

PLANNING COMMISSION

June 2, 2016

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of June 2, 2016 was called to order by Chairman Welch at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Two citizens were in attendance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chairman Welch led the Commission, staff and citizens in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Christopher Forth, Deputy Director of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Services and Brian Beach, Assistant City Attorney.

ROLL CALL:

Mr. Forth called the roll: Patterson (yes), Stoffer (yes), Welch (yes), Dargitz (yes), Joshi (yes), Schimmel (yes), Richmond (yes) and Shoup (yes). A motion was offered by Commissioner Stoffer, seconded by Commissioner Richmond, to approve the roll excusing Commissioner Bosch. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

Chairman Welch introduced Sarah Joshi and Raymond Shoup as the two newest Planning Commissioners.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Welch referred the Commission to the May 19, 2016 meeting minutes contained in the agenda packet. A motion was then made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stoffer, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

None

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Election of Officers. Chairman Welch indicated the Planning Commission customarily elects officers during the month of June. Chairman Welch also indicated he was reappointed for one additional year and would like to continue in the capacity as chairman. Chairman Welch indicated he would like to have a succession plan in place for next year when his term will end. Mr. Forth updated the Commission when certain Commission member terms end. Commissioner Stoffer stated he is interested in serving as the vice-chairman and Commissioner Schimmel indicated she is interested in serving as the secretary.

Commissioner Stoffer offered a motion to nominate Paul Welch as the chairman. The motion was supported by Commissioner Dargitz. The motion was unanimously approved and Paul Welch was re-elected Chairman of the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Dargitz offered a motion to nominate Wayne Stoffer as the vice-chairman. The motion was supported by Commissioner Schimmel. The motion was unanimously approved and Wayne Stoffer was elected Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Richmond offered a motion to nominate Betty Schimmel as the secretary. The motion was supported by Commissioner Dargitz. The motion was unanimously approved and Betty Schimmel was elected Secretary of the Planning Commission.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS:

None.

7:25 p.m. - The Commission took a short recess.
7:30 p.m. - The Commission reconvened the meeting in City Hall Conference Room No. 2

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Portage Road Improvements and Road Diet. Forth summarized the communication to the Planning Commission concerning the May 5th public open house involving the proposed Portage Road diet. Forth also summarized the additional evaluation underway by the City Administration. Jim and Heather Hall were present to speak in support of the road diet. Mr. Hall indicated the speed of Portage Road is too high and vehicles are still making left turns at Lakeview Drive to travel northbound on Portage Road. Commissioner Dargitz suggested installation of a physical-type barrier that would better prohibit left turns. Chairman Welch indicated a traffic signal at Portage Road and Forest Drive would likely create gaps in the Portage Road traffic making it more convenient for motorists to turn onto Portage Road from a side street or driveway. Commissioner Dargitz asked if the signal timing between the Bacon Road and Zylman Road could be modified to create more gaps in traffic. Commissioner Schimmel asked why the speed limit in front of Lake Center Elementary School is 35 mph and not 25 mph and the school zone sign not located further in advance of the school. Finally, the Commission asked about a southbound Portage Road left turn lane to eastbound Stanley Avenue. Forth noted the road diet, if implemented, would provide for this left turn lane. Forth indicated he was not aware of any current proposals to add a left turn lane at Stanley Avenue. Forth indicated he would follow-up on the Lakeview Drive barrier, signal timing, school zone speed/sign and left turn lane for Stanley Avenue.

2. Ordinance Amendment 15/16-A, Off-street Parking and Loading Regulations. Forth summarized the Department of Community Development communication regarding several proposed amendments to the Off-Street Parking and Loading regulations contained in the Zoning Code. Forth indicated the intent of the amendments is to achieve better, more sustainable off-street parking facility design. In summary, the amendments are designed to address the following:

- Better utilize off-street parking resources by removing barriers that currently prevent joint use of adjacent or nearby facilities.
- Establish a process that allows a property owner to reduce off-street parking based on unique characteristics of a use and other factors that support a reduction in parking.
- Streamline the approval process by allowing the Director and/or Planning Commission to make decisions concerning off-street parking facilities.
- Promote green and sustainable development practices.
- Encourage more pedestrian and non-motorized amenities consistent with the adopted Complete Streets Policy.
- Shopping habits have been altered as a result of increased internet options and growth in other areas of the county that affect local demand for off-street parking. Existing land use categories have been evaluated and parking requirements adjusted, where appropriate, based on local observations and comparison to regional/national standards.
- Promote economic development opportunities involving underutilized off-street parking lots, where appropriate.

Forth provided a brief PowerPoint presentation that included several photographs taken during the afternoon of October 3, 2015 of parking lots located within the South Westnedge Avenue corridor that documented the availability of off-street parking spaces. Forth explained the amendments would require less parking spaces with the exception of casual sit-down restaurants. Commissioners Dargitz and Schimmel suggested there should be more sidewalk-type facilities located in the parking lots that separate pedestrians from vehicles. Commissioner Stoffer suggested retaining the 50 space parking lot threshold when, if a development project proposes to exceed 50 off-street parking spaces, Planning Commission review and approval would be necessary. Commissioner Stoffer noted the percent over the maximum is proposed to increase from 10 to 25 percent and the parking requirements for many commercial land uses are proposed to be reduced. The Commission also discussed protecting existing casual sit down restaurants that may not meet the new standard. Chairman Welch asked there were any further comments. There being no further discussion, Forth indicated staff would be working with the City Attorney to format the proposed amendments in ordinance form and would include it on a subsequent agenda for further discussion.

3. Community Impact Projects Grant Fund – additional discussion. Chairman Welch indicated he reviewed the material concerning other community programs asked the other Planning Commissioners to do the same and provide feedback to Commissioner Dargitz. Chairman Welch asked staff to again forward the information summarizing several other community programs to the Commission members. Forth noted he would e-mail the information. Commissioner Dargitz explained the project for the benefit of the new Planning Commissioners and asked that the programs from other communities be reviewed and identify what ideas might be adaptable to the City of Portage. Once this information is received, Commissioner Dargitz indicated she would assemble it and forward it to the City Council for feedback.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher T. Forth, AICP
Deputy Director of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Services