

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
MARQUETTE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**

August 19, 2025

A regular meeting of the Marquette City Planning Commission was duly called and held at 6:00p.m. on Tuesday, August 19, 2025, in the Commission Chambers at City Hall.

ROLL CALL

Planning Commission (PC) members present (8): W. Premeau, M. Rayner, K. Hunter, J. Fitkin, Chair Kevin Clegg, D. Fetter, Vice-Chair A. Wilkinson, S. Lawry

PC Members absent: none

Staff present: City Planner and Zoning Administrator D. Stensaas, Zoning Official A. Landers, City Engineer M. Kilpela

AGENDA

It was moved by S. Lawry, seconded by K. Clegg, and carried 8-0 to approve the agenda as presented.

MINUTES

The minutes of the June 03, 2025, meeting were approved by consent, with a change noted by W. Premeau to a statement attributed to him.

CITIZENS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Nobody wished to comment.

NEW BUSINESS

A. 01-STR-08-25 Wright Street Reconstruction

K. Clegg explained the process for consideration of this item.

A. Landers read the memo provided in the Planning Commission agenda, and described all of the separate document items in the agenda packet for this case, and showed each of them on the monitors. She also stated that staff did not receive any correspondence for this item.

M. Kilpela reiterated the scope of the project and stated the major features of the street that contribute to the need for replacement. He said that the primary issue that is being addressed with this project is the outdated utilities, particularly the 6-inch water main and the sanitary sewer. He explained the current right-of-way condition and the intended elements of the reconstructed street and their dimensions, and Staff showed the graphic depiction of those items from the agenda packet. He said that the lane widths will meet the requirements of MDOT and the Community Master Plan, and that the project is being funded by an MDOT "small urban" grant. He also said that the intention is for the project to begin in the spring and that it will last about two months.

K. Clegg asked if any PC members had questions. There were none, and K. Clegg then asked if anyone in attendance wished to comment on the proposal.

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
MARQUETTE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**

August 19, 2025

Mike Koskiniemi, owner of Motions and the property at 910 Wright St., asked several questions that were directed to City Engineer Kilpela:

Mr. Koskiniemi: Will you be pulling the sidewalk through our parking lot?

Mr. Kilpela: Yes, in the right-of-way.

Mr. Koskiniemi: Okay, and what about access during business hours?

Mr. Kilpela: We'll require the contractor to provide access to your business at all times.

Mr. Koskiniemi: Good. Will you be working on both sides of the road at the same time?

Mr. Kilpela: Yes. Because of the utility replacements, it won't be feasible to do it "half and half".

Mr. Koskiniemi: Okay, that's all I have. Thank you.

Kristi Mastric, of 702 Wright St., inquired about whether the boulevard in front of her house would be torn up. She said that she has things planted there and was wondering if she should dig it up and relocate it.

Mr. Kilpela said that the boulevard would be torn up, and that plantings should be removed.

K. Clegg said that, with nobody else wishing to comment, it was time for Commission discussion.

M. Lawry said that he has questions for Mik about the status of vacation for Neidhart Ave. and the utilities that are currently located in that.

M. Kilpela said that NMU re-platted the area around Neidhart Ave. south of Wright St., and that the right-of-way has been abandoned. He said the water main there will not be reconnected, and it is shut off near Center Street, and NMU has also abandoned the sanitary sewer. He said Neidhart Avenue, south of Wright Street, no longer exists, although it shows up on the map.

M. Lawry said okay, and it was vacated previously. He also asked if NMU is happy with the 5 ft.-4 in. sidewalk.

M. Kilpela said that NMU was hesitant to grant more than a 7-ft. easement, and a narrow sidewalk would narrow the boulevard area. And they said yes, they are happy with the proposed sidewalk width.

D. Fetter asked if there are plans to paint any crosswalks at the intersections.

M. Kilpela said that yes, they will paint crosswalks at Neidhart and Van Evera.

D. Stensaas asked M. Kilpela if Wright St. is a truck route east of Sugarloaf Avenue.

M. Kilpela said it doesn't have a truck prohibition on it.

D. Stensaas said that truck traffic is probably why the travel lanes are designed at 12 feet wide, and that we probably can't take some of that space for wider bike lanes.

M. Kilpela said that MDOT is requiring that too as part of the grant since it is classified as a Major Street.

J. Fitkin asked what is planned for plantings in the boulevard.

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
MARQUETTE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**

August 19, 2025

M. Kilpela said it will just be grass, except at Motions Fitness where there is all existing asphalt that will be replaced in-kind.

J. Fitkin asked if there is any opportunity for trees to be planted on the north side.

M. Kilpela said yes, there certainly could be trees planted, but we typically leave that up to the City Arborist. He said that it is not specified in the contract.

M. Lawry said that NMU did add a considerable fire load to this area, and flows are somewhat weak in that area, so this project should be quite helpful for that.

M. Kilpela said there are 12-inch water mains on the west side and east side that are tied together with a 6-inch main, and this project will fix that gap. He said it will provide more capacity at the meter.

M. Lawry said that would supply hydrants on Wright St., but not boost their [NMU] system after their master meter, right?.

