

FARMINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS
23600 Liberty Street
Farmington, Michigan
October 9, 2023

Vice Chairperson Perrot called the meeting to order in Council Chambers, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan, at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 9, 2023.

ROLL CALL

Present: Crutcher, Gray, Kmetzo, Mantey ,Perrot, Westendorf
Absent: Majoros
A quorum of the Commission was present.

OTHER OFFICIALS PRESENT: Director Kevin Christiansen; Recording Secretary Bonnie Murphy, Brian Belesky, Director of Media Specialist, Brian Golden, Media Specialist.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Crutcher, seconded by Mantey, to approve the amended agenda.
Motion carried, all ayes.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON CONSENT AGENDA

A. August 14, 2023 Minutes

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

DISCUSSION AND REVIEW – CITY OF FARMINGTON MASTER PLAN

Vice Chairperson Perrot introduced this item and turned it over to staff.

Director Christiansen stated he will be presenting this item from the podium with the projector screen.

He then introduced DeWayne Gray, newest Planning Commissioner, and welcomed him to his first official meeting, appointed in August by City Council.

Director Christiansen asked the Commission what is a Master Plan? He stated the current Master Plan is from 2019 and before that the last Master Plan Update was 2009, so there was a period of about nine, ten years before the update got started and completed.

Perrot stated a Master Plan is our vision for what we want to be, it's our forward-looking document into the future. It's noted the 5-year plan, it's the 10 to 25-year plan of what we're planning to develop ourselves into.

Christiansen stated excellent, it's the City's plan, it's the City's plan for where it wants to go, what it wants to do in terms the built environment.

Mantey said it's a guide for the vision of the City.

Christiansen said it implements the City's land use decisions and development decisions and that guide is created under State law, State statute, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and it specifically in that Act it indicates the purpose of the Master Plan is to serve as a guide in decision making when it comes to land use and developing, so it's a very important document for the Planning Commission, it's a tool that you use. It's also statutorily based a legal tool so that it needs to be justified and it needs to be defensible so it has to have a basis and there has to be a relationship of the Master Plan to the community's vision as you talked about and many other elements that might relate to the Master Plan to the direction of the City. One thing that it's very important to relate to is its implementation tool. So if the Master Plan is the guide, the plan, what is the implementation tool for the Master Plan? You have a vision, you have ideas of what you want to do, where you want to go, how do you implement those ideas and what tools might ensure that you can put in those ideas. Something that has a structure, something that has rules.

Mantey replied the Zoning Ordinance Code.

Christiansen replied excellent. The Zoning Ordinance is an implementation tool and it is created under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act so you have two State statutes that we here, the Planning Commission, that you use with respect to your responsibilities. One is the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and the Master Plan was derived from that Act and everything that it lays out for community planning commissions to be and to do, requires you to do. The same thing then with the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act. It then lays out the framework for communities and Zoning Ordinance and that instrument, that tool, and how that comes about and what that must contain and to include and on and on and on. And it obviously, the Zoning Ordinance, is a legal, too. So, the Master Plan is the guide and the Zoning Ordinance is the implementation tool. So, you use these tools every time you sit here at this Board dais for whatever it is you do and whenever you do it as Planning Commissioners as well as many other tools. The Master Plan can be whatever the Planning Commission and the community would like it to be, again, following State statute, the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. So, there's no one size fits all and there's no specificity in terms it has to have all of these elements, there are required elements, but

it's what you, as Commissioners, and what the City as a whole decide it to be. One of the things that is required is for it to stay current, it needs to be reflective of the current vision, right, the current vision as to what you as Commissioners are working with this guide, with this tool, and the community as a whole. It's not just the Planning Commission, but this document, the Master Plan, is at the top of the development tools that a community can have. It is the guiding document. It is the one overarching document. And under that overarching document, the Master Plan, under the umbrella of the Master Plan are all the other tools and documents that make up the community's vision and direction and planning. What might those, what are other documents underneath the Master Plan, do we have any others?

Perrot stated all of the other plans that are within the Master Plan.

Christiansen said in the Master Plan or underneath the overarching Master Plan, the volumes in the encyclopedia set, what would the others be?

Mantey replied the Recreation.

Christiansen stated that the Recreation Master Plan is an element, a tool of the community but an element of the Master Plan. It stands alone and it's created under its own provisions and it has its own process and requirements coordinated actually through State statute through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and how all that comes about. So, that's one under the Master Plan, the Recreation Master Plan; any other?

Kmetzo replied the Downtown Master Plan.

Christiansen the Recreation Master Plan as adopted in 2020 and then there is the Downtown Master Plan, I think it was created in 2016, there were some changes in 2017, so we can call 2016 into 2017 and it is specific under the Master Plan but it specific to the downtown, to the boundaries of the Downtown Development Authority and Downtown Farmington. As the Recreation Master Plan is specific to the City's six parks and is it then references and reflects the interest of the citizenry because there was a big survey with that and that's contained in that, so there's a lot of things contained in these plans.

So, that's two, any others?

Kmetzo replied the Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority Vision Plan.

Christiansen stated excellent. So we have a Downtown Master Plan, we have a Grand River Corridor Master Plan, again, under the umbrella of the Master Plan. And a couple

more. We have a downtown area plan. We also have some other planning tools that you might consider under the Master Plan that are very important and that help to implement the Master Plan or a part of it. I mentioned the Zoning Ordinance, okay, there's a document that's required under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act which provides for communities to plan, but also under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act and is a responsibility of the Planning Commission is another document that relates to infrastructure, that relates to Capital Improvements, that relates to expenditures, that then has rationale because of the City's long range plan and its vision. Do you know what that document is?

Mantey replied the Capital Improvement Plan.

Christiansen stated yes, the Capital Improvement Program. The Capital Improvement Program under the Michigan Planning Enabling Act is a responsibility of the Planning Commission and as you know it lays out the City's long range capital expenditures over time, identifying those, prioritizing those, identifying an estimated cost for that and then a timeline and that is any purchase and any items that might relate to infrastructure, water, sewer, roads, land acquisition, park property, buildings, etc. Also, capital outlay purchases so equipment and things like that, that's all in the Capital Improvement Program that is a document that is updated annually and it is usually for a period of six years. Does anyone know what the rule of thumb is on the Master Plan, take a look at it and update that Master Plan?

Crutcher replied four years.

Christiansen the current MP is 2019 and we are coming up on 2024.

Crutcher replied five years.

Christiansen stated every five years but we take a look at this document and use this document every day. What if there's something in the Master Plan that may no longer be the direction or the vision that the community might want to take, what can you do?

Crutcher said update it.

Christiansen said modify or update it, amend. Amend your Master Plan. If your Master Plan isn't what you want, change it. Just like any other plan if it's not the way you want to go, whatever it might be, land use, an area, direction, future land use, something in the corridor. Then you as Commissioners and you as a commission need to take a look at that and make a decision as to whether you want to change that or not. Having a valid plan, up to date community plan, makes the community defensible or puts you in that

position. And also that provides you a current guide from which to implement then your vision, the City's vision, and also it is a tool that is used by the community, I use it in my capacity as Planning and Building Director, we use it here, City Manager, City Manager's office, all the other departments, etc., the community as a whole when we look at the private property owners, developers and investors, have an interest and what they would like to do is what their interest is, is what they'd like to do, is what they're presenting to the City, following the City's long range plan. So, this document again, needs to be current, required statutorily, that's a good rule of planning to be updated every five years. Your other tools, I mentioned the Downtown Master Plan, it's ready to go forward with an update and after talking to the Downtown Development Authority Executive Director, we've talked about the City Master Plan, the overarching umbrella of the Master Plan and the volumes in the encyclopedia set underneath it, including the downtown Master Plan and it's very likely from my discussion with DDA Executive Director with the Downtown Development Authorities is going to look to update their Downtown Master Plan. And here tonight one of the reasons that I felt that it was important for us to have the dialogue we're having now is because we're turning the corner to the five years. We need to take a look at our Master Plan. Does it still reflect, represent what you as Planning Commissioners see as the direction, the vision for the community, does it still serve as the same guide as it did five years ago. And now I'm mentioning the DDA updating their instrument, too, for the downtown, the Downtown Master Plan, I mentioned the Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority has the Grand River Corridor Vision Plan, that was just updated in 2022, so that's current. And the Recreation Master Plan is 2020 and so having these current updated tools again provides current direction and reflects those like you in your capacity as volunteers, residents and commissioners that have weighed in and created this document through all the processes and steps, as well as all the boards and commissions do in theirs. The DDA, Downtown Master Plan, Grand River Corridor Improvement Plan, the Grand River Corridor Vision Plan. The Recreation Master Plan was created by the City and there was a special Recreation MP steering committee that was created for that instrument but it was vetted through you and public hearings and other things and all that, went through various bodies including yourselves and City Council. So, Statutorily the Michigan Planning Enabling Act has a structure provisions for the legislative body, for City Council to be involved in this process and they are involved in this process. The Master Plan also statutorily is required to be at least made aware of if not considered with the ability to respond back with any issues or concerns of adjacent communities, communities directly adjacent to Farmington, so you have Farmington Hills, and we would have Livonia to the south of us and they would have notice from us in terms of our process, we're engaging, we're kicking off the Master Plan process. In fact, Farmington Hills has one going on right now, they made us aware so they're doing what they are responsible for as a community as we do and we are and so all of that moving forward. And there are other tools, too, there are other special area plans. I mentioned the downtown area plan, that was specific to and I know you're aware

of this, a small area of the downtown which was the area between Warner and School Street on the north side of Grand River, those properties within that block, Methodist Church on the west end all the way down to the commercial businesses on the easement to the Maxfield Training Center, to Shiawassee Park, to the Farmington Public Schools property and the Shulman Service Center and the bus garage and the Ten Mile School and the Courthouse property, now Liberty Hill. And that also, too, includes, this is the Downtown Area Plan again, includes twelve properties just outside of downtown to the east along Grand River on the north side within the Grand River Corridor, so from the east end of DDA out to Power Road. One of the things we have to consider is there a need to update that tool. What's happened since 2015 in those areas, what's going on, because there's been changes and there's been changes with Maxfield Training Center and I mentioned Liberty Hill/Courthouse, some things have moved forward, some haven't, we need to reflect that.

So this is the kind of thing that planning commissions get into, their guides, their implementation tools, their long range plans, as a matter of their responsibilities. It's not always development projects being proposed at that time and at the moment. It certainly is also, too, the structure of the direction, the vision, and how to achieve that vision. Then when those plans come forward do they fit in to the context of those tools. And if you look at the reviews that we do and we have our consultants do reviews for certain projects, you'll note in their reviews there is reference to the City Master Plan and there's reference to the Zoning Ordinance and the Zoning Ordinance district in which the property is located. And that only comes about if these tools are current and are reflective of what the vision is. So, with that, I'd like to go back to you, Mr. Chairman, and ask if there's any questions.

Perrot opened the floor for questions from the Commissioners.

Kmetzo asked if the Master Plan is being reviewed for 2024, will the revision follow the same structure that it deed when it came out with the 2019 MP.

Christiansen said that's a great question and I appreciate that. It can. And that's certainly one alternative as far as the process to update a MP, is follow the same process you followed the last time and just do an update to your plan. You can do something different. You can look to utilize consulting services, we've done that, we'll have to look at budgeting for that and working through that process which would be request through City management, City Council, and having a budget to do it. But knowing what the responsibilities of the community are and what your charges as commissioners, what their charges as legislative officials would have to consider that if we wanted to do something different or in a different direction, if we went out and sought a Request for Proposals to do the services or qualifications, however it might be. So we can take a different process.

We can look at other examples of what other communities do and see if you have any interest in that.

