

FARMINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS
23600 Liberty Street
Farmington, Michigan
March 8, 2021

Chairperson Majoros called the Meeting to order via Zoom remote technology at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, March 8, 2021.

ROLL CALL

Present: Crutcher, Kmetzo, Majoros, Mantey, Perrot, Waun, Westendorf
Absent: None
A quorum of the Commission was present.

OTHER OFFICIALS PRESENT: Director Christiansen, Recording Secretary Murphy, Brian Golden, Director of Media Services.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Crutcher, supported by Perrot, to approve the Agenda.
Motion carried, all ayes.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON CONSENT AGENDA

A. February 8, 2021 Minutes

MOTION by Waun, seconded by Crutcher, to approve the items on the Consent Agenda.
Motion carried, all ayes.

PUBLIC HEARING – 2022-2027 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Chairperson Majoros introduced this item and stated that I think we've all had a chance to go through what's been a pretty rigorous and well-communicated process. Kevin, you've been great on this; Chris Weber does a phenomenal job as does the balance of the subject matter experts, etc., and asked Christiansen to give a quick summary of where we stand. I know one question that probably many of us have is, you know cycle over cycle, the last time we saw this to where we stand today, I don't recall that there were any further meetings, but I guess the first item would just be a question, Kevin, what we're asking public comment on and from what we have seen and read and distributed in a mail out, is there anything of significance, material changes, things we should be aware of and maybe the public from kind of what's been out there.

Director Christiansen replied that there have no substantive changes and no additional meetings since the Planning Commission looked at the Draft CIP 2022/2027 last, that was at your last meeting in February where you scheduled this evening's public hearing.

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Chairperson Majoros said I think the action that we'll be taking today is not only a Public Hearing if we have any comments, we'll make sure before we close it out that we ask one more time, but I believe also is a specific action item after we close the Public Hearing to formally move the Capital Improvement Program and forward and form the resolution as noted.

Christiansen replied that is correct, Mr. Chair, and what might be really helpful I think just really quickly if you might be to have Mr. Golden bring the agenda back up and then after the minutes that you just considered under Consent and approved, is the staff report for this item, real short and sweet and to the point, and then the CIP Draft 2022/2027, if Mr. Golden might be able to screen share that real quick, that one item to reference if we could move through this. Again, just an overview, the purpose of the item, Mr. Chair, is to hold the required Public Hearing, and that's by State statute under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. You're doing that then this evening as scheduled. You'll note that you set that Public Hearing at the February 8th meeting for this evening. I can tell you that public notice was published and the Draft 2022/2027 Capital Improvement Program is attached. The next sheet is the public notice that was published in the paper and it was also placed on the City's website. So, as required, public notice has been published and has been placed on the City's website so that complies with your requirements to do that. The next page is the Draft. If we go a couple pages in to this, the action is right here, and that's what you're considering this evening, that is the Draft as you've worked on for the past several months. And now before you for Public Hearing tonight, and if the Planning Commission is so inclined the requested action is to approve the 2022/2027 Draft Capital Improvement Program for the City of Farmington in accordance with this resolution.

Majoros asked Director of Media Services Golden if there were any meeting participants other than the Commission present in the Zoom meeting and Golden replied there was none. He then called for a motion to open the Public Hearing.

MOTION by Crutcher, supported by Waun, to open the Public Hearing for the 2022/2027 Capital Improvement Program.

Motion carried, all ayes.

(Public Hearing opened at 7:10 p.m.)

PUBLIC HEARING

Chairperson Majoros asked if there were any participants in attendance wishing to comment and asked Director of Media Services Golden if anyone had joined the meeting since his last inquiry and Golden replied none had.

Hearing none, Chairperson Majoros called for a motion to close the Public Hearing.

MOTION by Crutcher, supported by Perrot, to close the Public Hearing for the 2022/2027 Capital Improvement Program
Motion carried, all ayes.

(Public Hearing closed at 7:11 p.m.)

Chairperson Majoros then called for a motion from the Commissioners to approve and adopt the City of Farmington 2022/2027 Capital Improvement Program, as presented, and to forward it to City Council for their review and consideration in accordance with the resolution in the Plan.

MOTION by Crutcher, supported by Perrot, to approve and adopt the City of Farmington 2022/2027 Capital Improvement Program, as presented, and forward to City Council for their review and consideration in accordance with the resolution as outlined in the Plan.
Motion carried, all ayes.

