

Planning Commission

Master Plan Work Session Minutes Thursday, January 19, 2017 7:00 p.m., Council Chambers



City of South Haven

Main Street Planning Company will facilitate a Master Plan Work Session for the Planning Commission covering the following topics:

Tentative dates for Neighborhood meetings

Survey Question Formation

Hosier reminded all to use their microphones so the audience can hear what's being said.

The chair opened the floor for citizen comment:

Dorothy Appleyard. Spoke about the need for community engagement and feedback as the most important part of the Master Plan review process. Also spoke about more background information being available to the public before the meetings. Expressed negative feelings about how she perceives the process being carried out.

There were no other comments.

Roll call

Present: Bill Fries, John Frost, Clark Gruber, Steve Miles, Brian Peterson, Judy Stimson, Larry Heinig

Absent: Suzanne Loafman, Dave Paull

Also present: Kate Hosier, Staff

Janis Johnson, Main Street Planning Company. Explained she did not bring a printed agenda because just going a couple of items will be covered tonight. Noted the additional handouts, which includes the first, very rough draft of the section on demographics. Pointed out the handouts are also available for the public on the table. Demographics will be discussed at a later date; suggested the commissioners read through the information between now and our next meeting. The information is from the 2011 plan; it's part of that revolving sampling. While

not completely accurate, some projections are made and it is pretty good. If you see an error please circle it and let the consultants know.

Discussion ensued regarding whether or not to put all information being presented to the Commissioners online ahead of the date of the meeting, with some feeling everything should be available online for the public to review and be aware of before each meeting and others concerned with people misunderstanding the information and becoming concerned that decisions have been made before discussion is held. Commissioners couldn't reach consensus on this subject, and Hosier suggested these handouts can be added to the packet online once they have been discussed. Johnson noted she was just trying to get the information in the commissioners' hands; it won't always be this last minute.

Johnson spoke about the **physical presentation of the Master Plan** with the 2011 Plan being a long document and the next Master Plan being shorter and will be more focused. Johnson stated, "We think, at Main Street, that you should have a document that you can edit" as opposed to being done in specific software and only able to be edited if you own that specific software. "We want this to be a document the Planning Commission can use as a manual."

Johnson next presented **draft two of the survey**, "from your comments in November." Johnson has included, in bold, that each property owner may complete two surveys.

The question "Can both surveys from one household be returned in one envelope?" was asked and Johnson explained the actual details of that will be handled by the city, so we will have to discuss that.

Johnson talked about how people who are not property owners will find out about the survey. Suggestions included a statement in the survey, publicity in the paper, information on the website. Heinig expressed his feeling that all of the above should be implemented.

#4. (1-3 areas or blocks or street segment). Johnson explained this as an opportunity to look at small areas in the survey and ask for feedback from respondents. "It might be hard at this point to identify those areas; this is kind of optional, whether you want some specific feedback on some specific areas. Are you interested in talking about that tonight? We will be getting some input from downtown business owners so that will be covered. Would you like specific input on certain areas? If you feel you need more time to identify an area, that will just delay the survey for a month or so. From your initial session, there was discussion of the gateway on Phoenix Street and a potential gateway in another entrance to the city.

Heinig asked what kind of areas Johnson, as a consultant, typically sees to which Johnson responded, "**Areas in transition; areas in decline; where residential meets commercial; areas where there are a lot of non-conforming uses.**" In the last case Johnson explained that input would be taken from people who live in remaining dwellings.

Heinig said the example of the M-43 transition area of residential mixed with commercial which was clarified as the section running in front of the hospital and through residential. Hosier agreed and also reminded of the National Motors property. Stimson asked if the National Motors site can't be used for residential. Hosier said we can do some research to find out the status of it; what it can be used for.

#5. Identify a location for a central gathering venue. Johnson suggested the commission can come up with three top choices for citizens to choose from or you can leave it open-ended

for citizens to write in. What about listing some areas that might be good choices? Peterson brought up the armory, noting that the school owns it. Stimson noted an area near Aylworth, a couple of churches and a couple of residences. Discussion ensued about putting an event venue on top of the National Motors site and paving the rest for parking, as well as an area near the Overton site that has open space. The armory site is another possibility.

After a comment about **changing zoning**, Johnson pointed out that another option to changing zoning is **adding uses** to the district. After discussion about land by the middle school, Johnson noted that **planning outside the city's boundaries** is also done in Master Plans. Heinig said he'd like to leave the third option "other" to allow creative thought for those taking the survey.

Going back to **#4**, more discussion ensued about taking a look at the **M-43 corridor as an area in transition, with the final result covering South Bailey, along Phillips, to Broadway**. Johnson noted before she does the inset maps she is going to try to come down in daylight to put her eyes on it. The question was asked whether the commission thinks two options are enough to include with "other" allowing citizens to identify something that might not occur to the commission. Johnson suggested, "Not on this one; that would be a logistical nightmare." That kind of thing can come out in neighborhood workshops."

Stimson asked if all of the area down by the river/waste water treatment is planned to which Hosier replied that area is going to be developed into a park and Black River Park will be expanded.

Johnson asked if the rec plan is on the website and Hosier responded, "Yes, under Official Documents" in the Government tab. Johnson reminded that **when a community facilities map is put in, make sure all the parks are labeled and cross-reference the recreation plan**.

#6. Name where you need crosswalks. Discussion ensued regarding the crosswalk at Hubbard on Phoenix needing a sign saying "Stop for pedestrians," and that there is still a crossing there but no crossing guard. Hosier pointed out that we heard from MDOT that there was too much traffic to do a lane diet or crosswalk. Stimson mentioned the area on Center Street by the theater, which after discussion was identified as the Center/Quaker intersection and Johnson pointed out, "We want people to identify/nominate three such places. The commission can have their ideas, too, of course."

#7. The first part is a statement about short term rentals. Frost pointed out that #8 should really be part of question #7 which Johnson agreed with.

Choose the one best answer. There are three items up for discussion and the potential for an option for the survey-taker to state a place where short term rental should not be allowed. Johnson noted that on any of these questions it could be mapped using GPS and mapping software. Hosier said we are concerned that some people really want to be anonymous and suggested different color paper from any of the other areas for surveys picked up at city hall. There was some discussion on how many copies might be made of a survey and numbering the copies that are picked up at city hall so duplicate entries cannot be made.

#8. Fire pits regulation. In response to a question regarding whether we have ordinances regulating these things. Hosier explained that much of it is regulated by the fire code. Frost pointed out that it would not be against the fire code to say no fire pits. Stimson said if fire pits are banned by the ordinance she wants to be sure grilling or BBQing is exempt. Frost noted it will be understood by the first statement "The City is considering regulating outdoor recreational

fires and fire pits.” Hosier clarified that cooking fires and grilling are not considered recreational fires for the purpose of the International Fire Code. Fries expressed concern about whether this means indoor fire places. Discussion ensued about composite woods, screen covers, size of pit and fire, and burn permits being required. It has been said that only 10 percent of people get the permit. Do we have any regulations about size of fire pits? Johnson said the sample ordinance does have a size restriction which is three foot by three foot. Hosier clarified that the ordinance does require a recreational burn permit from the fire department. Stimson suggested starting the questions with “Recreational fire pits, yes or no?”

Final comment on the survey regarding visiting the Master Plan 2017 web page, which Johnson noted does not yet exist and added that she could **add information about what we have decided we are going to do, monthly updates and a statement that the survey will also be available through a link on the city manager’s blog.**

Fries asked if we have a deadline when these need to be mailed back which Johnson noted needs to be decided. Hosier pointed out that **other master plan questionnaires sent out have an explanation of what a master plan is, what it is used for, and who uses it.**

#2 was revisited to discuss resident status. “Could a person be a full-time resident and not have a Personal Resident Exemption (PRE)?” to which Hosier responded with a yes. Johnson noted that **the survey taker is instructed that they may choose as many answers as apply.**

Frost and Fries reminded that the **survey needs to clarify that one person may only fill out one survey.** Hosier noted that the **surveys handed out at city hall are going to be numbered and they will have a separate color code.**

Discussion ensued about a property owner with six apartments; he and one other resident of his unit may each fill out one survey and the other unit residents can pick up a survey at city hall. Stimson commented that we are most interested in property owners who have invested in the city. Johnson clarified that the intent was that we **do not want to leave long-term renters out of the results because they are residents.**

Johnson noted that the next step for the survey is for Johnson to revise it plus add the inset maps and then the Planning Commission will have to look at it again. Stimson said she does not want to hold the up for another month and asked, “Could we review it by email and get it back to Main Street in a week?”

There was discussion regarding including a self-addressed stamped envelope. Frost suggested doing a cost analysis. Discussion continued regarding how to do the **survey return.**

Appleyard requested from the chair the opportunity to speak. Appleyard also demanded that the chair call for a break and commented about not allowing input from the people in the audience, who possess a wealth of knowledge. “The gateway on Phoenix was about the welcome island being moved and has nothing to do with the section of Phoenix being discussed tonight.”

Heinig agreed to a break and Hosier called out the time to reconvene. After the break Heinig stated it would be a good idea to open it for **public input**, again with the three-minute limit.

Susan Woodhull. Spoke wanting all fire pits to be required to be gas; then the police and firemen can take care of more important issues.

Pat Gaston. Spoke about fire pits and who to call when there is a problem with smoke as well as her feeling that no one will respond if someone calls.

Mary Lynn Bugge. Spoke about looking beyond the city limits for a venue for trade shows, weddings and other large events. Stated she would love to see the township and city work together and come up with a plan that benefits both.

Johnson clarified that the Planning Commission can have planning input through the Master Plan but you cannot zone other townships.

Appleyard. Apologized for her previous comments being harsh; expressed that she wishes she had known further public comment was going to be allowed and appreciated the chair giving the extra time.

Woodhull. Spoke about a lot of people being intimidated to call in with complaints; questioned whether enforcement is going to last or go away; stated residents shouldn't have to police the short-term rental neighbors.

There were no other comments.

Johnson spoke about planning outside the boundaries. Noted she is not sure why this map says "Existing and Future Land Use" but pointed out that you can see where some **planning was done outside the boundaries in the last Master Plan**. That is something we should definitely discuss when we get to future land use. Johnson noted that when the draft is ready for input from adjacent communities, they have 60 days to interact with you on that.

Discussion ensued about how the Planning Commission will receive Johnson's draft of the survey questions by email for review and how commissioners will submit suggestions and how commissioners will learn the suggestions made by other commissioners. Further discussion regarding commenting by "reply all" would possibly violate the Open Meetings Act since that might be construed to be a quorum. It was decided that commissioners will send comments in to Kate, who can send them to Johnson. Johnson suggested maybe Kate can print the emails and commissioners can come in to city hall and add comments.

In discussing how long Johnson thinks it will take before she has a draft to commissioners, Johnson said she will shoot for within four weeks or less, aiming for two weeks. Further discussion ensued regarding a launch on the website, working out logistics with the city, whether to include a return envelope or fold over; mailing and return mail. Johnson believes there could be a mid-February launch, with comments returned to Kate by March 3 or somewhere between February 24 and early March.

Setting neighborhood meetings. Johnson noted this is meeting #3 because the December 15th meeting was canceled. Johnson pointed out that her hope was to have neighborhood meetings in February, but now we are pushing into March. In response to questions about Commissioners' attendance, Johnson noted that it's nice if the Planning Commission does come especially if it is in your neighborhood. It was noted that all can't come to any one meeting because that would create a quorum. It would be good if two commissioners attended two of the meetings; it is not expected that commissioners attend all three, although they can if they want to, taking care not to have a quorum present.

Johnson stressed that the important part is the venues. Hosier suggested the following venues: the **Wellness Center, Listiak Auditorium, Lake Michigan College, Warren Center or Senior Services of Van Buren County.**

Discussion of what is involved with a neighborhood meeting ensued. Johnson noted that it needs to be a big enough venue for fifty to one hundred attendees; she will need tables to place air photos on for comment, some chairs (optional), and a microphone. She will make an introductory statement, "Here's why we're here, here's what we're doing." Commissioner Miles noted that **North Shore Elementary has a microphone in their lunchroom.**

Johnson explained that public comment is not taken before the neighborhood workshop because the whole thing is public comment. Hosier asked if there is any interest in doing one workshops in day time, at the Warren Center, but there was concern that a whole dynamic of working people would be lost.

Dates. Hosier will investigate dates from late February to March, with one in February and two in March. Johnson suggested meeting the last full week in February or last partial week in late February/early March. There was discussion of what is the best date or day. Frost suggested trying to schedule them on different days of the week. Johnson noted she has a lot of Wednesdays free.

Once we get the neighborhood workshops schedules Johnson will do the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and the Overton Charrette, then the Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA) and the Central Business District (CBD) walking tour. Sometime in April or May we should meet; review results to date; get feedback on the boilerplate Master Plan language. After a suggestion by Stimson it was decided **March 30 at 6:30 p.m.** would be a good time to meet.

Discussion ensued about the legalities of putting the packet online for regular planning commission meetings and Council meetings. Gruber noted that it's helpful for everyone to be on the same page. Stimson said we need to clearly communicate that no decisions have been made and we are not voting on anything at workshops. Heinig said he would like to have a list of discussion items and any attachments that go along with those items. Johnson will do some reflecting and ask legal advice.

Johnson summed up by noting that the commissioners have received and discussed proposed survey questions. Demographics have not been reviewed or discussed and will need to be reviewed at a later meeting.

The meeting was adjourned 9:46 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary