

CITY OF WIXOM
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2023

This meeting was called to order by Chairman Day of the Planning Commission at 7:26 p.m. at which time allegiance was pledged to the American flag.

PRESENT: Cheryl Tacy (Vice Chairperson), Phillip Carter, Ray Cousineau, Sandro Grossi, Mark Lada, Anthony Lawrence

ABSENT: Excused: William Day

OTHERS: Doug Lewan (Carlisle Wortman Associates), Drew Benson, Assistant City Manager; and Mona Freiburger (Recording Secretary)

Determination of a Quorum:

A quorum of the Planning Commission was present for this meeting.

Changes or Additions to the Agenda:

None

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION made and seconded by Commissioner Carter and Commissioner Lawrence to approve the January 16, 2023, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes, as amended.

VOTE:

MOTION CARRIED

Correspondence:

January 24, 2023 City Manager Update
Final draft for City Council - VCA Ordinance with graphics
Final draft - City Zoning Map

Assistant City Manager Benson stated if there were any comments, questions or a desire to discuss the VCA Ordinance with graphics and VCA zoning map, he would recommend moving them to Old Business for discussion purposes.

Vice Chair Tacy commented she had two items to call to Mr. Benson's attention which he may be able to resolve. She noticed there were two graphics left out. Vice Chair Tacy indicated she assumed the graphics were not ready at that time and she could note those for Mr. Benson after the meeting. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated they had an opportunity to chat before the meeting and they could follow up; some graphics were not ready in time for this packet.

At this time, the Motion stands where the Planning Commission already approved submittal to City Council and no further action is needed. Assistant City Manager Benson agreed.

Call to the Public: (Limited to 5 minutes per speakers, addressing Agenda items on Agenda only)

No public comments.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

1. **SITE PLAN REVIEW - SPR#22-015 WIXOM BAPTIST CHURCH, 620 N. WIXOM ROAD, WIXOM, MI 48393.** The applicant is requesting site plan approval to demolish the existing storage garage in the north central portion of the subject site and replace it with a new 5,000 square foot garage storage structure in the same area of the site. The site is located south of the W. Maple and N. Wixom Roads intersection. The site is zoned VCA, Village Center Area and, currently, contains the First Baptist Church of Wixom complex that includes the church structure, existing storage building, parking facilities and recreation area (eastern portion of the site). Churches are a permitted use in the VCA zoning district. The parcel is 17-32-301-035.

Summary:

The applicant is requesting site plan approval to demolish the existing storage garage in the north central portion of the subject site and replace it with a new 5,000 square foot garage storage structure in the same area of the site. The site is located southwest of the W. Maple and N. Wixom Roads intersection. The site is zoned VCA, Village Center Area and, currently, contains the First Baptist Church of Wixom complex that includes the church structure, existing storage building, parking facilities and recreation area (eastern portion of the site). Churches are a permitted use in the VCA zoning district.

The proposed accessory structure will be used for a bus garage, general storage area, vending area and contain two (2) unisex restrooms. An outdoor covered patio is also proposed at the southeast corner of the structure nearest the recreation field (adjacent to the vending area). Driveway and sidewalks will provide access to the proposed structure connecting existing drives and paths in this area of the site.

Based on the information provided and Site Plan Review submitted by Carlisle Wortman Associates dated January 17, 2023, Carlisle Wortman Associates recommend approval with the condition that the applicant demonstrate evergreen plantings at the minimum planting size of five feet as required by Section 14.02.G.E., a color rendering as well as material boards for consideration.

Discussion:

Mr. Lewan referenced and overviewed the memos to the Planning Commission dated January 17, 2023 and January 31, 2023.

In reference to the Area, Width, Height, and Setbacks, the applicant meets these requirements. It is of note that existing church building exceeds the distance from the center line of Wixom Road. There is a maximum distance that new structures are supposed to be from an existing roadway in the VCA district. This project exceeds that; however, it is an existing building and would be considered a pre-existing condition.

The subject structure would be considered an accessory structure; it is not a primary use to the land. It is an association with the church use of the property.

With regard to natural resources, it is a big, open field with an existing pole barn on it. There are a few trees that this facility will have to remove and those trees will require mitigation. The correct number of mitigation of trees are shown on the site plan. Four mitigation trees are required, and the applicant is installing five mitigation trees.