UPDATE – CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Chairperson Majoros introduced this item and stated this item has probably four areas he feels would be prudent to discuss and of course at any time for each of these four, I'll stop and ask for Commissioner comments or questions or what have you. The first category is what I call "projects currently underway", so the items that have either been through us already that we know are underway like the gas station at Nine and Farmington, the Tropical Smoothie for those of us who travel down Grand River, I've seen tremendous progress there; Blue Hat Coffee, a lot of the initiatives that we have as a team have seen and moving forward that are underway. So I think the first probably area of update for staff would be for those projects that are currently underway that we're seeing visible results on, I guess I would ask Mr. Christiansen for any fundamental what I call cycle over cycle changes. So are there any pieces of news that we as a body should know about or Category 1, which I call our current body of projects underway. So, with that, I'll ask Mr. Christiansen for a comment there and then we'll open it up to the Commissioners for any comments on current projects and then we'll move on to my next category.

Director Christiansen stated as of today current status of the projects that we actually were discussing at the February meeting; they are continuing to move forward. So, other than progress which you have noted you can see in your travels, there's nothing new specific to those projects that we discussed at the February meeting, they all continue to move forward.

Chairperson Majoros opened the floor for questions from the Commissioners.

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Commissioner Crutcher stated he had a question regarding the coffee shop at the Masonic Lodge. How are they proceeding, there was some construction but he hasn't seen any activity over there lately.

Christiansen replied yes, they continue to progress and that's even as of last week, current status interior work, there's been some additional inspections that the City's building official has conducted. And you may note that the exterior improvements, the ramp that was approved and is to be on the north side of the building, continues its implementation. Progress is still being made and we're hopeful that as the weather breaks, more of the exterior work will commence and will be able to be completed along with what's going on the inside right now. Dialogue with the owner, he's really trying to work to get open sometime this mid Spring.

Commissioner Perrot commented with Tropical Smoothie Café and that's been in our rear view mirror for quite some time from an approval process, and then we asked them to come around and help out their tenants and get the building all squared away before the City signed off on them breaking ground on the out building now. And we went from a fenced in lot, to one wall up, to two, three weeks of extremely cold weather and no work, and now they're going like gangbusters so it's really good to see and it will be nice to see that in the win column soon. He said the progress, the work that the staff did on that whole plaza, the beautification, the enhancements, it's really strong, it's a beautiful looking place now, so kudos, good work.

Commissioner Kmetzo said she has a follow-up on the Tropical Smoothie. Has there been any feedback from the tenants or the occupants of the facility behind them, have they said anything about how their structure is being obstructed or any negative feedback from the erection of that building? I think on paper it looked fine, but now that the building is up, I'm just curious if there was any concern from like the China Merchandise or the Indian Grocer, and Tweeny's, has there been any comments about the structure itself?

Christiansen replied that's a great question and said no, they've heard nothing negative, in fact, they've heard positive comments, they're very excited about the work being done. They're very pleased with what's going on with their building that they're tenants in, but in fact, they're really excited because new signs are going up. You might note that new wall signs for those businesses are going up right now. I think there's two new ones, an O'Reilly sign has gone back up, there's a new House of Lee sign that's been installed, I know they're working on the Tweeny's sign right now and they're going to be working on the others, so they're all pretty excited from those that I've talked to.

Chairperson Majoros then asked Christiansen if he could provide any feedback in the area, is there anything on the horizon, a lot of times you give us a heads-up on what might be brewing; any new developments, any areas that you think may be hitting our radar

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screen here at some point that would be of interest to know. So that's just an open ended question to you, Kevin, we'll start there and go to Commissioners after.

Christiansen replied that he's very pleased to share with the Commission and to let you know with all of the work that you have done previously and have been involved with on the 47th District Courthouse property, Liberty Hill Condominiums, that they commenced site development yesterday. And I'd like to share with you that we received from the developer, a quit little snippet, if Mr. Golden is able to play it, it's not very long, it's just the current status of the property, a little aerial overview via drone photography, and also it just kind of shows the equipment delivered, some piping delivered, a little bit of overview. We had the preconstruction meeting and they've commenced construction as of today. Again, this site development will be then work according to the approved PUD plan, and the engineering construction plans and permit development related to the fourteen approved detached single-family homes and the site as a whole. And we're really excited that this is moving forward now and look forward to seeing this development.

(Video played)

Christiansen stated as you can see the site, you can see the equipment that's been delivered, the materials, the pipe. So, that was the site status as of last week and they wanted to share this with you this evening in our update. And as I indicated the preconstruction meeting having been held, site development commenced today.

