

Planning Commission

Master Plan Work Session Minutes **Thursday, November 10, 2016** **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

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

Heinig stated there would be time for some public comment but seeing no public turned the floor over to J. Johnson, Main Street Planning Company.

J. Johnson commented on the documents she forwarded that were the result of the discussion at the kick-off workshop, noting she will review the focus points.

A member of the public, Dorothy Appleyard, arrived.

Heinig explained the times and public workshops that will be set up for public input, including the survey that will be mailed to everyone and asked if Appleyard wanted to comment.

Appleyard stated she wants to follow the process to make sure there is plenty of public input.

A little later, another member of the public, Mary Lynn Bugge, arrived.

J. Johnson stated the first handout is communication and guiding principles. The following points emerged:

- Full-time residents who live and work here or live here and commute to work or school.
- Employment & jobs
- Affordable housing
- Long-term rentals; short term rentals and home owners.
- Diversity

- Second home owners
- Third poorest county in Michigan
- Working persons & retirees.

J. Johnson noted that the group will focus on relating these issues to land use.

- Tourism? What kind of town is this? Small town? Tourism affects housing.
- Schools – not sure what the focus should be here. 1 school district. Wider ranging community college
- Taxation & millage rates (High?) J. Johnson is not sure what the focus should be here. Stimson said the city of South Haven doesn't turn down many millages; except for the failed millage for the high school renovation, which was later passed, millage proposals are usually passed; one bonus of being a tourist community is that the extra 18 percent charged to second homeowners goes to the schools.

Heinig pointed out that high housing costs are driving some people to the surrounding communities. Fries noted it depends on what prism you look through; whether it is a PRE or not; people have told him they wouldn't rent their second home if the taxes weren't so high. Gruber wondered what the millage rate is and Miles asked what a mil is worth. It was explained that the value of a mil differs from community to community. Gruber noted our rate is fairly high for surrounding areas. Fries noted that it depends on when a property became uncapped. J. Johnson suggested exploring what we have to offer in the way of affordable housing.

J. Johnson spoke of the guiding principles in the order they were rated by the group at the kick-off. The number of votes for each concept is included before each principle:

8. Walkable

Principle: Walkability highly valued; Master Plan recommendations should include policies which require sidewalk construction; pedestrian safety in design during site plan review; construction of trails/walkways other than sidewalks at the time of development or recording of an easement on sites during site plan approval for future trail construction.

Discuss: How much walkability is reflected in development review. City's sidewalk plan/non-motorized trail. Who can use the non-motorized trail?

8. Expansion of infrastructure; not just streets but water treatment, waste-water which also improve quality of life – and venues that support community events.

Principle: Planning for infrastructure construction and maintenance is a high priority; infrastructure includes not only roads, water, sewer, and stormwater management, but also venues that support community events that enhance business and culture.

J. Johnson noted that the guiding principles will be included at the beginning of the master plan.

7. City's "front door" needs to be more welcoming and quaint.

Principle: A first impression is important; the Master Plan should identify those locations that function as gateways, and recommend improvements so that visitors entering the city will gain a sense of the culture, vibrancy and welcoming spirit of the city.

J. Johnson noted that as she drove in and saw the Center for the Arts building, she felt that the gateway should be there. Acknowledged and noted that the welcome island is wonderful; but she feels it should happen as one leaves the residential area. Noted there are other gateway areas that could be addressed.

6. Neighborhood.

Principle: Neighborhoods provide a sense of place; the Master Plan should recommend land uses and design elements that enhance neighborhood character and cohesiveness.

J. Johnson: Enhance preserving neighborhoods; what holds it together; what breaks it down? There are solutions to break down. Allow some encroachment but have design guidelines.

5. Focus on core elements of our community: Lake Michigan, trails and access to nature, walkability.

Principle: The attributes of the city are unique due to location along the Lake Michigan shoreline, and the proximity to natural features and trails; the Master Plan should recommend land uses that capitalize on these natural features, and preserve them for residents and visitors.

J. Johnson: Natural features preservation. You are already well on the way; what else is there? What other natural areas need to be connected.

3. Reaching out to untapped audiences

Principle: Future land use and design elements should reflect the diverse ages and cultures that exist in the community, and the Master Plan may recommend land uses or zoning ordinance amendments which enable a wider variety of uses than currently exist. (Examples: accessible concert venues, brewery/distillery, re-use of industrial sites for living/working environments, etc.).

J. Johnson: Asked if anyone from the Planning Commission attended MAP (Michigan Association of Planning). Asked if the commission knew that Linda Anderson spoke on short-term rentals along with the City of St. Joe and Marquette (the UP). Noted that there was a mobile workshop; attendees travel to sites on a bus; went to some amazing rehabbed areas; not large buildings but small industrial buildings; areas with breweries, distilleries, it's a whole different crowd; living spaces above work spaces. Stated she thought of South Haven right away and noted that there are great ideas and examples out there. In downtown Kalamazoo

– there’s a really old sign that says South Haven and an arrow. Untapped audiences can influence land use.

2. Accessibility

J. Johnson commented that everybody is considering accessibility these days when anything new is being built; even when state law does not require it. It’s called universal design; landscape architects are also considering it.

Discussion ensued regarding the accessibility at South Beach and the new Pilgrim Haven site outside of the City of South Haven.

1. Collaboration

J. Johnson noted that collaboration is always good. “It’s a long journey, not a straight path; focus on the big picture.”

J. Johnson reviewed the ideas that emerged from the collage boards created at the kick-off workshop:

1. Our community is a pyramid of assets such as fun, access to nature, walkability, fellowship, community events, agriculture, and front porch living; we build on these assets through education and technology; we recognize that the path to achieving a safe, diverse community is a long journey that may take us in different directions, but we are aiming for the “big picture” which is a highly valued community.
2. Our community embraces key values of pedestrian access, walkability, retention of businesses, neighborhood, fun and collaboration. We value variety and uniqueness; we are not afraid of problem solving. We are surrounded by our “playground” of natural features and assets. We are on a journey, and through planning, we will achieve our goals as a community.
3. We value schools, walkability, culture and family focused living. We need a venue space where the community can hold events including weddings, trade shows, B 2 B commerce, and other events. Phoenix Street should be more welcoming to pedestrians and bicyclists (challenge).

Other ideas that emerged during discussion:

City/Township collaboration
Electronic accessibility for community information
Attracting and keeping the next generation/getting families to stay
Industrial expansion which will attract workers and residents
Mixed use opportunities – old Elkenburg factory
Condominiums as neighborhoods
Recreation or aquatic center needed/South Haven Rec area too far away
Armory as neighborhood center?
Beach Haven is gone; need more venues, concert sized
Possible marked pedestrian crossings and lights on Phoenix and other streets where trails cross.

M-43 at I-96; and M-140: CID (Corridor Improvement District) – slow traffic through street diets, bike lanes, safe crossings
Chamber activities are a positive
Farmers' Market – needs to be bigger; sometimes other activities pre-empt use of the space
City is doing a good job of improving roads, water, storm and sanitary sewer

Discussion: SHARP Park on 102nd is being sold and the city is hoping to purchase the Lappo site. J. Johnson commented that we aren't doing a rec plan but we'd like to reference what is available in the city and somewhat outside. If it is a facility that can serve the needs of the city as well, you don't have to plan for one in the city. Some areas currently used for softball and volleyball are overused. Need for a venue with enough parking for tournaments. The group who headed up SHARP wanted intergovernmental involvement but Casco Township wasn't interested in that; the site now being considered is in South Haven Township where it is felt there would be more cooperation. The armory was brought up again. J. Johnson noted the city of Ionia utilizes their armory for recreation.

J. Johnson noted that if kids in families are playing different sports, the trend is to try to look for a space in town that could be utilized; it brings people into town. Discussion of Beach Haven being gone and the need for more concert-sized venues.