Kmetzo asked if the Planning Commission is who drives the structure of how the Master Plan is to be reviewed and revised and Christiansen replied yes and stated under the Master Plan there is provision for the legislative body to be involved. The legislative body could provide more direction, there could be some specificity with that. But typically it comes from the Planning Commission, it's your tool, it's your instrument, you hold the Public Hearing, and then you through the process hand that off to City Council and they either serve it in a legislative advisory capacity or they can be engaged in a decision-making capacity. But it's typically your instrument and the structure is to be determined by you, so that's part of the reason we're going to go through this review as we're kicking it off this evening. This might not be the only time and likely not to be in the next couple months because here we are in October, we're doing this tonight, 2024 happens in three months and trying to get a little bit of a leg up on this, be proactive about it, instead of all of a sudden reacting okay, it's January or February, we feel administratively that dialogue start now and to get you to start to think about what you see in this current plan, what you find valid still in this plan, what's been addressed and what might you want to change in this plan. And you might want to change up the structure of the process, it could be something different than this. Typically a Master Plan has several elements to it. It has inventory of existing conditions, existing land use, existing infrastructure, existing environment. It has typically a series of goals and objectives for the community in the next ten to fifteen years where it wants to go with certain things. It also may include forecasts, what about population projections, what about persons per household, what about income information and other important demographics. Those demographics, we obtain those demographics through various sources, whether it's a source like the Southeast Michigan Council of Local Governments or Oakland County Economic Development and Planning or from the State of Michigan or from other valid resources that provide demographic data for the community, whether it's population in households or per capita income and all those kind of things, those are important for us then to understand what the current structure is with respect to the tomograph and then what the projections are of that so then we can be prepared and plan for it. What if there was a forecast that identified in Farmington the increase in population, whatever the basis is, that is at such a level that wow, we better take a look at our land use, we might not have enough houses, maybe we better take a look at our MP and then instead of this here and here, take a look at where there's opportunity for housing. Maybe we need to take a look at that, we know that taxes, taxes that are paid to the City of Farmington provide the resources to achieve the services that this City is requested by its customers, its citizenry, its residents, required by its customers and citizenry and residents, it's taxpayers, it's voters. The citizens have certain things that they expect, that they require, I'll say demand, from their community. Let's talk about drivable roads, let's talk about flushable

toilets, let's talk about safe drinking water, let's talk about a safe community, let's talk about garbage that gets picked up or snow that gets removed, leaves that get picked up, all of those operational elements, well, how is that driven, how are those operations provided for. Again, resources. What are the resources, money, revenue. Where does the money and revenue come from? Taxes. How are the taxes generated, value of property, how is the value of property then continued to be maintained or stimulated or increased, redevelopment, maintenance of property, investment in property, redevelopment, how is that achieved? Developers and investors come in and take a look at your planning tools and your MP to see what development opportunities are laid out in your Master Plan or your Downtown Master Plan or your Grand River Corridor Vision Plan. Then how is that achieved? Well, through the implementation using your Zoning Ordinance, that's how all this intertwines together. So, with all of that, we need to take a look at all of this, we need to take a look at the economics, not just the demographics of population and numbers in households but I mentioned the economics because maybe it's not just housing that we need, maybe we need to take a look at our industrial corridors and see if there's opportunity there for some enhancement and change because it's a diverse tax base, it's very important we have a diverse tax base. We have a residential base which is primary and that is most significantly single family detached residential land use and tax base. We have a significant multiple family tax base. So between those two residential types, they make up a significant portion of the land use of the community. What about the nonresidential, downtown, commercial, office, office service, other sorts of uses that relate to that not just through the downtown but throughout the community. What else? Industrial. We have several industrial corridors in the community. Very important to keep those areas at a high level because they generate tax base. Who do you think might be the most significant tax generators, payors in the community? Not collectively as a whole, but what uses do you think are the higher tax base contributors?

Perrot replied it's the commercial spaces. Christiansen replied it's the big shopping centers. Downtown Farmington Center. Big shopping centers because of the value and most of them have upgraded over the past number of years, clean up the site, build-out, façade modification, etc. What else, what others? We have a couple industrial uses that are significant on Nine Mile Road and we have some on Eight Mile Road that are significant not only in terms of the business but what they provide to the community, what they generate, what they do as a business and the tax base that is generated from the value of their real property, what they do, the land, the building, etc., and their personal property, equipment. But they also provide what else? Jobs. Very, very important. You wouldn't think for a minute oh, really, the Master Plan we look at and the relationship to jobs, absolutely, they are part of that. What else? Your multiple family residential. Your multiple family residential communities within Farmington as a community is significant in terms of housing they provide and contributions they make and significant in size and

they are some of the highest tax base contributors in the community. So, all of that. So, all of that, too. So looking at all of this and tying it altogether and making sure that we're going in the direction we want to go and making sure the overarching Master Plan that is supported by the other tools underneath we talked about is implementable with the Zoning Ordinance. What did we just do, we just went through a Zoning Ordinance audit, we took a look at the Zoning Ordinance to make sure that it was something that was still achieving that you as a commission wanted it to achieve through the rules and regulations, etc. I'll go back to you, Mr. Chair. Any other questions at this point?

Mantey asked about the possibility of using consulting services and stated she remembers from the 2019 plan from the Steering Committee guide that OHM was heavily involved; is that part of their arrangement with the City or would that be a consulting service that we would have to go to Council to ask for?

Christiansen replied that was specific to the 2019 MP update. They actually were selected from a number of planning consultant firms that the City went out and asked for proposals so the City sent out an RFP, Request for Proposals, from planning consultants to provide services to update the Master Plan. And from all of those that responded, and there was a half a dozen, OHM Advisors was selected and that was through the Steering Committee that was appointed by the City Council. City Council created a Master Plan Steering Committee and they then went ahead and considered all of this and the City considered all of this and OHM Advisors was selected. Don't know if that's going to be the same process, it could be, that we do, we're just kind of getting to that point right now, this is really the beginning of how this MP update discussion with you and City management, administration, we've had some dialogue about it in our development meeting which is where the DDA Director, the City Manager, administration talked about where we're at with our planning tools and here we are tonight. So it could be that. OHM Advisors has been the City's engineering consultant for a significant number of years, probably more than sixty, seventy years and has been our planning consultant now for a number of years and still are as well, so it could be that that's where we go but we'll see as we move forward.

Perrot stated seeing no other questions I think we can all take that as an action item going forward and obviously Kevin is always available for questions and Christiansen welcomed the opportunity.

Christiansen stated this is a very unique tool, this is a very important tool. What I might do real quick, Mr. Chairman, let me flip through real quick for the structure and I'm hoping this will stimulate you individually as Commissioners and the Commission as a whole to take a look at this document online and at your leisure and see what is good, see what may need to be changed and see what may still be valid and whatever other ideas you

have in terms of structure or direction, whatever that may be and how that's going to play out. This is not a one meeting item, it takes a good part of a half a year to a year to really do a good job on this and we need to make sure we do a good job.

He then went through the 2019 MP on the screen and the different categories that it contains and the opportunities for residents to comment on it further discussion was held. He then went through the 2013 Vision Plan, containing six vision initiatives which reflect the direction as a whole as a community. There are a total of forty-seven action items in that VP to implement the six vision initiatives, eighteen of which are priority action items, most of which have been achieved since 2013, so that's a tool we're going to need to take a look at as well.

The 2013 Grand River Corridor Vision Plan has been updated now since 2022. The 2015 Rouge River Nature Trail Project Plan, still part of our planning set. The 2015 Downtown Area Plan, the 2019 RMP that I mentioned, the Downtown Master Plan 2017 that I mentioned and the 2017 Downtown Parking Study. Now, the Parking Study is another tool and all these tools are available online and they are what we use to compile this overall MP.

Community trends, got to have the metrics, does anyone know what our population was in 2010? 10,400 residents. And after the last census, 2020, the population was 11,600. Christiansen asked if anyone knew why community trends such as pet ownership were important and Perrot replied it's the same reason we do demographics and head counts at the Farmer's Market, they influence purchases and have a large impact and further discussion was held.

Christiansen stated that understanding the demographics of the community is important and needs to be part of this plan. He then asked Westendorf what does it take to maintain property values and he replied it takes a lot of work and capital to do so and Christiansen said we need to plan for that then and that our housing stock is only as good as it is maintained, individually and collectively.

He continued going through the 2019 MP and its categories and contents.

Perrot then stated there is a ribbon cutting ceremony between Farmington and Farmington Hills for broadband.

Christiansen stated the key element in the Master Plan is the future land use layout and that is something I'm hopeful that you as commissioners will take a look at in the coming months.

Identity, image and branding, does Farmington have a brand? Perrot replied sure, we fashion ourselves as a small town surrounded by large western suburbs of Metro Detroit.

Kmetzo good place to live and work and play.

Christiansen added it's a good place to live, work, shop and play and has a very high quality of life and that's achieved through the many tools we have in place and the community lifestyle and events, all the activities that continue to get better and better and better every year as seasons progress. Now that we've done this broad brush stroke to look at future land use and focus areas and implementation of same.

Perrot stated it's the end of '23, beginning of '24 and it's time to plan and budget and time for the Capital Improvement Plan once again.

Perrot stated to the commissioners to take that as an action item to look through and have notes put together for our next meeting.

Kmetzo will this review of Master Plan, will that be a regular agenda item in future meetings?

Christiansen said you may anticipate it being on agenda at next meeting and looking at implementation at December meeting and then I anticipate having the Master Plan update from thereon, through 2024 on every agenda.

Kmetzo stated she's a little confused. Shouldn't we be discussing in what's our next step to define a plan and how we're going to revise the Master Plan, what's our strategy, will there be a SC, will be conduct surveys, shouldn't we have some agreement on what the commission will do before discussing the various aspects of the plan itself.

Christiansen stated we went over our current Master Plan tonight and then we will look at what we want to do with the next plan, what is the structure, what is the process, would you suggest a Steering Committee like we did last time, would you suggest an update or a complete revamp, so to answer your question we are going to look at every one of those things you brought up, probably end of this year and we look at this document and everybody gets comfortable and we will move forward to what you're laying out.

Kmetzo said as members of the Planning Commission we should have taken time already to read and understand the Master Plan so that we have some idea where we think the direction should go, what changes need to be done, but I'm more concerned with moving

two steps back and how exactly are we going to get to that point, what is our plan with respect to the changes.

Christiansen replied you're going to get there, we use this plan every day and we need to look at is it still valid, is it still our vision, now what do you want to do?

Kmetzo said that is why it's more effective to use the time like in our next meeting to discuss an action plan, a strategy, as opposed to having two, three, four meetings discussing every single section of the plan itself because we're supposed to know it and we use it all the time

Christiansen stated we also need to have a budget approved. Christiansen stated it's important for us to have the dialogue we're having and understand what is of value still in this tool and what may need to be kept and what might need to be changed and go from there and making sure we're current, knowledgeable and up to date.

UPDATE – CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Director Christiansen stated that this agenda item affords the commission an opportunity to ask any questions they might have about development or for an update of existing projects that are moving forward.

He said things have been very active with the Streetscape being done, Heights Brewery is pretty close to opening up, Jills Pharmacy up and running, the former Fitness 19 is now My Salon Suites. The new owner of Cassel Dental is meeting to discuss possible tear down and rebuild, Cannelle's open, there's a bookstore going in at Avalon Studios, we're about ready to get plans for old Sunflour Bakehouse, Blue Hat Coffee should be very shortly opening and available tenant spaces are transitioning in downtown,

Down Grand River former Chicken King was sold, Bob's Big Boy is open, Legion Square was approved by City Council, there is some interest in The Winery, it is the last step in the final PUD for Hillside Townhouses, soon to be two final PUD site plan for Legion Square.

There is full tenancy at World Wide Center and Drakeshire and Freedom Plaza. The Special Land Use for Shell Gas Station, ready to move forward with that. Savvy Sliders opened up this week. Farmington Crossroads almost full tenancy, new Amoco at Nine Mile has best gas prices in town and they have a charging station. Industrial corridor on Nine Mile has some turnover and upgrades and enhancements of some of the old long-term uses of new owners and new investments. Liberty Hill, all homes have basements and there is discussion about acquisition and redevelopment of the Village Shoe Inn.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None heard

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENT

Everyone welcomed new Commissioner DeWayne Gray.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Crutcher, supported by Kmetzo, to adjourn the meeting.
Motion carried, all ayes.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary