

Commissioner Dailey was elected to serve as Chairperson for the evening. Acting Chair Dailey called the Planning Commission Work-Study session to order at 7:35 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Boyles, Dailey, Demick, Koneczny, Wojciechowski, Hayman.

Absent: Dupray, McEachin, Plachinski, Rutledge, Burkhardt.

Also present: Judy Sproat, New Baltimore Director of Planning & Economic Development
Brian Wilson, Community Planning and Management

Motion by Boyles, second by Koneczny to excuse the absent members. Council Liaison Hayman explained that Council Liaison Burkhardt would be absent through the end of the year, as she is required to be EMT certified for her job, and is in classes and unable to attend the planning commission meetings due to her work schedule. Voice vote. All ayes, motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion by Demick, second by Boyles, to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of 9-16-08. No additional discussion by the commission. Voice vote. All ayes, motion carried.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION: None. There was no public in attendance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion by Boyles, second by Koneczny, to approve the agenda as proposed. No additional discussion by the commission. Voice vote. All ayes, motion carried.

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. SIGN ORDINANCE DISCUSSION:

Our planner explained that a couple of months ago, he distributed a letter explaining the pros and cons of A-Frame signage and potential draft language. The question in front of the planning commission is do we want to entertain allowing A-Frame signs in the GC and LC districts. If so, to what extent. Do we want to allow them out on the road, do we want to allow them only next to the actual doorway of the business. These are questions to resolve. Businesses are looking for ways to be more visible from the road.

A-Frame signage is allowed only in the downtown district. It is designed for pedestrian traffic, or on roads with slow traffic. The GC district in New Baltimore is on Green Street where cars don't drive 30 mph. Council had received requests from the community to expand the A-Frame signage to the GC and LC districts, and requested the planning commission review the ordinance last spring. There was a discussion when the health food store owner came to the planning commission asking for additional opportunities to advertise his business and increase visibility.

Director of Planning and Economic Development, Judy Sproat, explained that she had a sub-committee meeting with representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, the health food business, Council was invited, a Planning Commissioner and the Mayor. Photos of the A-Frame signs at the plaza where the health food store is located were discussed. She was trying to demonstrate if A-Frame signs were allowed along Green Street and 23 Mile Road, how it would look. How far to extend the exceptions was discussed. Each plaza occupant could make the argument for A-Frame signs. She has a power point presentation available in her office for review.

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The health food store's A-Frame sign did not meet the ordinance. The building official allowed a temporary sign for this location. Signs on trucks were discussed. The planner explained that whatever is decided will be allowed through out the entire district. We cannot pick and choose. If you allow every unit in a shopping center to have an A-Frame sign, it would create visual clutter. If you allow one A-Frame sign per shopping center, would it really be an effective form of advertising. Enforcement was also discussed.

Council Liaison Hayman explained she had received a complaint about the farmers market sign. It is now facing Green Street in violation of the ordinance. It used to be down Washington.

Commissioner Boyles suggested limiting the number of A-Frame signs as we do in downtown to one per building. Perhaps VG's doesn't need an A-Frame.

Commissioner Dailey asked about the status of the sub-committee. Ms. Sproat explained they had not met a second time. She had originally put together a letter of invitation, sent it to the mayor asking him to forward it to council. He did not. A future date was discussed. The mission of the committee was discussed, which is to make a recommendation to the planning commission regarding the sign ordinance in general. Our planner explained even if nothing changes as a result of the committee it creates awareness and discussion between the business owners and the city.

Motion by Wojciechowski, second by Boyles, to appoint Commissioner Dailey as liaison to the sub committee and report back to the planning commission. No additional discussion. Voice vote. All ayes, motion carried.

Commissioner Dailey explained that the commission has a responsibility to the council to make a recommendation on the A-Frame signs for the other districts in New Baltimore.

Commissioner Koneczny explained although he questions the usefulness of the A-Frame signs businesses in the downtown should be offered a perk to entice them to locate there. Because of the size limitations it is particularly suited to pedestrian traffic. It is not suitable for vehicular traffic and if allowed along Green Street and 23 Mile and County Line it would be unmanageable, unsightly and ineffective.

Commissioner Wojciechowski discussed the owner of the health food store setting a bad example by violating the ordinance. Signs without a permit should at lease meet the ordinance.

Council Liaison Hayman suggested gathering information from other communities as to what they do on major roads. Judy Sproat will investigate that suggestion.

