

**MINUTES  
MARSHALL CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY, February 11, 2015**

In a regular meeting session, Wednesday, February 11, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall, Council Chambers, 323 W. Michigan Ave., Marshall, MI, the Marshall Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Davis.

**ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Commissioners Davis, Banfield, Burke-Smith, Mankerian, McNiff and Meservey

Members Absent: Commissioners Collins, Zuck, and Council Liaison McNeil

Staff Present: Natalie Dean, Director of Community Services

**MINUTES**

**MOTION** by McNiff, supported by Banfield, to accept the minutes of the January 14, 2014 regular meeting as presented. On a voice vote; **MOTION CARRIED.**

**AGENDA**

**MOTION** by McNiff, supported by Burke-Smith, to accept the agenda for the February 11, 2015 regular meeting as presented. On a voice vote; **MOTION CARRIED.**

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

None

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

None

**NEW BUSINESS**

Clearzoning will present Master Plan Draft with discussion of proposed revisions.

Mardy Stirling and Joe Tangari with Clearzoning, city consultants, began to present the Master Plan first draft for comment and discussion. They first addressed the processes that had already taken place, including:

- Published and distributed a formal Notice of Intent to Plan
- Invited the public to an Open House event
- Invited all stakeholders to complete a survey for public opinion
- Staff and Planning Commission review of draft

Then they clarified the future processes that will need to take place, including:

- Authorization to distribute the plan, requested from City Council
- 42 day period in which all adjacent jurisdictions can comment on the plan

- A Public hearing would be required.
- Final staff and Planning Commission review
- Approval would be requested from City Council.

Stirling and Tangari continued the presentation which included conversation and comments from Commissioners regarding revisions, suggestions, and insight. The discussion included:

- Many of the Downtown strategies were carried over from the 2008 plan. The biggest challenge that was presented is that the Downtown District is along a state highway which requires a high degree of cooperation with MDOT. Therefore, benchmarking other examples of communities cooperating with MDOT will be helpful.
- The River District was able to be identified by about half of the people that took the online survey. The district could benefit from increased way finding and walkable connections with the rest of the city, as well as by creating a cohesive design for the area.
- The West Michigan Corridor had very low public opinion and according to the survey, was viewed as visually unappealing and dangerous, specifically for pedestrians. This area could benefit greatly from incorporating ideas from Complete Streets and through creating design standards for uniformity. It was suggested that a mid-block crossing be installed about mid-way up the West Michigan corridor. There were also suggestions from staff and commissioners to change the images in this section of the draft plan.
- Freeway service areas were discussed as a challenge due to properties along the corridors not being within City jurisdiction.
- Demographic studies showed that the City's population decreased during the last census within certain age brackets. This was most likely due to lack of housing options and amenities such as senior living and young family entertainment. Therefore, a chapter on transitional housing was included in this Master Plan update.
- The hospital overlay district discussion focused on way-finding challenges. The hospital traffic needed to be directed in order to minimize use of residential areas.
- The site formerly used for insurance office space on the east corridor was discussed. This property was presented with the assumption that any major redevelopment may require a public/private partnership. It was also discussed that this property has many different options when it comes to redevelopment, but Commissioners expressed that future uses would have to be sensitive to a completely residential surrounding.
- Fairground areas were also addressed. The need for the Fairgrounds to have their own Master Plan was highly desirable, as well as a possible upgraded entryway onto the grounds.
- Citywide internet was a major factor that was presented through the public survey including that lack of reliable, fast service in the downtown area. The draft plan presented from framework for fiber optic service throughout the city, and consultants also discussed the idea that exceptional internet service could be marketed to entice developers to the City.
- The Industrial Park area had a wide range of suggested uses during the Open House. The area has a large amount of vacant land. It was also suggested to add some amenities to the portions of the park that are already occupied.
- Gateway and way-finding goals were carried forward from the 2008 Master Plan.
- Complete Streets was a popular concept during the open house and through the public survey. Complete Streets was a new act since the last Master Plan. A Non-motorized Plan will be conceived shortly after the Master Plan update. It is expected to be referenced in the Master Plan.
- Implementation strategies were updated and correlate with the goals set in each section of the draft plan. Planning Commissioners will address these and set priority, time frame, status, and designee for each strategy at a later date.

- Benchmarks were not included in the draft plan, but they will be added in order to show precedence for projects in other communities. A handout was distributed for a visual example of this section.
- Consultants discussed that they plan to reference the Iron Belle Trail system, 2007 Downtown Improvement Strategies, and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Other minor changes were addressed such as image choice, spelling errors, and items to be in the appendix such as Future Land Use Map and comprehensive survey results.

**MOTION** by Banfield, supported by McNiff, to request authorization from City Council to distribute the Master Plan draft as presented. On a voice vote; **MOTION CARRIED.**

## **OLD BUSINESS**

None

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

## **REPORTS**

Burke-Smith reported that the Ice, Wine & Blues Festival that took place the previous weekend sustained extensive damage to the ice sculptures overnight possibly from pedestrian traffic downtown.

Meservey reported that the Farmer's Market applied for a second grant, and they are expecting to hear back within a week.

Staff reported that the MEDC will have Redevelopment Ready Communities representatives presenting the complete review of City processes as they pertain to redevelopment. They will present to City Council during a work session on Monday, March 2, in the City Hall Training Room. Staff had a chance to review the document, and many of the suggestions regarding planning and zoning will be addressed through the Master Plan and zoning ordinance updates. Other suggestions that will be presented will rely on MAEDA. This would be a great opportunity for the Commissioners to hear more about where the City stands with regards to the RRC Program. All Commissioners are invited to attend. There will also be a developer there to reinforce what developers look for in locating and staying in certain areas and how the RRC programs assists communities in providing and showcasing those aspects. Finally, Staff reported that the Director of Public Services, Carl Fedders, has resigned with the City and will be leaving at the end of the month. The process of hiring his replacement is expected to start soon.

## **ADJOURN**

The Planning Commission adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Submitted by,

Lisa Huepenbecker