No issues with natural resources on site.

No issues with Building Location and Site Arrangement.

Essential Facilities and Services are reviewed by the City engineer; those include sewer water, storm water retention, etc. This would be a separate review from the engineer consultant.

Parking and Loading. The church has the same amount of parking available. The primary square footage of this building addition is going to be used for bus storage/parking. It will not generate the need for extra parking. The parking for this

accessory structure is fine and no additional space is required based on what is already at the church.

Site Access and Circulation. There are no issues with site access and circulation. No change.

Landscaping. The building is near the north property line and there are a few homes north of the property line. The City ordinance does require screening when a non-residential use abuts a residential use. The applicant is proposing some material and there is also some existing material on the site. The combination of existing and proposed material meets ordinance requirements for the number of plants that are required, however, the size of the proposed evergreens will need to be increased to a minimum of five feet each. If the Planning Commission would like to move to approve this project, the planners could check prior to building permits take issue.

Lighting. There is not a lighting plan. The ordinance requires contour lines that connect the points of light. The applicant provides a photometric plan, which does not have the contour lines. On the grading map, the lighting plan shows the property line and the points, which meet ordinance standards. Mr. Lewan commented he was okay with not having a lighting plan that has the point by point contour lines between them. It is very minimally lit and from the applicant's drawing, it meets ordinance standards.

No additional signage is proposed.

Floor Plan and Evaluations. The applicant provided the elevations of the project as well as floor plans. A sample board was brought in for the Planning Commission to view. The applicant can provide more detail/information with materials.

Mr. Lewan indicated with the exception of the plantings to be increased to a minimum of five feet along the north property line, Carlisle Wortman Associates recommend approval of this proposed site plan to allow a new accessory structure.

Commissioner Cousineau commented based on the actual plan, the elevations and sample board mimics the existing building in terms of the use of materials, colors, etc.

Mr. Craig MacDonell, MacDonell Associates Architects, 312 E. Liberty Street, Milford, MI, representing the applicant stated the intent is a campus between the church and its extension. The applicant tried to match materials to give it the campus feeling. They will be using masonry C-Brick material for the brick; metal panels will match the same color. The applicant did not have an issue with the minimum five foot evergreen trees required as opposed to the three foot trees proposed to meet the ordinance.

MOTION made and seconded by Commissioner Lawrence and Commissioner Lada to approve **SITE PLAN REVIEW - SPR#22-015 WIXOM BAPTIST CHURCH, 620 N. WIXOM ROAD, WIXOM, MI 48393**. The applicant is requesting site plan approval to demolish the existing storage garage in the north central portion of the subject site and replace it with a new 5,000 square foot garage storage structure in the same area of the site. The site is located south of the W. Maple and N. Wixom Roads intersection. The site is zoned VCA, Village Center Area and, currently, contains the First Baptist Church of Wixom complex that includes the church structure, existing storage building, parking facilities and recreation area (eastern portion of the site). Churches are a permitted use in the VCA zoning district. The parcel is 17-32-301-035; based on the condition as follows:

1. That the applicant demonstrate evergreen plantings at the minimum planting size of five (5) feet each along the north property line as required by Section 14.02.G.E.

VOTE:

MOTION CARRIED

The applicant did provide during the Planning Commission meeting a sample board with detailed information including proposed materials to be used on the accessory building.

2. **ZONING FOR MINI WAREHOUSING AND HOTELS/MOTELS - DISCUSSION ITEM.** For Planning Commission discussions and consideration of possible zoning ordinance changes to address the location and development standards for both Mini-Warehousing and Hotel - Motel uses within the City.

Discussion:

Assistant City Manager Benson introduced the general concept of this discussion topic.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated the zoning for mini warehousing and hotels/motels became a topic a few months ago. City administration and consultants had pointed out that there have been calls regarding mini storage which is, currently, only allowable in the M-1 Light Industrial district as a special land use. They have discouraged applicants from attempting to rezone or doing similar things to adjacent parcels. There seems to be significant demands and there are some concerns.

This demand also applies to hotels. There are a number of hotels built in the City of Wixom, specifically, in the IRO district. There are six hotels, currently, including the hotel that is under construction.

These topics are, partially, staff generated but these topics do not have to be the only topics moving forward as we think about changes, or modifications to any of the City ordinances, allowable uses, special land uses, etc.

