



City of Marquette, MI

300 West Baraga Ave
Marquette, Michigan 49855

Meeting Minutes City Commission

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 22, 2021

Special Meeting

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call

Present: Ayes: Bonsall, Davis, Hanley, Hill, Mayer, Smith, Stonehouse

Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Jenn Hill moved to Approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Cody Mayer and Carried Unanimously.

Announcements

Mayor Smith had no announcements.

Public Comments - Comments may not exceed three minutes per person. Please state your name and physical address when making public comments.

Paul Schumacher spoke about the difficulty in finding affordable housing in the community. He said the problem has gotten worse, especially recently.

Geraldine Nault said the City is built on the backs of several decisions made over the years, and she urged the Commission to be careful when considering the various recommendations.

Margaret Brumm spoke about planned developments, as well as the impact of the former Cliffs-Dow property, and asked the Commission to closely consider any of the recommended changes.

Dave Thomson said he is a professional engineer and has built houses in various parts of the country. He said the cost of building is related to the regulations in place locally and that per-square-foot cost of home construction in Marquette is higher than in other communities.

1. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Fred Stonehouse moved to Approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Evan Bonsall and Carried Unanimously.

1.a. Approve the minutes of the November 8, 2021 regular Commission meeting.

New Business

2. Ad-Hoc Housing Committee Final Report and Recommendations - Roll Call Vote

Mayor Smith asked for a brief introduction on the topic from City Manager Karen Kovacs, and then opened the floor to Commissioner Evan Bonsall, who was the chair of the Ad-hoc Housing Committee. Commissioner Bonsall spoke briefly, highlighting the history of the committee, as well as recommendations from the report. He reviewed recommended changes to City codes and policies, but also talked about the importance of local partnerships and cooperation.

Commissioner Jessica Hanley moved to Approve suspending the rules for discussion, seconded by Commissioner Fred Stonehouse and Carried Unanimously.

Commissioner Stonehouse asked whether the university population is influencing the accuracy of the data in the report and said he would like a clearer statement of how to quantify success in this regard. He suggested the Commission would benefit from having a concrete goal.

Commissioner Hill said she agreed the City needs a more data-focused way to define success, and spoke about population trends in the Upper Peninsula and how to best visually represent local data. She said she sees this report as offering opportunities, and as a good first step.

Mayor Pro Tem Mayer suggested following up this meeting with a Planning Commission work session to discuss further.

Commissioner Davis said she wanted the City to review several of the recommendations individually prior to implementing anything specific, and also said she agreed on the need to establish concrete goals.

Commissioner Bonsall said this is a salient issue and that he often hears comments about housing issues. He said this is an important first step, but that tonight's action would simply empower staff to begin taking steps toward these recommendations, and is only the beginning of a multi-year process. Commissioner Bonsall said he agrees that concrete goals are important, but that he thinks a professional study should likely be done first.

Mayor Smith said this is a complicated and long-standing issue, and that it is great to finally see this first step. She said there is likely a need for a housing needs assessment.

Commissioners thanked the volunteer members of the Ad-hoc Housing Committee, as well as City staff.

Commissioner Jenn Hill moved to Approve the recommendations in the Ad-Hoc Housing Committee final report, recommend the Planning Commission adopt the report as an appendix to the Community Master Plan, and authorize the mayor to sign the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Evan Bonsall and Carried by Roll Call Vote .

The motion carried 6-1, with Commissioner Stonehouse voting against it.

Public Comments - Comments may not exceed three minutes per person. Please state your name and physical address when making public comments.

Paul Schumacher shared information about various sources of population data, and he said this report is a beginning. He said the City has been moving in the wrong direction and too many of the local projects don't lead to money coming into the area. He urged the Commission to focus on homes for families.

Stephanie Jones said she was on the Ad-Hoc Housing Committee and she said it's important to realize that the City can facilitate housing, but is not a developer and will not be unilaterally develop property. The City owns only a small amount of land, but can work to incentivize development. She said development isn't necessarily bad and that many of the people living in the newer condos are locals that sold their homes in town in order to make the move, opening homes for others to purchase.

Sarah Mittlefehldt thanked everyone and said the report was informative.

Dave Thomson said affordable housing has to be aligned with the directions laid out in the City Master Plan. He said the Commission should focus on how to build a middle-class, mid-income lifestyle in the city, which goes beyond housing discussions.

Geraldine Nault said she would like to attend the meetings and work sessions mentioned tonight, but that they are often posted online fairly late in the process.

Margaret Brumm talked about the impacts of these decisions and of past decisions. She spoke about the need to make the city attractive and about the need to move intentionally.

Antonio Adan, a member of the Ad-hoc Housing Committee, thanked the Commission for acknowledging such an important topic, which impacts several generations. He said he agreed that solid data is key and said that developers are vital to any sort of positive action.

Comments from the Commission

Commissioner Stonehouse shared an update on the short-term rental bill in the state legislature. He said tonight's meeting was a good one, with solid discussion.

Commissioner Hill said there is a lot to build off in the current Master Plan and spoke about data and maps.

Mayor Pro Tem Mayer said there was a great discussion tonight and that this sets the groundwork for a lot of effort to come. He said it seems as though the City doesn't have the employment environment that would be needed to sustain an inflated housing market.

Commissioner Hanley thanked everyone who took part in this process and said she hopes everyone in the audience stays involved as this moves forward.

Commissioner Davis congratulated Downtown Development Director Becky Finco on being appointed to the state board.

Commissioner Bonsall thanked the committee members that showed up. Says the ability to continue to regulate STRs is more important than any recommendation in the report.

Mayor Smith said it feels good to approve this item and she looks forward to moving ahead.

Comments from the City Manager

City Manager Kovacs had nothing further.

Adjournment

Mayor Smith adjourned the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Kyle Whitney, City Clerk

Jennifer A. Smith, Mayor

If you require assistance to participate in any meeting, program or activity offered by the City of Marquette, please provide advanced notice to City of Marquette ADA Coordinator Eric Stemen at 906-225-8978 or via email at estemen@marquettemi.gov.