M. Kilpela it will provide more capacity at the meter, but the master meter will limit the flows on campus.

K. Clegg asked if anyone wanted to make a motion.

It was moved by S. Lawry, seconded by K. Hunter, and carried 8-0 that after review of the proposed cross-sections and associated background information for 01-STR-08-25 - the Wright Street Reconstruction Project, the Planning Commission finds that the proposed project meets the intent of the Community Master Plan, and hereby approves the street reconstruction design as presented.

NEW BUSINESS

B. Planning Commission Special Election

It was moved by M. Rayner, seconded by S. Lawry, and carried 8-0 to nominate K. Clegg for the Chair position.

M. Rayner said that she talked with A. Wilkinson about taking the Vice-Chair position, and that he said he would.

It was moved by M. Rayner, seconded by A. Wilkinson, and carried 8-0 to nominate A. Wilkinson for Vice-Chair of the position.

CITIZENS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Maddie Smerin, of 1209 Gray St., stated:

I'm here with another resident to express her concerns with Ordinance [Chapter] 25-03 [of the City Code], which deals with noxious weeds. We're really happy that there is language in there to support native plant gardens and so there is clearly support from the City for that, but there are a few issues I'd like to bring to your attention, and I will present this to the City Commission too. One is that there is a certification required through the County Conservation District, which they may not offer anymore. I've

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
MARQUETTE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**

August 19, 2025

had two separate conversations with that office and the staff wasn't aware of that certification. So, that is important to address since enforcement is leaning on that certification.

K. Hunter asked for clarification of what certification is being sought.

Ms. Smerin said that it is for a "planned natural landscape" as defined in the code, and the code specifies that the Marquette County Conservation District (MCCD) is responsible for providing it. And enforcement seems to think there is a more involved process than seems to be available. She said the MCCD said it does consultation with people and help as an educational resource, but they don't offer any certification. She said people can buy signs that say "I'm a pollinator garden", but anyone can buy them and they're not part of a certification. So that is one thing to address since there is enforcement, so that gardens aren't lost due to that expectation. Another thing is more general, and that is we hope that natural landscapes can be allowed in right-of-ways, and this ordinance says they are not, but we put together a lengthy list of reasons why they're beneficial in any space where somebody wants to do that. She said there is lots of precedent of other other cities that support and regulate that but don't prohibit it, so there is some middle ground to find where we can address anyone's concerns for zoning and codes and still have some natural landscapes. She said for a lot of people that is a lot of their property and for some it is all of their property, so that brings up some inequities.

Ms. Kyra Goodrich, of 404 W. Michigan St., stated that she supports everything that Maddie [Smerin] said, and I helped draft some of the information that we'd like to share.

TRAINING

A. Land Use in Michigan – two articles from the Michigan Planner - April/May 2025

K. Clegg said that the articles made him think about the interaction among different units of government. The Planning Commission and Staff discussed issues related to intergovernmental cooperation.

S. Lawry said that he gleaned from the population figures that the lack of housing isn't due to a lack of units, and that second homes and short-term rental units must account for a significant portion of the housing units that have been taken out of housing stock for sale or long-term rental.

WORK SESSION

A. Planning Commission Presentation for City Commission

The Planning Commission and Staff discussed the upcoming (Sept. 8th) annual presentation to the City Commission and D. Stensaas went over the draft slideshow he created, including slides that showed planned and unplanned natural landscapes, which were in the slideshow just for information because staff knew that there would be comments made about that issue and their office does the enforcement. D. Stensaas said that he would follow up by sending the draft slideshow to the commission members, and that they could send their comments to the Chair, and that they would create a final draft at their Sept. 2nd meeting.

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
MARQUETTE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**

August 19, 2025

STAFF COMMENTS

W. Premeau stated that government fees are adding substantially to the cost of homes.

K. Hunter said that it's good to be back and that she is thankful for the public comment.

S. Lawry said that he empathizes with Staff about the mowing issue because he wrote those letters for many years. He said the code has changed and obviously it needs changes again. He said that all the public utilities have the right to use the right-of-way and they have materials buried in there and access points on the surface that they need to have access to. He said that most of them are prepared to put back a lawn if they have to excavate it, but they are not prepared to replant a garden. He said it is up to the homeowner to salvage their plants if there is enough time available for that, but in some cases like a water main collapse there are not going to be able to provide notice, so people should consider how much they invest in improvement in that property.

J. Fitkin said that it is proper to thank Sarah Mittlefehldt for the time she put into the Planning Commission, and wish her well in her new role at NMU. She also said that, about the natural landscapes, she can empathize with both groups, and we need to try to strike a balance. She said that the clarification of the right-of-way and the height standards in the right-of-way will be important, and she hopes to see a resolution soon. She said that for the Wright St. plan, she hopes that trees could help with speeding and she hopes the Arborist will prioritize planting in that area.

A. Wilkinson stated that it's good to be back and agree what Jane said about Sarah, and that it was good to observe her run the meetings and learn from her.

K. Clegg stated he wanted to thank those that provided public comment, and offered thanks to Sarah Mittlefehldt for her long service. He also thanked the members for their faith in him by electing him Chair.

D. Stensaas said that Sarah would be recognized at an upcoming City Commission meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair K. Clegg adjourned the meeting at 7:15 pm

David Stensaas

Prepared by D. Stensaas, City Planner and Zoning Administrator, Planning Commission Staff Liaison