Assistant City Manager Benson stated they are open to suggestions by the Commission for discussion, and the discussion is not necessarily limited, in general, if there are other topics the Planning Commission would like to include.

Mr. Lewan stated there were some concerns regarding the uses and he did a quick look at the zoning ordinance with regard to these two uses. The uses are very different. They are two kinds of land uses that people are asking about within the City. The question being asked is, are the current provisions enough to regulate these kinds of uses within the City? Are they located in areas that the Planning Commission would like, and ultimately, City Council would like, or could there be some ordinance language that may funnel these to locations that may be more appropriate?

Mini storage, while it is a special land use, is located in much of the southern half of the City of Wixom which is zoned M-1. There has been some interest in mini storage and almost the entire southern half of the City could accommodate mini storage. The question becomes, how many vacant lots are there? There are probably not that many actual vacant parcels but there are under-utilized industrial buildings that could be converted to mini storage.

Another question Mr. Lewan proposed is, is M-1 and M-2 the districts that we want to concentrate mini storage in? It is a warehousing kind of use and it does make some sense, if these are the districts we would like them to be in. Should there be some additional standards or additional design standards?

There are five standards in the zoning ordinance for mini warehousing. Most of the standards include circulation, an office for the facility, spacing of the units on the site, etc. The only external standard is that the outside of the facility has to be masonry. There are other standards that can help funnel these uses to locations that might be the most appropriate for them such as lot size, only permitted on certain lot size, for example; only allowed with a certain type of road.

Commissioner Carter commented the Planning Commission goes through great pains to try to keep the face of the City pretty well tighten. As far as outdoor storage, he indicated he would not want to see anything like that in any of those areas along the highway. In terms of mini warehousing, Commissioner Carter indicated the big buildings with all of the garage doors on it didn't bother him as well. Although, the outdoor storage could go bad quickly.

Commissioner Lada commented outdoor storage is by special land use; the Planning Commission has some voice in the aesthetics of the building from the outside. He indicated if it is fenced or shielded by an evergreen wall, if it is unseen, he would not be completely opposed to it. Wilson Marine was approved by the Planning Commission, it is very clean looking, and looks nice as you drive by.

Commissioner Lawrence supported Commissioners Carter and Lada in their comments. He indicated the boats at Wilson Marina looks very neat, and no problem, but across from the Ford property, Royal Truck, there are a lot of junk cars about a year ago, several hundred junk cars. With the cars removed, it still looks awful. This is located on a main thoroughfare.

Vice Chair Tacy commented she liked the idea of reworking the ordinance in terms of limiting them to certain lot sizes, certain type of road, etc. If they were limited to a certain type of road, it could keep them off of the main thoroughfare; and as far as the lot size, you don't want to end up years from now with a bunch of derelict looking buildings. Vice Chair Tacy indicated she did not have a problem with where they are located in the M-1 and M-2 district but she did not want them front and center. Delineate them where they would or would not be appropriate.

Commissioners Cousineau and Lawrence agreed with the comment to keep them off of the major thoroughfares.

Commissioner Cousineau commented, architecturally, even the closed storage facilities are ugly, and have no character. Architecturally, they need to be cleaned up; not just a steel box.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated they have gotten questions related to mini storage outside of the M-1 district; specifically, the most common is the Sam's Way property that is, currently, vacant, along the freeway and zoned B-3. Also, B-2, in some of the shopping centers, there have been questions, specifically, North Wixom Road and Loon Lake, either for the vacant parcel or for the existing units, if it is allowed to do mini-storage or readapt one of those units for it. The answer has been no. Vice Chair Tacy and Commissioner Grossi commented they would not vote for a unit there; it is a major thoroughfare; it is Wixom Road, on the north face of the City.

Assistant City Manager Benson commented it is an interesting idea to increase or change the architecture requirements, specifically as it relates to adoptive reuse of an existing industrial building. For example, if it is a two acre minimum, this would cut out a lot of the minimum square footage size; but if you set architectural requirements, that would require applicants to make wholesale changes to an existing industrial facility which may be a positive. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated he did not think there would be much interest for units that aren't visible from the street. It would also

create non-conformities with the existing ones, which isn't a deal breaker, and they certainly have the ability to do that. The desired location for these things is to be highly visible so the traffic can see them.

Commissioner Cousineau inquired with respect to economics, if a 100,000 square foot light industrial building compared to a 100,000 square foot mini storage, if there is a difference in tax revenue based on value. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated it would be difficult to give a concrete answer. With personal property being phase out, if they are both new construction, he would venture to say the industrial building is still worth more because you can do more with it; but mini storage facilities have a relatively high value, just from the value of the property standpoint.

Commissioner Cousineau inquired if most mini storage units provide the service to the local area or if there are a lot of outside people using them. Assistant City Manager Benson answered it depends; as an example, outdoor storage units for boat storage, there are less of those, so you do get people from further away. Conventional mini storage are neighborhood businesses. There are so many of them, you shouldn't have to drive more than five miles to find one.

Mr. Lewan stated he thought he had enough information to do a draft a summary for the Planning Commission to review to point out specific ordinance sections in a memo format for the changes or bring updated language.

The next topic for discussion was in reference to hotels. Mr. Lewan indicated Assistant City Manager Benson brought this topic to his attention.

The question is, is that the best use for the industrial research office park land? It does have frontage on I-96 which is desirable for a hotel. There are only two areas of IRO in the City; is that where we should promote hotel development?

The two questions are: Hotels are not permitted in the Industrial District, but they are permitted as a use by right, not even special land use, in the IRO district, the freeway service district and the Village Commercial Area. A fix could be to have a little more discretion about where the hotels could be located, and require that hotels be a special land use in the IRO district. This would then require a public hearing and discretionary approval on that part of the City rather than a non-discretionary approval; or take it out of IRO all together. This could create some non-conformities, if that was done to the existing hotels. The freeway service district would be a typical zoning district where you could find hotel development. It also would be terrific to have a small hotel in the VCA district to promote the commercial businesses, etc.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated there are four hotels that exist; two of which are freeway serviced which are closest to Culvers; the other two hotels are IRO. There

are not any applications or formal submittals that this would be contradicting but there are calls with a lot of interest. They are being proposed on the other side of Alpha Drive. There is a difference in the way that the two sides of Alpha Drive could be viewed. One has visibility directly from the street, and the other does not. There have been some industrial development in that area; and there are a couple of projects that are proposed to be Industrial Research/Office uses; all permitted uses and structures that would fit within that characteristic. To alleviate the potential non-conformity issue, the Commission could also look at rezoning the two hotels to freeway service and then not permitting hotels in the IRO which is another avenue to clean up issues but protecting the existing uses.

Commissioner Grossi asked about the ramifications with the IRO and the other hotels become non-conforming. Mr. Lewan indicated non-conformity means that a use was existing prior to the community changing the ordinance. That would be a legal, non-conforming. The hotels could not add onto a non-conforming use. There is no legal ramifications to the City. For non-conforming uses, they can change ownership; signage would be no problem; non-conforming uses aren't supposed to expand, but they can be maintained, fixed, painted, etc.

Commissioner Grossi commented the City has too many hotels. In hindsight, he indicated he, sort of, regrets rezoning the Meijer parking lot for a hotel. With hotels, there are all kinds of illicit uses such as human trafficking; easy on, easy off the expressways. This is a major hub. He would hate to think about Wixom being a hot spot for these uses. He also indicated there are also a lot of good uses for hotels such as for the business industries, shows at the expo center, etc. Commissioner Grossi asked if there is a way to stop hotels from building in Wixom. Mr. Lewan answered there is no way to prohibit hotels, if they meet minimum zoning standards.

Vice Chair Tacy inquired, in Mr. Lewan's opinion, if changing the IRO to a special land use versus making that not permissible in an IRO to only the freeway service and the VCA, which would lean toward in terms of what we hope to accomplish? Mr. Lewan answered that he thought special land use with some standards for hotels would probably help to limit them to areas that could eliminate the idea of creating non-conformities. It would seem that they could be addressed through a special land use, making IRO's a special land use with some hotel specific standards. Specific standards such as types of streets, only be located on a primary road, freeway visibility, adjacent to a freeway, etc. There could be certain location constraints such as acreage and location.

