

MINUTES OF MEETING
CITY OF HOUGHTON PLANNING COMMISSION
MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2021 – 1:00 p.m.
CITY CENTER COUNCIL CHAMBERS

PRESENT: Bill Leder, Kristine Bradof, and Jennifer Julien.

ABSENT: Michele Jarvie-Eggart.

Also present: Clerk Ann Vollrath, Code Enforcement Officer Jeff Jepsen, Sharon Levine, Derek Bradway, Craig Waddell, Garrett Neese, Robert Megowen, and Grant Dossetto.

APPROVAL OF
PREVIOUS
MINUTES:

A motion was made by Bradof and seconded by Julien to approve the minutes of the August 23, 2021 meeting as written

Yes: All

No: None

Motion carried

APPROVAL OF
AGENDA:

No changes were made to the agenda.

OPPORTUNITY
FOR PUBLIC
TO ADDRESS:

Craig Waddell of Houghton said a lot of universities are de-densifying on-campus housing. This complements the densification of off-campus housing the planning commission has been discussing. He also said millennials are less inclined to take public transportation now for health reasons.

Mr. Waddell said the city should be considering how climate migration will affect the city with possible population increases.

Jen Julien said Michigan Tech tried to de-densify their on-campus housing this year; however, there was not enough community housing available.

Derek Bradway, a local developer, said it is hard for developers to invest in housing because Michigan Tech will not offer a guarantee to the community that they will not require three students to a room in dorms in the future.

BUSINESS:

Bill Leder said the commission should be considering housing options for the missing middle that include multi-family housing types such as duplexes and

row houses. While increasing density, we are looking for ways to meet housing needs and develop a sustainable community. The current master plan discusses the need for diverse housing options. There is a need for choices for senior citizens and families looking for suitable rental options. The zoning ordinance should be amended to add more housing options to align with the master plan.

Kristine Bradof said the city should look at diverse housing options as there may be opportunities for the city to grow. In addition to the university, climate change may increase our population. She would like to look at increasing options for accessory dwelling units that are not attached to the main house.

Derek Bradway said there are a lot of people looking to move from a single-family home into something smaller; however, there is an enormous population drop off expected in the next 10 years so it is hard for a developer to plan a development with that in mind.

Jennifer Julien noted the average lot sizes in some areas of Houghton are too small to allow for duplexes so lot sizes will be a factor in determining where zoning districts for duplexes can be located.

She also mentioned a concern about developers purchasing homes to use as vacation rentals as the rate of return is high. In residential housing areas, the conversion of family homes to vacation rentals consumes the availability of missing middle housing.

Bill Leder mentioned the current zoning ordinance provides an R-2 zoning district, but there are no areas in the city zoned R-2. He discussed possibly reviewing the zoning map for areas that may be logically zoned R-2.

The committee said they need to be proactive and offer alternatives and flexibility in the zoning ordinance.

The committee mentioned topics they would like to discuss at another meeting:

- Downtown
 - Placemaking.
 - Walking tours.
 - Garbage and recycling collection.
 - Building heights.
- Housing Mix
 - Zoning changes to allow a diversity of housing types.
 - Preserving the historic feeling of houses, especially on College Avenue. A suggestion was made to provide historic plaques to houses.
- Vacant Land
- Transportation
 - Ways to move people from place to place without the necessity of taking individual cars.
 - More off-street parking by campus.

A motion to adjourn was made by Bradof and seconded by Julien.

Yes: All

No: None

Motion carried

The meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Kristine Bradof, Secretary