

**CITY OF HOUGHTON PLANNING COMMISSION
2019 ANNUAL REPORT**

1. Membership	Segment Represented
a. Tom Merz, Chairperson	Educational
b. Mike Needham, Vice Chairperson	Governmental/Municipal/Housing
c. Gary Lubinski, Secretary	Recreational/Tourism
d. Eric Waara, City Manager	
e. Robert Backon, Mayor	
f. Kristine Bradof	Environmental
g. Bill Leder	Transportation/Utility/Communication
h. Dan Liebau	At-Large
i. Michele Jarvie-Eggart	Industrial/Economic

Member Travis Pierce resigned on August 20th to move out-of-state. Member Michele Jarvie-Eggart was appointed by the council and attended her first meeting as a commissioner on October 22, 2019.

2. Meetings

- a. January 9, 2019 – Joint with Council
- b. January 29, 2019
- c. February 26,2019
- d. March 26,2019
- e. April 30,2019
- f. May 28,2019
- g. The June meeting was cancelled.
- h. July 23, 2019
- i. August 20, 2019
- j. September 24, 2019
- k. October 22, 2019
- l. November 12,2019 – Joint with Council
- m. November 12, 2019 - Regular
- n. December 17, 2019

3. Plans

- a. On January 9, 2019 the commission and council held a joint meeting with a public hearing to take comment on the proposed Five-Year Recreation and Natural Resource Conservation Plan. Following the public hearing, the commission and council passed resolutions adopting the plan.
- b. The commission approved the Capital Improvement Plan.
- c. The commission completed the remaining chapters of the Master Plan. Subcommittees met throughout the year providing draft chapters to the commission for review and revision. On October 22, 2019 the commission held a public hearing to take public input on the draft plan. Following the public hearing, the commission passed Master Plan 2019-2023 to the council.

4. Zoning Ordinance Amendments

- a. January 28, 2019 – the commission held a public hearing to take comment on proposed Ordinance 2019-294 to amend the R-4 Redevelopment Ready Residential District to require the same minimum amount of square footage for efficiency apartments and one-bedroom apartments. The ordinance also added exceptions to the minimum front yard setback and rear yard setback that are in the other residential zoning districts. Following the public hearing, the commission voted to recommend the proposed ordinance to the council.

5. Site Plan Reviews

- a. The commission reviewed and approved a site plan for the construction of covered parking areas at Wal-Mart for online ordering at the store.
- b. The commission reviewed and approved a site plan for St. Albert the Great Parish to add a second story to the priest's residence so that the living quarters can be moved to the second story with the first story renovated for classrooms.
- c. The commission reviewed and approved a site plan for 1220 Military Road to renovate the dentist office into a dwelling unit.
- d. The commission reviewed and approved a site plan for 5th and Elm Coffee House at 326 Shelden Avenue for the new owner to expand the dining room, fix the damaged patio area, and renovate the basement to add an apartment and office space.
- e. The commission reviewed and approved a site plan for a new 8-unit apartment building at 612 Garnet Street.
- f. The commission reviewed and approved a site plan for three additional duplex units on Quincy Cove Road.
- g. The commission reviewed and approved a site plan for St. Ignatius Church to construct a Faith Formation Center on the property. The Zoning Board of Appeals granted the church a side-yard setback variance for the east property line.
- h. The commission reviewed and approved a site plan for the new Meijer store. The Zoning Board of Appeals granted a parking variance to reduce the minimum number of spaces required.
- i. The commission reviewed and approved a site plan for the old Shopko store that was purchased by the Evangel Baptist Church to relocate the church.
- j. The commission reviewed and approved a site plan for the Copper Range Depot building. The new owner is remodeling the first floor of the building for a restaurant.
- k. The commission reviewed and approved a site plan for Kataluma Apartments located in the former Evangel Baptist Church at 1114 College Avenue. Prior to reviewing the site plan, the commission approved increased density for the development.

