McCaffery responded that the city had zero input on location. The concrete/steel building will be sprinkled and water service will be sufficient to serve the fire suppression system.

Ms. Sairls asked if there were any lawsuits against the property? She doesn't want the hotel in her backyard. How will her safety be ensured, privacy in her back yard? What will developers do for them? Will there be sidewalks on Kipp Road, can the road handle the additional traffic?

Mr. McCaffery responded that there were no lawsuits against the property. There is a portion of the land that cannot be used for development that he is willing to give back to the community. They are also looking at a walkway along the east of the property. He recognized that she was upset and this was a tough situation.

Steve Hubbard, 608 S. Lansing, stated that this hotel would be Heb's death warrant. He wondered why the developer didn't go down Jewett Road where 140 acres were available. Alternative routes will be important in the future.

Keith Hein, 1002 Eugenia Drive, stated he was encouraged by the dialogue, the developers were trying, that this was not a 'take it or leave it' conversation. Previous administration told him in the past that the Franklin Farms subdivision was a 'done deal' and he could do nothing about it. He reiterated his position on the Franklin Farms Drive connection and asked that the matter not be brought up again.

Chair Sabbadin closed the public hearing at 7:25 p.m.

Sabbadin asked Hude to read written comments received into the record that were received during the open houses on Saturday and prior to the Tuesday public hearing. The four comments expressed support for the hotel and were received by John Brittain, Maureen Brittain, Becky Clinton, and one without a signature.

Waxman motioned to approve Resolution 2018-03, Reeser seconded. The following discussion took place:

Waxman recognized the concerns of residents, that this was a very big project, change is difficult. He stated this was the beginning of a process and that concerns needed to be addressed regarding the road extension and the water. Sidewalks were also important especially on Kipp Road.

Feintuch stated that every action is a precedent and this one involved four stories. She is in favor of the hotel and understands the need in the area. She operated a Bed and Breakfast and was full all of the time. Her concerns with the hotel relate to flooding, lights and the four stories. It is important to listen to the community.

Reeser stated that in all his years on the commission he did not feel that they were ever pushed around or had arms twisted. He pointed out the work on the master plan and specifically effort made on Temple Street and the studies over the years for different matters such as the food truck.

Sabbadin asked for confirmation about where water was coming from and if hydrants would be added. The water will come from service at the end of Franklin Farms Drive or Eugenia and hydrants will be added.

Discussion took place confirming that the site would be served by sanitary sewer line that runs parallel to US 127, and that storm runoff would be directed to a detention pond that would then flow to Willow Creek.

Barna asked for confirmation of handicap spaces to serve the needs of users including our aging population – a total of 7 will be provided.

Feintuch asked for clarification of why other Sleep Inns are two stories, but this is four. McCaffery explained that Choice Hotels won't allow two stories, and four is the only feasible way to make the proposed lot work given the floodplain issues.

Droscha motioned to amend the original motion and defer the discussion to the May 8 meeting, Waxman seconded.

Barna questioned the need to continue given that this was a preliminary site plan. Howe supported Barna's statement.

Feintuch asked if this was similar basis as Klavon's – it must be approved if it meets requirements regardless of public comment. Hude stated that yes, if the commission had information to determine it met requirements, it could be approved.

Waxman stated concern about requiring sidewalks on Kipp. Hude explained that the developer could not be required to make public improvements offsite, the city would be responsible for sidewalks on Kipp Rd. Deb Stuart, City Administrator, clarified the city's policy on new sidewalks and that the cost for those improvements would be assessed to property owners. The sidewalk program will focus on improvements for the southwest quadrant of the city in 2022-23 but is only for repair of existing sidewalks.

Discussion took place on the creation of pedestrian access along the east of the property out to Kipp which would require crossing MDOT right of way for a stretch of 47 feet. MDOT requires a permit and the developer has looked into this, it is costly. McCaffery would like to give floodplain portion of the lot back to the city.

Note: Barna left the room.

Sabbadin asked for a vote to approve motion to postpone discussion to May 8.

Yes (5) Droscha, Feintuch, Hagle, Sabbadin, Waxman

No (2) Howe, Reeser

Absent (1) Barna

MOTION PASSED

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Development Updates – The Administrators Report was distributed.
- B. Workplan Update – Public hearings for ordinance amendments were shifted from April to May due to the public hearing this evening.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Discussion: Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment – Sec. 94-173(i) Hotel, motel, transient lodging facilities.

Hude provided a brief overview of the ordinance and recommended change to the ordinance that would allow a four-story hotel, up to 45 feet. The height restriction in a C-2 district is 45 feet but this is reduced for hotels.

Waxman proposed striking the sentence that references a height restriction and that an office building could be four stories. Feintuch stated that the use of the building was a factor. Office workers leave at 5 p.m. when adjacent residents are returning home. With a hotel, users are still in the building in the evening which could potentially impact privacy to residents.

Reeser offered that the age of the zoning may be a factor, that it was based on the old model for hotels, which were primarily two stories. Barna noted that the residential lots in this location were consistent with traditional country road development – lots on the edge of farmland, and that this could be a difficult transition.

Howe stated that this ordinance change would apply to any location where a hotel would be allowed, not just this site.

Feintuch stated that users are transient, in contrast to employees of an office building who are regular users. Three stories would be better for privacy. Does not feel the current four-story

proposal fits in this spot and that we should listen to the community.

Waxman stated that the issue was about height anywhere, not just in this area.

Reeser stated that this was a good quality development, a national chain prototype, restricting the height could result in a lower grade hotel.

Discussion continued regarding examples of hotels in other communities, Meridian Township in particular where older hotels are two-three stories and newer hotels are being built at four stories. Everyone agreed it was an important discussion. The consensus was to prepare a draft for public hearing that struck the sentence in Sec 94-173(i)(2)e. completely.

LIAISON REPORT

Droscha provided an update on City Council meeting including a change to allow solid waste receptacles to be placed after 5pm the evening before pick-up, and that a workshop was held regarding Code of Conduct based on a session from the MML conference.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.



Lori Hagle, Secretary