Chairperson Majoros asked if all goes well, what is the potential finish date, is this a year, if you can just roughly if you can.

Christiansen replied I can relate it back if you can recall to the Flander's School site redevelopment and you may recall that development, that is the Riverwalk of Farmington, that's 33 detached single-family homes on that 10-acre site with the dedication it was about 7.75 acres. But from the time that they broke ground and moved forward, they sold out that development in nine months and that was 33 homes and they completed that development up through not only site development but dedication of everything within one plus, going on two-year period. It was really quite expeditious and they moved forward pretty quickly. They were actually able to do production, which is the building of the homes, concurrent with site development. So that's really what the goal of the developer here is, is to be developing the site, grading the site, cutting in the roads, installing the infrastructure, putting in the base course and the road, and at the same time as staging provides for during the first production. Their intent per my discussion with them is to build a model, but I'm going to tell you that my experience and with everything else, the timing in all this and with the existing market as I'm aware of it and as I currently am seeing with the issue with demand for housing, in particular in Farmington, I'm going to believe in speculation that they're going to have sales and may even sell out before

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site development is either progressing or complete at a minimum such that production can move along as they're able to do it without having to have a model, they're certainly not going to need a sales trailer on site for something like of this scale anyways. And I would say to you that I would project that it's very possible spring of 2021 that they may be able to complete this site development and even some of the production of this year and then complete then the remaining portion in 2022. So it may be a one and a half year, two-year build cycle if all goes well.

Perrot stated he seems to recall the developer, Boji, being really motivated and he was really willing to work with the City on getting all the approvals so he could build right away.

Perrot then asked if there was any updated information on the Panera site and Christiansen replied there is a broker that is marketing the property, there's been several phone calls and dialogue with interest, but nothing more than that, nothing specific to any sort of discussion regarding a particular use or intended plan, so there's an opportunity there. One of the things I can tell you is Panera is just one of several sites within the community as a whole that we are focused on in paying close attention to in terms of marketability and re-tenanting the building. We have several in downtown, we have several in other areas of the City and you can speculate as to why that may or may not be the case. Some of that is due to the existing economic environment right now, some of that due to the pandemic, to the Covid pandemic, to the Covid crisis.

Perrot then stated that our approval to add a drive-thru then at that location, even though it's no longer a Panera, that still would carry over to the tenant so I think that would make it a more desirable location.

Christiansen replied that the broker's sign, the real estate sign on the property indicates that drive-thru opportunity exists on the site.

Chairperson Majoros said the third item is very timely, a lot of news what made this week with City Council's meeting and the Maxfield redevelopment and one of the purposes for this part of every meeting is for we as Commissioners have the lay of the land and can speak with a consistent and accurate voice when we're engaging with community members and with that, we've probably all read some articles or whatever but there's just some logical questions that may come out and logical next steps, so I thought it would be appropriate to ask you, Kevin, to just kind of give us if we were bumping into somebody on the street, what do we say in an instance like this so that we're being fair to the process, where we stand, what's next and those sorts of things. So maybe we'll ask for your take on that, that would be great.

Christiansen replied I think that's very appropriate; I appreciate your asking and certainly the Commission and your focus on all aspects of development in the community and

particularly this project. You've had involvement with this through a lot of other avenues with all of your planning efforts. And we talked about at some point in time like you have before, you're going to be involved in the plan review process for the redevelopment of the Maxfield Training Center. And it looks like we're moving along to that point right now. To give you an update as you've asked, current status, what I would say that you should be made aware of as you're asking what may be, what you can convey, is that City Council approved Robertson Brothers Homes RFQ response, their proposal, and they're proposed 59 unit townhouse condominium project for the Maxfield Training Center redevelopment project last Thursday night. Next steps are negotiation of the property acquisition from the City by Robertson Brothers Homes and then the Planned Unit Development, the PUD plan review approval process with the City, that's the next step. This will also include project environmental plans and financing plan to be reviewed and approved by the City. This will likely take the next six to nine months to be completed. Closing on the property acquisition and site development construction will probably not be completed and will not start until next spring, which will be the spring of 2022. So that's really the current status. Council went ahead and selected one of the RFQ developers, Robertson Brothers Homes, the next step is negotiation with respect to the property acquisition and then embarking on the PUD process.

Chairperson Majoros thanked Christiansen for the update and stated this is a good forum to all get aligned and hear from a factual source as to what's on the horizon and what's new.

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENTS

Chairperson Majoros opened the floor for comments from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Waun stated she would like to express her concern made by the statement made by Councilmember Maria Taylor at the March 4, 2021 Special Meeting about the MTC to the fact that the Planning Commission does not want high density projects. The statement is not necessarily accurate and it implies that the Commission as a whole is biased against particular projects that are allowed by the City Master Plan and Zoning Ordinances. I think that such a statement without explanation or qualification does a disservice to this Commission and could be harmful to future developments, opportunities to our community, if we are perceived as anti-development. I hope that as the project proceeds there will be a clarification or a correction of the statement by the Councilmember.

Commissioner Crutcher commented that coming up in the spring we'll be looking at the re-applications and applications for outdoor seating and if there's any other consideration, we may want to be thinking about post-pandemic how we would approach those outdoor seating arrangements for the eating establishments around town or if there is going to be

any concern. One other thing is one of the things that has come up with my affiliation with the Parking Advisory Committee, is bringing up some ideas about the parking code requirements and also for potential for a carry-out and delivery as a thing, having dedicated parking spaces for those kinds of activities. The ride sharing and also for the meals, pick-up and delivery, and it's not addressed in an ordinance right now, but we may be looking to something like that in the future.

Director Christiansen said that's a great question and what I can tell you is we've been having dialogue with the City Attorney's office regarding outdoor seating, how outdoor seating that's approved is being used, implemented in Farmington. The actions by Council last June, August and December that related to outdoor seating in light of the Covid pandemic crisis and how they approved things temporarily, what the status of that is and what may need to be addressed again either to keep things going as what was approved as we're still within that window right now, within the window of the pandemic crisis as it continues as is and anything else. Just really quickly, Council approved last June a resolution allowing for expansion of approved outdoor seating areas temporarily as a temporary special use in parking lots and the like. We got a dozen applications, had a dozen approvals, everybody from the restaurants on restaurant row in the north parking lot to the parking lot behind City Hall and the Library, a couple uses, and to the main parking lot in the Downtown Parking Center, and that worked out really well, and the DDA was an excellent facilitator of providing for means of identifying those areas, they had bollards, chains, planters, they provided tables and chairs and umbrellas and it worked out really, really great, I think. And I think those that took advantage of that I think had because of that more success than they thought they were going to have in light of the circumstances that came about. In any event, there was a second resolution that allowed that to continue past the October 31st end of season, that was in August, and Council approved that resolution and that extension was to April 14th of this year. A third action of Council was the December approval of the amendment to the entertainment provision of the Community Section of the Code of Ordinances that allowed for enclosures, temporary enclosures, the igloos, the small type of structures, the Farmington Forts as the DDA labeled them, some other elements and that was able to be intertwined with the social district that was approved, too, and so that worked out really, really well. And those are for temporary facilities that didn't require building permit and anything else to be addressed, it was a Council action and an oversight by City staff and administration and has worked out really well. That, approved in December, expires also April 14th. The discussion with the City attorneys have been a potential additional resolution to allow for outdoor seating expansion into the parking lot again for this season; so, April 14th comes along and we're able to continue doing so. Maybe those shelters then tend to phase out a little bit because of season, but we could certainly establish those areas that were approved last year and maybe even additional areas if they come about. So we're working with the City attorney on that to look to see that happen again. The other issue is a direction from Council that was requested by one of the City's food and beverage

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restaurant businesses, to consider City ordinance provisions that would permit canopies, awnings, sides of those awnings, zip up, zip off enclosure type structures on a more permanent basis in accordance with a process and an approval structure like is currently the ordinance structure for outdoor seating. So, for example, right now if you are a restaurant business and you want to have outdoor seating then you have to apply for a site plan review of the Planning Commission, and if it's in downtown, it's the DDA review and recommendation and the Planning Commission, and then approval of the Planning Commission in order to establish that outdoor seating area. Once approved via site plan it can continue annually as long as you are compliant, you had no issues, and anything that's needed in terms of insurance and everything else is provided. And that's pretty typical under our current ordinance structure but there is a request presented to Council considering an ordinance amendment or however it's going to be facilitated to allow for structures in outdoor seating areas on a more permanent basis, so more than tables and chairs. So that's also in the hands of the City attorney's right now; a resolution to continue to extend for this next year during regular season of the expanded area again, and then an ordinance to address permissiveness through a process for structures within outdoor seating areas. So that's a great question, Mr. Crutcher, and that's the current status of that.

Crutcher asked if there had been discussion on extending the outdoor seating season as well, as the pandemic has shown us, we can sit outside and Christiansen stated that is part of the discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Crutcher, supported by Perrot, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried, all ayes.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary