

CITY OF HOUGHTON PLANNING COMMISSION 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

1. Introduction

The City of Houghton Planning Commission fulfills a requirement of the Planning Enabling Act.

Duties of the commission include:

- Prepare and approve a master plan that is reviewed annually and updated every five years
- Prepare a capital improvement program to submit to the council for adoption every year
- Review and update the zoning ordinance periodically to make sure it complies with the master plan
- Review and update the zoning map periodically to make sure it complies with the master plan
- Hold public hearings and recommend or not recommend requests from citizens in accordance with the zoning ordinance
- Perform site plan reviews of new developments.

2. Purpose of Report

This annual report is required in the Planning Enabling Act. This report increases information-sharing between the commission, staff, boards, the public, and the governing body.

3. Membership

Segment Represented

2022:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. Tom Merz, Chairperson | Educational |
| b. Bill Leder, Vice Chairperson | Transportation/Utility/Communication |
| c. Dan Liebau, Secretary | At-large |
| d. Brad Baltensperger | Industrial/Economic |
| e. Eric Waara, City Manager | |
| f. Bob Backon, Mayor | |
| g. Mike Needham, Councilor | Governmental/Municipal/Housing |
| h. Kristine Bradof | Environmental |
| i. Jennifer Julien | Recreational/Tourism. |

2023:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. Tom Merz, Chairperson | Educational |
| b. Bill Leder, Vice Chairperson | Transportation/Utility/Communication |
| c. Dan Liebau, Secretary | At-large |
| d. Norma Veurink | Industrial/Economic |
| e. Eric Waara, City Manager | |
| f. Brian Irizarry, Mayor | |
| g. Joan Suits, Mayor Pro Tem | Government/Municipal/Housing |
| h. Kristine Bradof | Environmental |
| i. Ben Ciavola | Recreational/Tourism |

4. Committees

In August, the commission formed a committee to discuss regulating food trucks. The committee members are Eric Waara, Bill Leder, Dan Liebau.

The following committees were created to work on specific chapters of the master plan during the revision process:

Recreation Chapter – Liebau, Ciavola, Irizarry, Veurnik
Neighborhood Chapter – Bradof, Waara, Leder
Transportation Chapter – Leder, Liebau, Merz
Downtown and M-26 Chapter – Bradof, Waara, Irizarry, Suits
Economic Dev and Zoning Chapter – Waara, Merz, Veurnik
Sustainability Chapter – Bradof, Liebau, Ciavola

5. Meetings

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires that local Planning Commissions meet at least four times a year. The City of Houghton Planning Commission meets the fourth Tuesday of each month and held 15 meetings during the year on the following dates:

January 25, 2022
February 22, 2022
March 14, 2022 – Master Plan Survey Committee
March 22, 2022
April 26, 2022
May 24, 2022
June 1, 2022 (Joint Meeting with Council and DDA)
June 28, 2022
July 26, 2022
August 30, 2022
September 15, 2022 – Special Meeting
September 27, 2022
October 25, 2022
November 15, 2022
December 13, 2022.

6. Master Plan and Economic Development Strategy Review

On June 1, 2022, the commission held a joint meeting with the council and DDA to discuss Economic Development Strategy. The commission received a presentation from David Rowe, CEO of the MTEC SmartZone about the role of the SmartZone in the community and how the SmartZone assists with economic development. Since 2012, the SmartZone has assisted 97 new companies and created 612 new local jobs.

City Manager Waara discussed the future of Lakeshore Drive and downtown following the removal of the 1978 Parking Deck scheduled for 2023. The city approved a bond to cover the cost of the deck removal and received a Michigan Economic Development Company Revitalization and

Placemaking Grant to perform some projects on the site following removal of the deck including enhancing pedestrian access.

When the deck has been removed and the property enhanced, the city can then discuss the future of the property including items such as parking, access, and possible private development.

Chairperson Merz said the commission can seek public input during the master plan revision process.