6. Zoning Map Changes

- a. August 20, 2019 – the commission held a public hearing regarding proposed Ordinance 2019-300 to rezone a 200-foot strip of land located next to the Meijer property and owned by the Hope Fellowship Church from R-1 to B-3. Following the public hearing and review of the factors, the commission voted to recommend the council rezone this property.
- b. August 20, 2019 – the commission held a public hearing regarding proposed Ordinance 2019-301 to rezone a parcel of land on the Houghton Canal Road from R-1 to Industrial. Following the public hearing and review of the factors, the commission did not make a motion to recommend this ordinance as they considered it spot zoning.

7. Actions taken per Planning Commission Recommendations

- a. The Council held a public hearing and adopted the Capital Improvement Plan.
- b. The Council held a public hearing and adopted Ordinance 2019-300.
- c. Following receipt of the *Planning Commission Subcommittee Report on Rental Housing*, the Council adopted Ordinance 2019-298 revising Chapter 14, Article V, Housing Code for Rental Property.
- d. The Council allowed increased density for the Kataluma Apartments at 1114 College Avenue.

8. Other Business

- a. The commission received the results of the Social Media survey that included ways for the city to improve communication.
- b. In May, the city put out an RFQ for redevelopment proposals of the large parking deck downtown. Three proposals were received. Presentations were made on August 14th by the developers. The Council choose to work with Veridea Group on the redevelopment. A Lakeshore Drive Redevelopment Committee was formed to meet with Veridea Group. The members are Councilors John Sullivan and Buck Foltz, Planning Commission members Tom Merz and Michele Jarvie-Eggart, City Manager Eric Waara, DDA members Dick Gray and Alan Kiley, downtown business owner Bruce Rundman, and resident at-large Elise Nelson.
- c. The commission discussed a possible sale of the City Center building to the tenant who expressed interest in owning the building. In anticipation of a possible sale, the city manager presented alternative sites for the city office for the commission and council to consider at a joint meeting held on December 12th. At the meeting, the city manager was asked to pursue the Subway Garage site at 704 Sheldon Avenue and the Continental Fire Company site at 408 East Montezuma Avenue.
- d. The commission reviewed and discussed proposed Ordinance 2019-302 setting restrictions for possible recreational marihuana retailers in the city. The commission also reviewed and discussed proposed Ordinance 2019-303 revising the present medical marihuana ordinance to allow recreational retailers and medical dispensaries to co-exist. Public hearings to discuss these proposed ordinances were scheduled for January of 2020.
- e. The commission discussed the possible sale of the five-acre site north of the Michigan Tech Employees Credit Union owned by the City to Houghton County for relocation of the jail. The commission members voted to recommend the council not sell this property because the city needs this site for dumping snow and because the site is close to residential neighborhoods.
- f. In 2019, the City issued zoning permits for a total of \$7,516,900 in value. There were five new residential houses constructed.

9. Training

- a. Members Tom Merz, Mike Needham, Eric Waara, Bill Leder, and Kristine Bradof attended training in August presented by MSU Extension regarding Risk Assessment in Zoning.

- b. Members Tom Merz and Bill Leder attended a webinar regarding Form-Based Zoning in November.

10. Looking Ahead to 2020

- a. Training Priorities.
 - i. The commission will work on revising the zoning ordinance this year. Training should focus on zoning. We will ask MSU extension and WUPPDR for assistance.
 - ii. With many redevelopment opportunities downtown, the commission should also receive training for development and public participation. MEDC may have a webinar to assist with this kind of training.
 - iii. The city will assist members who want to become a citizen planner or need continuing credits by funding this training.
- b. Zoning Ordinance. Now that the master plan revision is complete, the commission will turn its attention to updating the zoning ordinance. Some possible amendments to the ordinance include:
 - i. Revising the amount of minimum automobile and bike parking spaces required for large commercial development.
 - ii. Short-term rentals
 - iii. Creation of a Downtown Central Business District. This is needed for Redevelopment Ready status. While we allow people to build up to lot-lines and provide outdoor dining, these items are not spelled out and need to be.
 - iv. Changes to site plan review process
 - v. Food trucks
 - vi. Rezoning Process. We need to be specific about what occurs if the planning commission does NOT recommend a rezoning or a conditional rezoning request to the council.