

PLANNING COMMISSION – CITY OF HOUGHTON  
CITY CENTER – COUNCIL CHAMBER  
APRIL 27, 2010

PRESENT: Chairman Mike Butvilas, Mayor Robert Backon, City Manager Scott MacInnes, Rachel Lankton, Gary Lubinski, Jay Green, Tom Merz, Mike Needham, and Kristine Bradof.

ABSENT: None.

Also present: Jonathan Julien.

REGULAR  
MEETING:

Chairman Mike Butvilas called to order a Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission.

APPROVAL OF  
PREVIOUS  
MINUTES:

A motion was made by Lankton and seconded by Needham to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2010 meeting as presented.

Yes: All

No: None

Motion carried.

REVIEW AND  
APPROVAL  
OF AGENDA:

No changes were made to the Agenda.

OPPORTUNITY  
FOR PUBLIC  
TO ADDRESS  
COMMISSION:

No one addressed the Commission.

PUBLIC HEARING: None.

NEW BUSINESS: Jon Julien is requesting a density increase for 1308 and 1310 E. Houghton Avenue. He proposes to buy these two properties, remove the houses, and build an apartment building with four, four-bedroom units. He is asking that the density be increased to what the ordinance allows.

Kristine Bradof arrived.

The present zoning requirements are 6,000 square feet for the first unit and for every additional one-bedroom unit you need 2,500 square feet and for every additional bedroom you need 1,200 square feet. Under the present ordinance he needs 6,100 square feet per unit after the first one. If the density is increased he needs 2,500 square feet for each unit.

City Manager MacInnes said that under the existing density requirement he would need 24,300 square feet of space to put this building up without an increase in density. The Planning Commission can reduce the minimum density requirement and Mr. Julien would then need 13,500 square feet of land space. He has 15,000 square feet.

Mr. Julien said he has enough parking for six people to live in each of the four apartments. He said he needs to allow six people to live in each apartment in order to get the rent he needs for each unit. Each unit is 1,720 square feet.

In multiple family zoning you are allowed to have parking in the front yard with a 10 foot landscaped area either between the parking and the road or the building and the parking.

A motion was made by Lankton and seconded by Backon to recommend the change to step two of density to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Tom Merz questioned why the Commission would increase the density for this parcel because there are already problems in the neighborhood with too many vehicles. This will increase the problem by adding 24 more cars.

Jon Julien said that the apartment building will provide organized parking instead of the present haphazard parking.

Mike Needham said that this neighborhood has been students and will continue to be students. There are two large parking lots near by already so he does not feel this building will change this neighborhood.

City Manager MacInnes said the Commission should look at this entire area and decide if this is an area that they want to allow the density to be increased as there may be other houses in the future

that are removed and the developers may come to the Commission and also ask for density changes.

Kristine Bradof said the Commission needs to come up with a Master Plan so that each area is defined and projects are not done haphazard.

Mr. Julien said he plans to remove the snow with front-end loaders.

Mike Needham reiterated that he feels this apartment complex will fit with the neighborhood. It will be the nicest looking building there. There will be less of an issue with cars because it is off the main drag.

The Commission discussed putting the parking in the back of the building. Mr. Julien cannot do that unless they grant him a front-yard variance so he can move the building closer to the road and then he can fit the parking in the back.

Yes: Lankton, Backon, Needham, Butvilas

No: Bradof, Merz, Green, Lubinski, MacInnes

Motion fails

The members who voted no said they would like the opportunity to physically look at the location. Mr. Julien said he will revise his plans to take into account some of the comments made by the Commission.

A motion was made by Lubinski and seconded by Lankton to hold a Special Meeting on Thursday, April 29, 2010 at 4:00 to look at the new plan.

Yes; All

No: None

Motion carried

City Manager MacInnes reported that the Western UP Health Department received a grant for a Complete Streets program for the City of Houghton. It is hoped that the city can develop an ordinance that will lay out accommodations for all forms of

transportation. A training session will be held in July for the entire Western U.P. They will meet with the Planning Commission about how subdivisions and streets are developed and then come up with ideas for the ordinance. The ordinance can cover new subdivision and also existing streets when they are redone. The City can decide how extensive to make the ordinance.

City Manager MacInnes provided the Commission with a copy of the Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan which can be reviewed at the next meeting. He explained that there is no money available for projects or to use to match grants. Personnel are being reduced in the parks department and public works.

The street funds are down over \$130,000 in the last few years. There is little paving money available. The water/sewer project scheduled for next year will include a lot of paving.

In the DDA the bond payment increases from \$100,000 to \$205,000 so there are no projects in the DDA. Mr. MacInnes is working with legislators to see if they can change the legislation to allow the city to refinance this bond payment.

Mr. MacInnes will add the Parking Fund to the Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan.

The new Planning Commission Ordinance was passed by the Council last night. A motion was made by Lubinski and seconded by Lankton to amend the Planning Commission By-Laws Number 2 – Membership so that they match the new Ordinance.

Yes: All

No: None

Motion carried

A motion was made by Lubinski and seconded by Lankton to recommend to the Council that they assign the members to the following segments of the Community when they are reappointed:

Rachel Lankton	Educational Interests
Kristine Bradof	Environmental Interests
Gary Lubinski	Recreational and Tourism
Mike Butvilas	Industrial & Economic

Jay Green  
Mike Needham  
Tom Merz

Transportation, Communication  
Governmental Municipal Interests  
At-Large

Yes: All

No: None

Motion carried

MDOT is repaving College Avenue this summer. They will fix the drainage at the same time. The intersections will also be redone. The City will put the two catch basins in while MDOT is working.

The next Planning Commission Regular Meeting will be held Tuesday, May 25, 2010 at 5:30 p.m.

A motion to adjourn was made by Lankton

Yes: All

No: None

Motion carried.

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Gary Lubinski  
Secretary