7. Other Plans

- a. The commission approved the Capital Improvement Plan and recommended it for adoption by the council. This plan was adopted by the council on June 15, 2022.

8. Zoning Ordinance Amendments

The commission discussed a possible ordinance revision regarding food trucks. They agreed the city should amend the ordinance to regulate food trucks. On August 30, 2022, a committee was formed to answer three questions brought up by the city manager:

1. Yes or no
2. If yes, where?
3. If yes, how do we keep the playing field level with brick-and-mortar restaurants?

The committee members are Eric Waara, Bill Leder, Dan Liebau, and Mike Needham.

9. Development Reviews

Project Type	Location	Description	Status
Site Plan Review	17800 Canal Road	Keweenaw Waters Resort Cabins to erect 24 vacation cabins.	Approved by PC January 25.
Site Plan Review	17800 Canal Road	Keweenaw Waters Resort to construct a private, non-commercial boardwalk subject to special land use permit.	Approved by PC January 25.
Special Land Use Permit	17800 Canal Road	Public Hearing for Keweenaw Waters Resort to construct a private, non-commercial boardwalk.	Recommended by PC February 22. Approved by Council February 23.
Special Land Use Permit	1301 Ridge Road	Public Hearing for Tranquility Fields to locate marihuana retailer.	Recommended by PC February 22. Approved by Council February 23.

Site Plan Review	111 Shelden Avenue	Sisu Ventures for a commercial business on first floor and two new apartments on second floor	Approved by PC February 22.
Site Plan Review	1220 Military Avenue	DTA Contracting to construct an apartment building.	Approved by PC March 22.
Site Plan Review	404 E. Sharon Avenue	Keweenaw Storage to construct a storage building.	Approved by PC March 22.
Site Plan Review	510 E. Sharon Avenue	Keweenaw Storage to construct a storage building.	Approved by PC April 26.
Site Plan Review	318-324 Shelden Avenue	Hall Building LLC to change use from commercial to residential in the upper floors.	Approved by PC on August 30.
Site Plan Review	326 Shelden Avenue	Braveworks Inc to construct an apartment building above the present building.	Approved by PC on September 15.
Site Plan Review	408 Fairview	Braveworks Inc to construct an apartment building including a reduction in parking requirements.	Approved by PC on September 15.
Site Plan Review	900 W. Memorial Drive	Construct a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant.	Approved by PC on December 13.

10.Zoning Map Changes

The commission held a public hearing on March 22, 2022 regarding Ordinance 2022-324 to rezone a portion of East Houghton Avenue from R-1 to R-3 as requested by some of the property owners. Following the public hearing the commission voted to recommend the proposed ordinance to the Council. The council held a public hearing on April 11, 2022. Following the public hearing, the council adopted Ordinance 2022-324.

11.Zoning Department Annual Development Review

The city received 26 Zoning Permits in 2022. 25 were approved and 1 was denied.

There were 8 commercial Zoning Permits completed for a total of \$10,300,000 in value and 16 residential Zoning Permits completed for a total of \$1,759,900 in value of which \$1,108,000 is the construction of 2 new residential houses. 1 Zoning Permit was issued to a non-taxable property for the total of \$38,000.

There was a total of 10 site plan reviews completed in 2021.

The Dangerous Buildings ordinance was enforced on one property resulting in the city removing the structure from the property.

12.Variances granted by Zoning Board of Appeals

On March 30, 2022, the Zoning Board of appeals approved a rear-yard variance at 220 Blanche Street to build up to 22 feet from the rear property line.

On May 11, 2022, the Zoning Board of Appeals approved a rear-yard variance to build 13 feet from the property line as well as a variance to exceed the maximum amount of lot area covered by buildings by 245 square feet at 609 West Calverley Street.

On May 25, 2022, the Zoning Board of Appeals approved a front yard variance at 208 W. Edwards Avenue to allow a house to be built 17 feet from the front property line.

13. Trainings Attended and Training Plan for 2023:

City Manager Waara attended the MML Annual Conference.

