

FARMINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS
Monday, October 13, 2008

Chairperson Gronbach called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Farmington City Council Chambers, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan.

ROLL CALL

Present: Bowman, Buck, Christiansen, Crutcher, Gronbach, Ingalls, Kuiken, Scott (arrived 7:39 p.m.), Sutton.

Absent: None.

A quorum of the commission was present:

OTHER OFFICIALS PRESENT: Building Inspector Koncsol, City Manager Pastue (arrived 7:59 p.m.), Recording Secretary Schmidt.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Sutton, seconded by Buck, to approve the agenda. Motion carried, all ayes.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION by Kuiken, seconded by Sutton, to approve the following item on the consent agenda as amended to excuse the absence of Bowman and Crutcher due to their attendance of a training session.

- A. Approve as amended Regular Meeting Minutes of September 8, 2008.

Motion carried, all ayes.

PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION TO SCHEDULE SPECIAL LAND USE PUBLIC HEARING, AMERICAN MOTORS – MR. BRAKES AUTO CARE, 22949 ORCHARD LAKE ROAD

Proponent: Jason Fochtman, Jeffery A. Scott, Architects, P.C.

Jason Fochtman, Associate A.I.A. Project Manager, Jeffery A. Scott, Architects, P.C., 32316 Grand River Avenue, Farmington, Michigan, was present on behalf of Mr. Brakes Auto care. He stated the main function of the business is an automotive repair center and the applicant would like to diversify by using the unused parking areas for used car sales. He commented the applicant wanted to diversify his business due to economic times. Mr. Fochtman commented they intend to create four landscape beds. He noted on the Mooney side of the property they intend to remove 8 ft. of asphalt and 2 parking stalls, which would be about 40 ft. by 8 ft. They would be narrowing the entrance approach to make it more like a parking lot drive to make it safer.

He stated LSL Planning had recommended planting trees along Mooney and Orchard Lake Road in the planting beds, but he noted the site is narrow and hard to see when going down Mooney and Orchard Lake. He commented the owner was concerned the trees would cover up the building and there would be no visibility. Mr. Fochtman provided photos of the location to the Commission. He noted the trees would cause a problem with the power lines along Mooney and would block the vision of the building.

Chairperson Gronbach asked the proponent if they intended to make pylon signage changes. Mr. Fochtman replied there is no intent to change the signage at this point and there would be a small "For Sale" sign in the window.

Commissioner Crutcher verified it would not be a used car lot. Mr. Fochtman responded that the business is primarily for repair and some times the owner buys decent used cars and repairs them and then sells them on the property. He commented it would be just a few cars for sale.

Gronbach noted they would use 20 spaces for used car sales.

Commissioner Buck asked the proponent what type of cars would be for sale. Mr. Fochtman replied they would be quality used cars and something that someone would want to buy and the vintage would be the year of 2000 or newer.

Commissioner Buck asked if the angled parking on the farthest east corner was going to be changed. Mr. Fochtman noted they are going to restripe and will add a handicap spot.

Commissioner Kuiken verified the maintenance area would remain the same.

Commissioner Bowman noted it seemed that the applicant was already selling used cars. Mr. Fochtman replied the 10 cars on the property were for repair and would be gone when repairs were completed.

In response to a question by Crutcher, Fochtman stated the business was primarily for auto repair such as standard maintenance, oil changes, tune-ups and brake repair.

Commissioner Ingalls asked if they had considered closing the access to Mooney. Mr. Fochtman noted he was not sure if the owner had considered that. He noted the owner would like the access for people to come from either direction.

In response to a question by Kuiken, Fochtman stated they had not considered speed bumps to cut down on cars cutting through the property.

Commissioner Sutton stated Belle Tire had trees at their location that did not interfere with the power lines. Fochtman noted the trees had to be cut so as not to interfere.

Discussion followed regarding the type and location of trees. Sutton voiced concern that the current landscaping is just lawn and it is not being maintained. She noted if there are complaints later about maintenance he will probably put in stones as other property owners have done. She questioned why the owner had not maintained the lawn. Mr. Fochtman stated he would talk to the owner. Sutton stated she was concerned that once a special land use is granted it would be difficult to control the type of cars so as not to look "trashy". She commented that 20 spaces would not be needed for the sale of cars.

Bowman stated she was not comfortable with 20 spaces for the sale of used cars.

Fochtman noted the cars that are repaired sit in the parking spaces just for the day until the owner of the vehicle picks it up and vehicles that needed major repair would be in the garage.