The issue of temporary signs was also discussed. The planner explained that the mayor has received requests for additional signage because of the construction along 23 Mile interrupting traffic flow. The mayor suggested a way to allow for additional temporary signage during unexpected construction issues. Granting city council or administratively the mayor, the authority to approve temporary signs was discussed. Vehicle signs, and human signs were also discussed. Enforcement was discussed. Limiting temporary signs was also discussed.

We allow temporary signage currently. Two temporary sign permits, for a total of 30 days per year. In response to the 23 Mile Road concerns, Commissioner Dailey explained that traffic is moving so slow you can see who is open and who is not. When traffic resumes normal speeds of 50 mph you can't really see businesses.

New businesses are also allowed a 30 day temporary sign. Our planner explained pylons signs are one of the biggest contributors to visual clutter. Monument signs look nicer. Our ordinance removes non conforming signs as of January 1, 2010 and eliminates pylon signs.

Commissioner Dailey will attend the sub committee meeting next Wednesday and report back the commission at our regular meeting October 21st. The commission can then decide.

2. RULES OF PROCEDURE – CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

Our planner presented an updated Rules of Procedure document which included a Conflict of Interest section with standard language as recommended by the Michigan State Extension/MTA. It includes language used through most of Michigan to determine a conflict of interest.

Discussion included a commissioner leaving the room when a conflict is detected, as not to influence the rest of the commission. Council Liaison Hayman suggested a commissioner sitting in the audience would be totally appropriate. Abstaining from discussion and voting was suggested. The way the proposal was presented would result in a commissioner who wants to present a plan to the commission having to hire a representative to do so. The pre planning and site plan review committee meetings were discussed. Our planner explained the new state law requires us to define Conflict of Interest in our Rules of Procedure.

Commissioner Dailey explained that any attempt by a commissioner, to even from the audience, represent themselves, is a form of intimidation by a person in power, that no one else has who is not on the board. A regular citizen does not have the same influence. It is not reasonable to expect that person has the same means of approaching any member of the commission. That is why they want to remove the individual totally from the process. If it is part of that individuals work, and they would have to abstain so often, then maybe they shouldn't be on the planning commission. Commissioner Dailey continued, you can't have the community questioning the integrity of the board. He didn't believe there was anyone on our commission that would try to use their power, however the public doesn't always see it that way. Our planner explained that even if the individual wasn't trying to influence the commission, just seeing the person sitting in the audience may make some of the commissioners more hesitant to make comments or voice concerns. Commissioner Dailey explained that we would all like to believe that we wouldn't lobby for our own project. It gets tougher when family relations are involved. The planner was directed to include language regarding other relatives. Adjacent land, churches, and other conflicts were discussed. How close something has to be before it impacts you was discussed. Questions as to if there is a conflict of interest should be brought before the commission.

The planner will research niece and nephew, aunts and uncles, and step derivatives language and present it at our next regular meeting October 21st.

Motion by Boyles, second by Demick to add the Rules of Procedure regarding Conflict of Interest be available for discussion and possible approval at the next regular meeting in October. No additional discussion by the commission. Roll call vote. Voting Yes: Dailey, Demick, Koneczny, Wojciechowski, Boyles. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Commissioner Demick explained the Historic Commission has nothing on the agenda this month and has cancelled their meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATION:

Commissioner Dailey explained that because of Commissioner Plachinski absence, the report regarding the conference he attended will be moved to the December Work Study Meeting.

Council Liaison Hayman discussed reducing the number of meetings the Planning Commission holds. After discussion, it was decided to schedule the meetings as usual and add an agenda item to review the work study agenda to decide to whether or not cancel the meeting. The work study meetings are helpful to our new members. Council Liaison Hayman explained that the Mayor felt the amount of money spent for a work study meeting is really insignificant. The length of meetings was also discussed. This meeting had a short agenda and not a full commission present and it was still an hour and a half. It takes time to deliberate. If there is nothing on the agenda we will cancel.

Commissioner Wojciechowski asked about the commission's election of officers. That is usually done at the regular meeting in February.

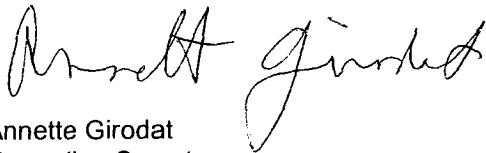
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The Goodfellows ad was discussed and money collected from the commission members present. After discussion, the agreed upon caption was "Planning on a Great Year" from the New Baltimore Planning Commission. Any additional monies received will be forwarded to Dorothy Bade for the Goodfellows.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion made by Demick, second by Boyles to adjourn. No additional discussion from the commission. Voice vote. All ayes, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Annette Girodat".

Annette Girodat
Recording Secretary