Bill Leder attended MSU From Exclusive to Inclusive/Evolution of R-1 Zoning, MSU Preemption of Local Authority.

Kristine Bradof attended MSU Attainable Housing training, Citizen Planner Regional Cohort meeting, State Preemption of Local Authority in Michigan webinar, MAP Woodland Preservation webinar, Shoreline Protection by WUPPDR and Keweenaw Land Trust, Coastal Planning and Zoning by MSU Extension, MSU - Housing, Real Estate and Resiliency. MSU Exclusive to Inclusive Single-Family Housing. MSU Resources and Tools for Local Government Sustainability. MTU- A Roadmap for Climate Action at Michigan Tech.

Brad Baltensperger attended the MSU Master Citizen Planner.

Dan Liebau attended MSU Resources and Tools for Local Government Sustainability.

Training Plan for 2023:

- a. New members will be encouraged to attend training to better familiarize themselves with the role of the planning commission in local government.
- b. Downtown Development and Redevelopment training as offered.
- c. Members that attend training are asked to briefly describe the training they attended and update other members on what was learned at training during the Reports section of the agenda at the next commission meeting.

14. Other Business

The commission reviewed an ordinance regarding the keeping of animals and made suggestions for changes and additions to administration.

The commission also reviewed an ordinance to amend the city's nuisances regarding noxious weeds, and placing shipping containers in yards. Again, the commission provided administration with some possible changes and additions.

15. Public Participation Report

On January 9, 2021, the City of Houghton adopted a Public Participation Plan to guide and outline policies, procedures and methods to effectively and equitably engage public input during planning, zoning, and development processes. In addition to all required State measures for public participation, the plan identifies methods of proactive public involvement, acts as a tool for accountability and transparency, and illustrates ways to share feedback and results to the public in a timely manner.

In addition to required public hearings, the commission held two public participation events in 2022 related to the revision of the master plan.

- a. The first Master Plan Open House was held on Tuesday, October 11, 2022 in the City Center Council Chambers. This event was facilitated by Pat Coleman of North of 45 LLC.
 - i. Attendees: 24 people attended the event. Not all attendees completed an evaluation. Of those that did, the ages of attendees were:
 1. 70-79 – 6
 2. 60-69 – 4
 3. 50-59 – 8
 4. 40-49 – 2
 5. 30-39 – 2
 - ii. How people found out about the event.
 1. E-mail – 5
 2. Newspaper – 4
 3. Website – 2
 4. Word of mouth – 4
 5. Radio - 2
 - iii. Comments:
 1. Attendees left their comments on the individual chapters of the master plan.
- b. The second Master Plan Open House was held on November 1, 2022 in the City Center Council Chambers following a short special meeting of the commission. This event was facilitated by Pat Coleman of North of 45 LLC.
 - i. Attendees: 31 people attended the event. Not all attendees completed an evaluation. Of those that did, the ages of attendees were:
 1. 70-79 - 3
 2. 60-69 – 4
 3. 50-59 – 0
 4. 40-49 – 5
 5. 30-39 – 2
 - ii. How people found out about the event.
 1. E-mail – 2
 2. Newspaper – 3
 3. Website – 0
 4. Word of mouth – 5
 5. Radio - 3
- c. Comments:
 1. All comments made were regarding individual chapters.

16.Looking Ahead to 2023

- a. The commission will receive the survey results from intern Stephanie Franco in February. The master plan committees will work on individual chapters with the goal of revising the master plan and forwarding it onto the council for adoption before the end of 2023.
- b. Hold joint meeting with council and DDA.
- c. Annual capital improvement plan review and recommendation to council.
- d. Revision of Master Plan including Economic Development Strategy
- e. Update Redevelopment Ready Community priority development sites.
- f. The commission will continue to work with the city manager on ideas and concepts for the Lakeshore Drive property following removal of the 1978 parking deck.
- g. Revisit possible food truck ordinance and downtown building heights as previously requested by the council.