J. Johnson asked if the city has a CID (Corridor Improvement District) in place. The city has the overlay zone in the zoning ordinance, but not a CID. J. Johnson said in reading past minutes, she found that in 2013, there was a motion to approve one, but after discussion (which was not included in the City Council minutes) the motion was defeated or withdrawn. J. Johnson explained that a Corridor Improvement District is a tax-capture entity; a Master Plan can recommend one. Sometimes houses are located in the CID but they can be exempted. Just like a DDA, a CID turns those taxes collected back into improvements in the corridor. J. Johnson noted a community can have both a DDA and a CID. A CID has a governing board; a Corridor Improvement Authority. They can purchase; they can lease; they can do business improvement activities; and make street/sidewalk improvements. Frost said that has been discussed, on Broadway, all the way to Aylworth. Gruber said that includes Phoenix; slow things down, put in some pedestrian-type stuff, make it more pedestrian friendly where the school and McDonalds are across from each other. Slowing the traffic might improve business for the businesses along there.

J. Johnson said the Master Plan is a recommending document. You could recommend further studies of a CID board. Discussion of DDA and CID not being able to overlap. J. Johnson said a law has been proposed in Michigan, if you have a DDA or CID to prohibit new special millages from being captured. J. Johnson said when you first start a CID or DDA, those taxing entities can opt out, and sometimes they do, but it is a one time option. CID is a tax-capturing tool and that doesn't make everybody happy.

J. Johnson noted she will try to keep pulling the commission back to land use focus.

Survey questions were discussed.

J. Johnson found a 2015 survey; looked at it to see if there are things we could re-use. The 2015 survey was a random sample and there are a lot of open-ended questions. The study was done by a group of college students. It was sent to 2,000 residents in the greater South

Haven Area; 242 surveys were returned. Discussion ensued of the demographic that returned the survey. We do have to look at the ages of people that return the surveys.

J. Johnson warned against open ended questions because that information has to be compiled but first you have to make sense of the information. J. Johnson discussed holding events that attract a certain demographic. There are events that you could tap into, like the After Business Ours which the Chamber hosts noting you do get a good amount of business owners, a lot of them in their thirties and up. Discussion about the differences between a small town versus resort town (i.e.: Bangor vs South Haven); would the results be skewed by holding public workshops in the winter months, when snowbirds are gone and second home owners are gone? J. Johnson hasn't noticed that, even for a workshop you get better attendance at a non-busy time of year – January, February, March – if you can extrapolate and say that might be when people might answer a survey. It would be helpful to know if 10 or 100 people attend a given workshop. One of the things that need to be addressed is the aging demographic, and how do we get the younger demographic here. J. Johnson said it might be possible, to substitute for one of the other workshops and host something that would attract young people. If it's important to, if we think we can, capture that demographic, maybe we could replace one of these events with something for younger people.

Discussion regarding the ABO events being once a month; people attend for the socializing; you see a lot of the same people. It was noted that once you have children that's a different demographic. J. Johnson agreed that it's the group under that (single young professionals, just married no kids, just divorced, no kids) that's the hard age to get to come to something. "If you build a brewery downtown . . . " Johnson asked, "Can we think of some way to attract them? You may not succeed, but think about that."

J. Johnson did more research on millennials and age groups; the first person was born in 1982 and we wrap 18 year olds in there. We don't have a "name" for the 18 to 34 age group. Those 35 to 44 are probably working somewhere, typically child-bearing years/adoption, they label it "family formation" now. Ages 45 to 64 may be empty nest or not. 65 plus might be retired, might not. We have an aging baby boomer generation that still wants to be active, have fun. Breaking it down much more than that doesn't help.

Resident status was discussed as being important... Does the number of years of living in South Haven shape land use? J. Johnson said, "Not always. Does it matter if you've lived here one year or thirty? You're looking for direction as a Planning Commission."

J. Johnson recommended that the commission identify one to three sub-areas, noting that the Hale's Department store block was just an example. J. Johnson can't tell you tonight the three sub-areas; we'll be discussing that. It might delay the survey if we take the time to do that.

Identify location for central gathering venue. On the survey, it might say, "Choose location from the list below" and the commission will put the selections in there. A master plan doesn't micro-manage sub-areas; you want to make sure that it is mentioned in the master plan that it's a goal, if you identify a place. You have to determine if the zoning would support it. As a site is identified consider whether the zoning fits the use; are you encroaching in a residential neighborhood?

Discussion regarding using zero to five (strongly disapprove; disapprove; neutral; approve, strongly approve). J. Johnson said five is too many. Use one to three; you really need a yes

or no. Stressed the need to think about specific locations. If you ask, "Do you think you need a venue?" who would say no? You need to specify some locations and see what rises to the top. J. Johnson noted the site does not have to be municipally owned. Another consideration is the zoning of specific sites.

J. Johnson also reminded that the commission should consider specific streets or specific segments of streets and focus on such things as better walkability, safer crossings. Don't ask questions you already know the answer to. Discussion ensued about asking about obstacles people encounter on their walking route to a specific place such as a school, the drugstore, McDonalds. Obstacles could include lack of lighting, lack of signage, safe crossings.

Should the survey include questions about short-term rentals? Should rentals be permitted everywhere as it is now; only allowed in certain places or not allowed at all? J. Johnson pointed out that the rental ordinance is new. In trying to picture how to present this topic on the survey, she suggested there could be some maps included and the survey could ask where people think they should be or should not be. J. Johnson noted that she is struggling with how to ask a question about the short-term rental issue on the survey that gives you true direction. J. Johnson informed that Linda Anderson felt there should be some questions on short-term rentals. Stimson asked how a yes or no question could be posed.

Heinig noted that because of the timing of the workshops we are going to miss some people; the survey is the best chance to catch those who are away. Gruber concurred, "Hopefully staff is compiling a report that will show where, how and percentages and how that all came out, for council." It was suggested that the information gleaned regarding rentals be on the city's website for people to go and see it if they have missed it. It was noted that density in the rentals and how big they can be seemed to be the bigger issues. Discussion ensued about defining what a short-term rental is. J. Johnson pointed out that the new rental ordinance amendments included a definition. It was agreed that there are way too many nuances to capture in a survey. It was noted that vastly different opinions would emerge depending on who fills out and returns the surveys. J. Johnson agreed that it is important to determine what exactly would be best to ask.

Discussion about the many different answers the city has gotten from a lot of different people regarding short term rentals; the feeling that we have heard so much from so many groups that we all have a flavor for what we have been told by the community. Consensus was that there is way too much to get it all into a survey.

What kind of input do we need at this point that we don't know? Gruber noted that the potential difference might be the opportunity to reach a larger group of folks, rather than just the ones with really strong opinions. "We may get the less passionate John Q. Public who has an opinion but didn't weigh in on it."

In response to a question about who will get surveys, Johnson said every property owner will get a survey. Discussion about the need to hear from business owners; the challenge of crafting a survey that will actually glean usable information; whether it is thought that the business people will fill out a survey when they wouldn't come into the room and talk publicly. suggested the addition of questions that identify demographics such as: 1.) Live outside the city and own residential property, or 2.) Own a business in the city. Does it really make a difference whether people live and work here or live here and commute for a job? What about retirees? Heinig pointed out that we are going to get their answer whether or not we know exactly what their status is. How to get an idea, generally, who we heard from? How does

this affect the future land use plan? Is the private market willing to invest in the things that attract millennials, when they aren't here yet? Johnson explained the master plan can include planning outside your boundaries; do we really need to know if they work in the city limits? If it's important to know that it can be put in the initial demographics or attached to the rental portion of the survey.

We should have rental questions to hear from the people that we don't hear from in the public venues. Johnson reiterated that crafting the yes or no question is important; we will cross tabulate that with ages and whether they own a business.