Assistant City Manager Benson commented hotels and motels are also a special land use in the B-3 district. In his opinion, there are existing opportunities around the district, even outside of the IRO. Special land use would give the Planning Commission more control but, ultimately, they are strongly obliged to grant approval if they meet all of the minimum standards. Vice Chair Tacy indicated the only B-3 is adjacent to freeway

service, so that would keep them all down in that area without compromising the IRO. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated it helps funnel development into those more difficult sites.

Assistant City Manager Benson stated at the last City Council meeting, City Council moved to take the section of 12 Mile along Wilson Marina, which will now be a city road as opposed to a county road. One of the selling points is the theory of economic development.

Commissioner Lada commented one possible solution based on this information would be, the two hotels that are, currently in the IRO become the freeway service and then not permitted in IRO; and then they still have the option of B-3. B-3 is everything south of I-96.

Commissioner Cousineau commented he would be concerned about non-conforming uses; and about the economic impact to that landowner.

Commissioner Lada inquired about the waterpark which never happened, if that is considered a hotel or what would it be labeled? Assistant City Manager Benson indicated it would have been a hotel/water park, and his main response to that is it would be a problem. You would be eliminating that by right. They could get a GPUD arrangement where those properties are viewed.

Commissioner Lada commented the two hotels going to the freeway service and no to IRO, would be his vote. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated under the proposal of rezoning those two properties the City can proactively rezone parcels. They don't have to request it. They are notified, the City sends them a letter to rezone, which also goes out to the adjacent properties, as well. Everyone would be notified of the proposed changes but they would not be notified for changing the zoning. A text amendment to the IRO, there is not a mailer requirement for text change. For a map change, there is. There is not a hardship with putting the two properties to the freeway service.

Commissioner Cousineau indicated it would be nice to tighten up or expand the Commission's architectural control. The hotels in the area and the price per room was shocking on how inexpensive the hotels were; it would be nice to upgrade the hotels.

No motion is necessary to instruct the planner to begin developing the new ordinance language as discussed this evening.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated there is a budget and line item for a study and analysis for the Planning Commission which includes training.

Commissioner Cousineau inquired on how the City is doing, fiscally, because a lot of what the Commission does impacts the tax base on whether they are less restrictive, or more restrictive. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated it would be difficult for him to give exact numbers. In a general sense, the City is doing well. There has been a lot of development in the City. The City hasn't really increased their costs in the last few years. As it relates to capital, that's a conversation City Council has been having, specifically, for roads. The current major road millage expires in 2024, so that is a conversation that has started, whether the City is collecting enough money to adequately keep up with all of the roads that need to be done.

Commissioner Grossi inquired if switching the hotels over to freeway service if that would be amending the master plan, and zoning. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated he thought it would not be in direct compliance with the Master Plan and would refer to Mr. Lewan on the impacts.

Commissioner Grossi indicated he spends most of his time in Wixom but did venture out to Canton, Michigan, on Ford Road. He commented everything looks the same along the Ford Road corridor with the design standards, and architectural standards. He thought it was nice. Mr. Lewan indicated it is probably a combination of design standards and Township participation to invest in those standards. A community can take a passive approach and insert in their ordinances to only get implemented for new development; then the property on each side doesn't have those elements. You can also have some investment by the community or possibly through the DDA; unified design standards.

Call to the Public:

No public comments.

Staff Comments:

Assistant City Manager Benson commented the DDA is offering to cover the cost for design services related to the envisioning for the vacant properties that the City owns on North Wixom Road, south of the elementary school. They are referred to as the Renton properties. Carlisle Wortman was selected for this process; three firms sent proposals. The proposal will be going to City Council. They will be sharing information with the Planning Commission, as well. Authorization is also needed for the project; and they will also be looking at, potentially, other properties in that area.

Assistant City Manager Benson also commented that a site plan will be coming before the Commission soon; People Driven Technology. It is an exciting development that they are proposing for the end three units on Alpha Court. They have also requested a tax abatement, so City Council will be considering this, as well.

Commission Comments:

Commissioner Lawrence commented they have a trash pickup issue in their area. DPW was called and finally trash was picked up in a pickup truck on Thursday afternoon. Vice Chair Tacy also indicated she called DPW and complained during the last two weeks when there was snow. Trash cans were being dumped and then thrown across; the trash cans were being bounced around and cracked. They do not want to replace all of the trash bins every year.

ADJOURNMENT:

This meeting of the Planning Commission was motioned and adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Mona Freiburger
Recording Secretary