

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

July 8, 2010

The Planning Commission convened in Courtroom No. 1 at City Hall for their regular meeting. Chairman Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM. He asked the secretary to call the roll. Members in attendance were, Mr. Brian Temming, Mr. David Komjati, and Chairman Fitzgerald. Absent were Mr. Andrew Eade and Ms. Christine Shoop. Also present were, City Manager Rita McMahon, Assistant City Manager/Community Development Director Douglas Lewis, City Planner Russ Schaedlich, Assistant Law Director James Lyons, and Secretary Lynn White.

MINUTES:

Chairman Fitzgerald asked if there were any additions or corrections for the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of June 10, 2010. There being none, he asked for a motion. Motion by Mr. Komjati, seconded by Mr. Temming to approve the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from June 10, 2010 as submitted. All members present said "aye". Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Fitzgerald indicated there was no New Business. He moved onto the next item on the Agenda.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:

Chairman Fitzgerald read the notice under the Administrative Report, Painesville Transportation and Streetscape Plan.

Ms. McMahon stated the purpose for the presentation was to update the Commission on the Streetscape Plan. The Streetscape Plan is an outgrowth of the Downtown Master Plan the Commission implemented in early 2009. The City received a grant through NOACA for the Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative (TLCI) for \$75,000. The idea of the streetscape was to take what was already done through the Master Plan, implement the transportation, and create an infrastructure that supports that plan.

Ms. McMahon discussed the areas that were looked at by the Steering Committee. The areas that were concentrated on were the roads that would be available for some type of federal or state funding. This includes five streets in the downtown area. In addition, the initiatives that were decided are to be applied to other streets.

Three plan principles that the TLCI required us to take into consideration as we came up with the plan. McMahon explained that they had a steering committee, public meetings; Brian Temming of the Planning Commission was on the steering committee, using City Architecture that created the master plan, Baker Associates has been contracted for the engineering traffic firm this needs to be based on sound traffic design principles. One of the principles being looked at is to take the right of ways throughout the district and simplify them to be more cohesive and uniform. They are looking at reorganizing and redefining development standards to support the new land use pattern. The other issue was to rebalance the streets to meet the needs of the pedestrians and bicycles that would be using the downtown area. Lastly, the principle is physical enhancement and development at key locations to revitalize the area and create a sense of place.

The proposed street designs were based on traffic. Any changes that were done had to follow a sound traffic principle. Baker and Associates evaluated the existing traffic operations, traffic counts at the intersections; they projected the traffic patterns based on the proposed development within the Downtown Master Plan. Ms. McMahon explained to the Commission the traffic study that Baker and Associates submitted and the numbers based on current and projected growth. The study shows that the current street capacity has enough ability to handle an increase in traffic volume because of the Master Plan.

The five streets that were focused on were Richmond/Liberty/Park Place; Veteran's Park; Main/State; Washington Street. The Committee came up with a long-term vision for the streetscape of these areas. It was discussed that the long-term initiatives needed to be broken down into some near-term initiatives rather than waiting years for funding mechanisms to come up. It was decided to

come up with enhancements that did not cost a lot and could be done without throwing away money. In essence, they will be finding products that can be reused later in the project.

Ms. McMahon indicated that she would go through each of the streets in the districts with the Commission. The first street discussed was Richmond and Liberty Street corridor. This is the main corridor into the City and a major arterial. The photos presented showed the current conditions of the area. The area has a lot of concrete and not a lot of landscaping or presence. This is especially important since this leads you into the major focal point of the City, the square. One of the proposals for upgrading the area is to change the lane configuration. She discussed the possibility of placing a boulevard in the center of the street to create a two-lane road instead of what is currently there. A photograph rendering of what the proposed streetscape improvements was shown. The area becomes a tree-lined area that is aesthetically pleasing to the area.

Ms. McMahon moved onto Veteran's Park. The area looked at was Park Place where there was a lot of opportunity to enhance the area and make the area more usable. The proposal is to add landscaping to soften the sidewalks; promote the storefront businesses; add more accessibility to the park and create a town center; provide more on-street parking. The biggest change that was discussed was to realign North Park Place to match with Mentor Avenue. The area that would be left could be changed into a green space to give City Hall a front lawn appearance and give Johnson Apartments some additional space. This can be done by maintaining on-street parking on the south side, add parallel parking on the north side of South Park Place and reducing the amount of curbs along the edge of the park. There is a lot of pavement that is not necessary for traffic and for the visual aspect of the area. Ms. McMahon indicated the most common comment regarding the park was that all of the sidewalks within the park push you out. The remedy would be to place sidewalks around the perimeter of the park allowing pedestrians to remain there. In addition, it was discussed changing the layout of the interior sidewalks of the park since the traffic generators have changed since those sidewalks were put in place in the 1960's.

The next area discussed was Main Street. Main Street is the main east-west connection through the center of town. Main Street consists of the historic commercial area long with the connection back to Veteran's Park. The idea was to unify the main walks of Main Street. The addition of the pedestrian mall cut off the connectivity to the rest of the park. The reconnection needs to be made visually and aesthetically between those two areas. The idea is to maintain parking, widen the sidewalks, add some vegetation by putting in street trees, allow the opportunity of sidewalk cafes for the businesses and make the crosswalk area more usable. Photographs of the proposed upgrades were shown to the Commission. The crosswalks would be shortened to make it easier for the pedestrian to cross the street rather than having such an immense area of pavement.

Ms. McMahon moved onto State Street. The area is a mixed-use district; it is a state highway so any improvements would need to comply with those requirements. The installation of more street trees with bigger treelawn areas would enhance the street for the pedestrian. The parking configuration on the street needs to be more consistent and to give an image of unity. The crosswalk areas would be shortened as previously discussed for the Main Street area.

Washington Street was discussed next. This area will have the biggest change with the departure of the hospital and the high school. The idea is to soften all of the edges, which are currently parking lots. The area will become more like the tree-lined portion of Washington that is west of Liberty Street. In addition to the treelawn, there will be on-street parking to support the residential properties. The idea is to create a residential feel that will connect to the greenway corridor. This allows the City to become more pedestrian friendly. The ultimate goal is to have the bikeway take you to the River Front Corridor that will eventually lead you to the lake. The proposed changes were shown to the Commission.

Ms. McMahon stated that this is what the City would like to accomplish. In order to put all of this in place it will cost a lot of money. The City realized this might take a number of years to accomplish especially since the City does not have the funds to accomplish this and without applying for grants and other funding mechanisms to make them happen. The Committee was asked to come up with a short-term strategy where some of the items that could happen now that would not cost a lot of money to implement. The first thing that was done was a list of near term strategies. How do we create this new area without tearing up the pavement and putting in trees and a new boulevard. The use of paint was brought up since it channelizes people by creating this new traffic pattern with paint. When the plan was brought to the community meeting there were six to seven areas that

could be done and they were asked to vote.

The community voted to restripe the roadway to make Richmond Street a two-lane road in front of the BP Station with left turns at the intersection. This can be done in-house with the City's own crews. The next is to create the gateway signage at the intersection. Entrance signage was discussed for the intersection of Erie and Richmond Streets. Decorative lighting was discussed along with adding landscaping planters. Along Park Place it was decided to add planters along the southeast side of the park with benches and waste paper baskets. Ms. McMahon stated the planters and benches are reusable in other areas when the time comes to take out the pavement and redo the area the way it is intended. She explained that one of the areas that did not rank very high with the community was striping out the outside areas of the park to redirect the traffic away from the curb area. This will most likely be done to see how the community feels about adding this additional space to the park. As these changes are done, they will create a focal point. Another item that was ranked highly was to paint the crosswalks a different color to add some definition of the crosswalk.

As part of Ms. McMahon's presentation, the Commission was shown various designs throughout other communities to show examples of the types of planters and benches and the way they are used to create a sense of place in the communities. Main Street was discussed and the items that were decided on by the community were to place the planters in the roadway to create the bump out areas. This will provide some landscaping for the area. The other item was to redo the Victoria Place landscaping on Main Street. The current configuration creates a visual block on the street.

In conclusion, Ms. McMahon stated that the main focus for the short term strategy will be to paint and stripe the roadways to start the streetscape program in the direction the city want it to go. In addition, the street trees are to be added to the areas that have parking lots adjacent to the roadway. In order to implement this there needs to be involvement from the private sector along with the public sector.

Ms. McMahon reviewed with the Commission the slides showing different styles and ideas in how to create a change for the area that do not cost a lot of money. Things like decorative planters, waste receptacles, striping, and painting. There were many ideas that can be used within the downtown area with cooperation from public and private entities to create a viable downtown.

The Commission should be aware that the Administration will be working on re-writing the City's sign code to update it to allow for the types of signage the Streetscape Committee would like to see go forward. This would be for street signage and new design standards to be applied to the businesses in the downtown area.

Ms. McMahon explained there was no action necessary from the Commission at this time. Her goal was to let the Commission know the direction the Steering Committee. A document will be prepared and presented later to the Commission for their adoption and will be forwarded to City Council for their approval.

OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other items to come before the Planning Commission the meeting was adjourned.

Lynn M. White, Secretary

Thomas Fitzgerald, Chairman