Heinig noted that the city manager has asked us to ask the question on the survey or in workshops regarding fire pits. Stimson said the person that wrote the letter had a problem with yard debris – burning leaves in the city is illegal today and they should call the police. Heinig said fire pits is closing in on us and we are going to have to deal with it. Stimson said she doesn't want to tell her grandchildren they can't roast marshmallows in the summer or her husband that he can't cook over charcoal any more. J. Johnson said open burning and fire pits is an issue everywhere. Some cities have banned them. The size of the lots is part of it; it does travel, we wrote a lot of ordinances when the wood-burning outdoor furnaces/boilers came into existence. Some places have defined the size of the fire pit, that it has to have a mesh cover. Gruber said our main issue is two individuals who have been heading this up; it has to do with smoke and particulate. Not a bad idea to get something out there to get some opinion.

Hosier said this may just be a nice "two-fer." J. Johnson stated that fire pits are not really a master plan issue, however it is an opportunity to just ask the question. Stimson said she doesn't want to have it be something that isn't master plan, zoning, land use. Frost said he wants it on there if the city manager does, but specified that it be a yes or no question. J. Johnson stated there could be qualifiers that they would be regulated. Heinig and Hosier agreed that the questions don't need to be designed tonight.

J. Johnson: Back to short term rentals, it's probably not going to be a question about where. Linda would like some land-use issues identified; permitted in some areas but not others? Permitted in all areas? Maybe even if you already know the answers, you're hearing from some people you haven't heard from before. Some areas by special land-use only. Or allowed everywhere by right. Or in some areas, no short-term rentals, even by special land use. Yes and no, and do you own a business? Part of a survey is Public Relations.

Frost we need to define a short-term rental in the survey. J. Johnson said she would reference the definition in the survey. Discussion ensued about whether the question of having no rentals at all needed to be asked, to which J. Johnson responded, "Only in some locations."

Fries asked about parking and downtown development, specifically developing empty apartments for living downtown noting that development has been stymied by the parking restrictions in the code. J. Johnson asked what the restrictions were, to which Stimson responded that the first apartment requires no parking but each unit after the first one requires two parking spots. Holland required less parking so it's much more vibrant. J. Johnson asked if the zoning ordinance allows second story living to which Hosier responded that the zoning ordinance does allow it, but the parking amendment hasn't gone to council yet. Fries noted that passage of that amendment could change land use downtown dramatically. Gruber noted some of them are short term rentals such as the condos above

the chocolate factory. Buildings with apartments have to be mixed use, retail or commercial on the first floor and living spaces above. Would like to see expansion of that downtown. J. Johnson said or maybe the zoning could be amended to allow commercial on the upper floors. Stimson noted that there are some that already have business on the second floor which was explained as possibly grandfathering. J. Johnson said if there is an area that currently does not allow mixed use, or residential above commercial, should there be a plan to allow that? J. Johnson spoke about looking at what the ordinance requires; in some cities, they didn't have the space for parking and had to get a variance – it's nice if you don't force people to get a variance. To lower parking standards, look at on street parking that is available. Develop a vacant lot for additional parking. Allow parking within 300'. Doesn't have to be right on the parcel. Discussion of parking garages, use only seasonally, expensive to build and maintain.

Expanding the area for mixed use or second story living. We need to look at our parking regulations carefully; recommendations for the master plan might be to have lower parking requirements.

Discussion ensued regarding the survey; it will be sent to owners of property. The survey won't be sent to occupants. Neighborhood workshops could capture those occupants.

Discussion of photocopying, white-out, sending in multiple responses, limiting the people who can fill out the survey to property owners. J. Johnson noted that the thought with sending surveys to property owners is to not have to develop another list. There will be publicity on the survey; blurb in the newspaper, newsletter, on the website. Heinig reminded that we do have the workshops for those who aren't property owners. It is not going to be a scientific survey. Is it one per household or per person? Should we add that anyone over 18 in a household can copy it? Decision that the surveys will have numbers on them and be available at city hall for anyone who wants to complete them other than the property owner.

Setting a meeting date for next month at which time J. Johnson hopes to finalize the survey, pretty much; start talking about workshop dates, if possible. The date for the next Master Plan Workshop meeting was decided on as December 15, 2016 at 7:00 pm

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary