

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
MARQUETTE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
September 5th, 2023**

A regular meeting of the Marquette City Planning Commission was duly called and held at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 5th, 2023, in the Commission Chambers at City Hall.

ROLL CALL

Planning Commission (PC) members present: W. Premeau, K. Clegg, A. Andres, M. Rayner, Vice-Chair N. Williams, D. Fetter, C. Gottlieb, Chair S. Mittlefehldt.

PC members absent: S. Lawry (excused).

Staff present: Zoning Official A. Landers, City Planner & Zoning Administrator D. Stensaas, Director of Planning and Community Development D. Stachewicz

AGENDA

It was moved by C. Gottlieb, seconded by K. Clegg, and carried 8-0 to approve the agenda with the addition of a second subitem to the Work Session item, for preparation of the P.C. annual report to the City Commission.

MINUTES

The minutes of 08-15-23 were approved as presented, by consensus.

WORK SESSION

1. Update on Community Master Plan Renewal project by Becket & Raeder representative

D. Stensaas stated that Russ Soyring was here to deliver a presentation for Beckett and Raeder on the status of the Community Master Plan (CMP) update and that A. Landers has updated data on land use by parcels and zoning districts for the Planning Commission and the CMP project consulting team and that we can go over that after the presentation by Mr. Soyring.

Mr. Russ Soyring said that he was here with Alex Wilkinson, who is working for Beckett and Raeder here in Marquette on specific assignments including taking photos, for the Community Master Plan project. Mr. Soyring also said that he wanted this to be a discussion and not just a presentation, and he invited the Planning Commission and staff to ask questions or comment at will.

Mr. Soyring stated that he will talk about portions of the CMP that have been drafted and reviewed by staff, but he would like to say that the "what's left to do" list includes a section on Coastal Resiliency, Housing and Neighborhoods, Economic Development, and Land Use to include existing and future land use as well as zoning. He stated that he estimates that all the material will be provided in a final draft in late October and talked about that timeline and process for completing of the updated CMP document, public review, and final adoption.

He then discussed data and information received as a result of to the two major online public surveys and the three major public engagement sessions that were conducted in the city, spending quite a bit of time talking about the charted results of community comments provided about the desired types and mix of housing and commercial properties in specific parts of the community, per the visual preference survey that was conducted at the open house.

Mr. Soyring provided a tax revenue per acre diagram of land in the city and discussed the reported values, which showed that development in the waterfront area of the city to be by far the most valuable and that small lots around the downtown core generate more tax revenue per acre than larger lot subdivisions on the outskirts of town. He also stated that pattern is fairly typical, as buildings take up more of the space on smaller lots and in commercial areas that have large parking lots, the parking lots generate almost no taxes and one-story buildings that spread out are also not generating much revenue and may not generate as much revenue as a home on a small lot, on a per-acre basis.

He also discussed in detail the results of the Redevelopment Workshops, prefacing the information and data with the explanation that this facet of the public involvement program was connected to the fact that the City lost its largest taxpayer when the Wisconsin Energies power plant on N. Lakeshore Boulevard was permanently closed in 2021. He went over the public input received about the following “redevelopment sites”, which were determined by members of the public indicating on maps where they thought transformative interventions were appropriate to create improved conditions: South Front Street, N. Lakeshore Boulevard (north of Ridge St.), West Washington St. (from McClellan Ave. to US-41/M-28), the 1301 O’Dovero Drive property where Tadych’s Foods is located, and the former Marquette Mall site.

Mr. Soyring also discussed highlights of the draft CMP sections on demographics, natural features, community facilities, transportation and recommendations for the natural features and transportation sections.

A. Landers presented data in the form of tables showing actual land use by number of parcels and area within the city (both as a finite amount and as a percentage of the total area), as well as the number of parcels by zoning district. She also presented a map of the city that showed all of the parcels in the city by the existing land use category, with a total of ten (10) categories, and she said this information was acquired by reviewing the land use status that the Assessing Department has and comparing to the data in the Building.net files that the City maintains.

2. Preparation of Planning Commission Annual Report to City Commission

D. Stensaas said that the presentation of the Annual Report is scheduled for Monday, September 11th and staff has updated the membership information and key data in the report, but the Planning Commission needs to determine what concerns and goals it wants to include in the report. He showed the report in PowerPoint and moved through the presentation showing the various pages and topics. The Planning Commission and staff discussed the report contents and decided that the issues of a Climate Action Plan, Mobility, and Housing are the top issues that should be addressed in the report. D. Stensaas said that he will work with Chair Mittlefehldt on the details and when the draft report is finalized, he will send it to the PC members by email.

COMMISSION AND STAFF COMMENTS

W. Premeau said that the sidewalk fund money has been wasted for years and it has not been improving walkability at all. He said that he liked the fact that it was mentioned in the presentation that asphalt absorbs heat and radiates it back. He said that there are huge rubber roofs, most of them are black, at NMU as an example, and parking lots – when you take into account, climate change may not be the bad animal you’re worried about. He also said that, regarding talk about “the wilderness experience”, where’s the wilderness? He said the paved trail with benches every 50 feet isn’t wilderness. He also said that when the surveys are distributed, is it by group or by whoever shows up? He said that if you ask the taxpayers what they want you’ll hear a different story, and that K.I. Sawyer has a big upgrade program

going on and that they can't get more carriers because there's not enough space for them to deplane, but they are working on that now and another upgrade is going to occur in a few years. He also asked rhetorically if the taxpayers benefit from tourism and said that downtown businesses benefit, but that the average taxpayer gets nothing.

A. Andres said that since 2013, when he joined the Planning Commission, the PC has done some amazing work trying to improve the city and things for the residents of the city, but it is frustrating that we have many obstacles that prevent things from getting done and we don't have a tendency to look back and see what wasn't accomplished and he wants to reiterate that its necessary to not only judge where we're going but to see how we did previously and learn from our mistakes or mishaps and try to take the low-hanging fruit where we can to try to solve the issues that are still existing.

D. Fetter stated her thanks for the presentation and to Andrea for her work on the updated land use data. She said that she enjoyed seeing all of the presentation information.

S. Mittlefehldt stated during her sabbatical last year she researched the history of biofuels and their production in the United States and she learned that the former Cliffs-Dow site was the world's largest wood distillery, from 1935 to 1968, and that she has decided to launch an oral history project for people that lived near the Cliffs-Dow site or worked there. She said the response from the community has been strong, and asked that anyone who knows of anyone that worked there and wants to share their story to send them her way, and it will be archived at the NMU Archives, where many records from the company reside. She also asked if staff had any information they could share about the status of the proposal to locate a new veteran's home to that vicinity?

D. Stachewicz stated that they have approached the Commission with their interest in doing that, but that the City is not in negotiations.

S. Mittlefehldt stated that it would be fantastic if there is a way to mitigate the black tar ooze and other contamination, and if there is a way to do that, what better population to live along our shoreline than our vets?

D. Stensaas wished Commissioner Premeau a happy birthday. He also stated that the next meeting could be cancelled since there is no business and there will be four cases for the first meeting in October.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chair S. Mittlefehldt at 7:45 p.m.

Prepared by: kw/iMedat

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