Commissioner Christiansen stated the Planning Commission could set conditions that would address their concerns. He commented they could limit the use of the vehicles that are not for repair and that are for sale. Christiansen questioned Mr. Koncsol if there was any limitation on the site for the use of the parking spaces. Mr. Koncsol replied each space could be filled. Sutton stated she is concerned about the landscaping and noted required landscape plans have been put in place with other businesses and when they don't maintain it they replace the landscaping with stones. Sutton stated weeping cherry trees could be planted that would be lower to the ground and stated she was not comfortable with the amount of parking spaces allotted. She felt the spaces could be limited to 10. Fochtman stated he would check into the parking spaces.

Sutton stated she did not feel the Commission could limit the condition or types of cars, but limiting the amount of parking spaces is workable.

Kuiken noted the owner would want to sell cars that look appealing and the owner could have the whole lot for repair of vehicles.

Christiansen verified every space would be used not only for repair but also vehicles for sale. He was not sure what kind of limitation could be put in place.

Sutton questioned if putting a "For Sale" sign in the vehicle was a violation. Mr. Koncsol replied it would not be a violation since the vehicles belonged to the owner, but if someone other than the property owner brought their vehicle to the property to sell, it would be a violation. Discussion followed regarding sign violations.

Christiansen voiced concern regarding cars that would be on the lot that were being repaired and if they were damaged it would create a visual problem. He felt the spaces for sale of used cars would be for drive by traffic to see. He stated the Commission could place conditions on the spaces. Mr. Fochtman stated the business was not a bump and paint shop.

Gronbach asked the proponent to check the ordinance to make sure there are the correct number of spaces for the building. Mr. Fochtman replied they did check and that is the number of spaces for the site.

Gronbach informed the proponent that there needed to be curbs in the landscape areas and that the landscaping part of the ordinance needed to be reviewed and the guidelines followed by the applicant.

Commissioner Ingalls questioned the hours of operation. Mr. Fochtman replied the business hours are 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 or 6:00 p.m., but he would check with the owner.

Gronbach stated it needed to be noted on the site plan regarding lighting.

Kuiken discussed the placement of a tree that would not affect the power lines. Mr. Fochtman replied he would check into it and report back to the Commission at the next meeting.

MOTION by Christiansen, seconded by Buck, to schedule a public hearing for special land use for Mr. Brakes at the next scheduled meeting on November 10th at 7:00 p.m. Motion carried, all ayes.

Gronbach requested the applicant bring revisions to the plan at the next meeting.

Gronbach asked Mr. Koncsol to check into the BP station on Power and Grand River regarding sale of cars and their landscaping.

CITY-WIDE MASTER PLAN UPDATE

- a. **Review of Second Draft.**
- b. **Consideration to recommend to the City Council that the Master Plan be Distributed for review.**

Sherrin S. Hood, AICP Senior Planner, LSL Planning, Inc. presented an overview of the second draft of the Master Plan and Land Use Map and noted changes that were made.

She noted the DDA Design Committee had met with LSL Planning and noted their concern regarding what role the Master Plan played in relation to the plans they have developed. Some of the Design Committee members felt the Master Plan was taking over the Downtown Design Committee's role in reviewing downtown development.

Kuiken questioned the terminology used on Page 2-7 referring to the Downtown Plan. Ms. Hood will note the change.

Ms. Hood reviewed the changes in chapter 5 and noted the difference between the Downtown Development Authority and the Planning Commission.

Gronbach noted terminology regarding bump outs on pages 6-5, and 6-10.

She noted changes in graphics and use of negative tone regarding redevelopment. Ms. Hood noted changes on page 6-14 regarding "Recreation".

Christiansen referred to pages 5-17 through 5-20 and Ms. Hood stated the color copy was done to present a clearer view of the photos that had been shown.

Ms. Hood stated there were not any major changes in regards to the direction of the plan, only changes in how they approach it.

Gronbach stated Ms. Hood did a good job and that she had included all of the issues that had been discussed by all of the committees involved. He wanted to make sure they looked at mixed use in perspective and the references in the Master Plan were appropriate. He noted the focus was still the downtown, which is good.

Sutton concurred with Gronbach regarding the fine job done by Ms. Hood.

Commissioner Scott asked if there is a way to discourage rental/multi-family in residential areas. Ms. Hood replied changes are being made by having owner occupied townhomes. Scott stated the Planning Commission needed more leverage if someone wanted to propose an apartment complex. Scott referred to page 3-2 and Ms. Hood commented she could add a goal to promote owner occupied residential compared to an apartment complex. Ms. Hood stated for a safety standpoint it is better to have owner occupied residential property than an apartment complex.

In response to a question by Crutcher, Hood responded she was referring to multi-rental housing.

Kuiken noted redevelopment of apartments into single-family homes.

Discussion followed regarding redevelopment and the preference for owner occupied property.

Gronbach noted on the first page under the Planning Commission members to list Ken Crutcher's name and to leave James Pogue's name on. Sutton said she does not use her full name as shown on page 1.

Christiansen asked if Ms. Hood had referred to the parking study and wanted to make sure they were consistent. Ms. Hood replied she will review the study and will incorporate areas to make sure they are consistent with the DDA plan.

Kuiken noted appendix A was hard to read. Ms. Hood replied she would correct it.

Gronbach asked that City Administration has the information as to who to contact regarding plans.

Commissioner Buck noted the building in the picture on the bottom of page 5-17 looks contemporary. He stated he would like the picture to look more like the building on pages 5-6 or 5-9. He noted redefining some of the school properties as mixed use or residential in the Master Plan. He noted areas noted were the Training Center and up the hill on the other side of Shiawassee Park. He noted they are shown on the Plan as public and quasi-public and he wanted to advocate to the Commission that they look at redefining those two areas; the Training Center as mixed use and the green area to the west of Raphael be defined as residential or some other area to give the Commission some ability to redefine and move in another direction. Discussion followed regarding the green area at the hill opposite the park. Ms. Hood referred to page 4-12 and stated they could get more specific. Buck felt changes need to be made regarding those properties and that area is ideal to create those changes.

Sutton stated the map needs to be consistent with the Master Plan.

Gronbach voiced concern regarding development of the sledding hill, which is considered part of the park area. He questioned if the school building and bus yard could be developed and leave the green area to the west not developed. Discussion followed regarding planning and development options for the school owned properties.

The Commission discussed single family residential in regards to the base of the sledding hill.

Buck noted that 9% of the land is allocated to the schools and other cities were around 5% in comparison. He commented making the area discussed into residential would allow reallocating 1 or 2% and converting to taxable use.

Bowman stated she was not comfortable losing that much greenway to allow 12 houses to be built just to obtain 1 or 2% of taxable use.

Discussion followed regarding the school site as a public/public quasi category and as a potential development site.

Christiansen commented there should be noted in the Master Plan there be special areas specific to the specific location and to focus on what the vision is for that area. There should be noted in the text that refers to the need to maintain, the need to keep the view, the need to limit development to certain types of uses, and the need to have certain characteristics achieved.

Ms. Hood stated a schematic could be drawn up to detail the issue and the parcel. She noted now is the time to discuss the parcel regarding redevelopment and also noted the site is zoned R1.

Kuiken asked if the PUD allows for clustering of residential units. Ms. Hood replied the Commission might want to get more specific and to voice their concerns.

Scott asked what stops the school from making a bus garage at the base of the hill. Christiansen noted they are exempt from the Building Code. Discussion followed jurisdiction of land use.

Christiansen stated the Master Plan would be the guide to any rezoning.

Discussion followed regarding public/public quasi development of the school property.

Buck stated the most efficient placement of the buses would be the schools where they deliver the students.

Buck commented this school property that has been discussed would be an excellent opportunity to create redevelopment.

Ms. Hood asked if the Commission wants to encourage redevelopment and if the answer is "yes" then there is a need to re-designate the site and the uses need to be decided.

Christiansen stated the City is limited as to control about the school and their plans for building.

Ms. Hood stated the issues regarding the site needs to be discussed and redevelopment regarding the school site.

Ms. Hood stated they could show retaining some green space on the north side of Shiawassee.

Discussion followed regarding the sledding hill and the use of the top of the hill for residential use.

Buck noted the Training Center is an under utilized facility.

Gronbach asked if the switchback staircase at Shiawassee Park is still being built. City Manager Pastue replied it is and is completely funded.

Ms. Hood stated she would re-designate the site at the Training Center and see that it meets with the downtown Master Plan. She commented the changes would be made for review.

Ms. Hood noted the City Assessor voiced concerns about the Master Plan regarding the office building off Power Road & Grand River. She also noted he objected to the term "neighborhood center".

Council concurred to table consideration to recommend to the City Council that the Master Plan be distributed for review.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

COMMISSION COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Kuiken noted there is a neon sign at Zap Zone and questioned if it is addressed in the ordinance. Pastue replied there is nothing in the ordinance prohibiting this type of sign, but it cannot be flashing.

Pastue noted there would be a presentation on the 27th for City Council, Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals about consolidation of variances and to take sign variances away from City Council. Christiansen stated he was not comfortable if City Council had to go to court over a sign variance issue.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Sutton, seconded by Christiansen, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried, all ayes.

The meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary