

**APPROVED**  
**JUNE 5, 2023**

**CITY OF WIXOM  
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
MONDAY, MAY 15, 2023**

This meeting was called to order by Chairman Day of the Planning Commission at 7:34 p.m. at which time allegiance was pledged to the American flag.

**PRESENT:** William Day (Chairman), Cheryl Tacy (Vice Chairperson), Commissioners: Phillip Carter, Sandro Grossi, Mark Lada, Anthony Lawrence

**ABSENT:** Excused: Ray Cousineau

**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 May 1, 2023, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes, as amended.

**VOTE:**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**Correspondence:**

May 13, 2023, City Manager Update

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

No public comments.

**Old Business:**

1. Discussion Item: Text Amendments in IRO and M1 Zoning Districts related to Mini-Storage Warehousing, Hotels and Commercial Recreation.

**Discussion:**

Earlier this year, there was discussion regarding the concerns with the current zoning standards (and map locations) for self-storage and hotels within the City. Based on the discussion with the Planning Commission, City staff directed Carlisle Wortman Associates to review the current ordinance provisions and allowed locations for these uses. The following is a summary of that work:

Based on the discussion with the Planning Commission included in the packet are draft revisions to the mini-warehousing part of the Zoning Ordinance. One of the key features of these revisions is to differentiate between traditional drive-up storage, and climate controlled self-storage. Climate controlled self-storage is generally more compatible with other industrial/office buildings in form, while drive-up self-storage is very different in site layout and, typically, has an outdoor storage component. Carlisle Wortman included their proposed amendment (Draft Date May 8, 2023) for more detail. Carlisle Wortman Associates believe these changes reflect the comments received by the Commissioners earlier this year.

**Hotel/Motel:**

The discussion on Motel/Hotel is a little easier than that of mini warehousing. At the last meeting, the primary issue was the allowance of motel/hotels in the IRO Industrial Research Office District. To address this concern, Carlisle Wortman Associates propose to simply remove hotels from the list of permitted uses in the IRO Industrial Research Office District. In association with this change, Carlisle Wortman Associates propose to rezone those parcels on Alpha Drive where existing hotels exist from IRO Industrial Research Office to FS Freeway Service. This rezoning makes sense as the properties in question would be adjacent to the current FS zoned property and would eliminate any non-conforming status that would occur if the ordinance language was changed without a map change.

**Other:**

Assistant City Manager Benson asked that Carlisle Wortman Associates raise the issue of the possible allowance of “commercial creation” as a special land use in the IRO Industrial Research Office district. There have been inquiries about this type of use in

the IRO district. This is being raised as a starting point to get the input of the Commissioners before taking any further steps.

Mr. Lewan indicated this is a follow-up of the discussion item from earlier in the year regarding mini-warehousing, self-storage, and hotels. Mr. Lewan and Assistant City Manager Benson have been receiving a fair number of inquiries for these types of uses.

In the Memo from Mr. Lewan dated May 11, 2023, Mr. Lewan indicated he wished to differentiate mini-warehousing into two different kinds of mini-warehousing. One would be climate controlled warehousing which looks, functions, and acts more like an office/industrial building. Second would be the traditional mini storage with exterior doors. Typically, there is also an outdoor storage component involved with those uses.

Mr. Lewan suggested instead of lumping these all together, which the current ordinance does, recognize that climate controlled storage is a newer way these facilities can meet some of the standards of the City and the GPUD section of the ordinance. This would, basically, make it a little more difficult to establish the traditional self storage facilities in locations where the City doesn't want them by, specifically, introduce acreage requirements, introduce architecture standards for climate-controlled facilities; prohibit or limit traditional drive-up, self-storage facilities from certain main roadways such as having frontage on Wixom Road, Beck Road, and Pontiac Trail. The City does allow outdoor storage with drive-up, self-storage; not allowing outdoor storage as part of the climate control would help address concerns raised by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Lewan stated in the amendment, he is proposing to eliminate these from the M-1 and M-2 district. They are still shown as a special land use in the M-1 district and permitted use in the M-2 district. The standards would still apply regardless whether it was a permitted or special land use.

Mr. Lewan indicated they are looking at an amendment to the section of the ordinance that deals with self storage which is part of the discussion.

Commissioner Carter stated one of the thoughts he had, does the Commission want to think about limiting height in the climate controlled buildings; although it might fall within the underlying zoning requirements? He also indicated some of the newer climate control buildings for storage have a lot of windows, so it doesn't look like a big block building; also goes hand in hand with requiring brick. Mr. Lewan indicated the M-1 district height maximum is 40 feet; M-2 maximum of 60 feet.

Vice Chair Tacy indicated one of the discussion items was the possibly of repurposing existing buildings. If someone comes before the Planning Commission and says they have a great use for this building which already exists, would the height requirements miss the opportunity to have an empty building repurposed?

Assistant City Manager Benson stated the blanket development requirements in terms of exterior aesthetics for the architectural design requirements would cover the Planning Commission's concerns. Vice Chair Tacy also discussed having more specific architectural or design standards to cause them not to look like a steel box. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated the development requirements in terms of exterior aesthetics for the architectural design requirements would probably cover these items. City Manager Benson indicated this inclusion must meet all standards from Section 18.14.01, which would meet the intent if the Planning Commission were comfortable with the requirements. Assistant City Manager Benson stated some are pre-existing before the requirements.

Vice Chair Tacy agreed that she would like to see more glass in the architecture instead of a great amount of concrete. Vice Chair Tacy inquired if the Planning Commission has the authority or ability to have the applicant update the exterior of an older building, so to keep progressing forward. Chairman Day asked if the Planning Commission would want to require that in climate controlled storage building that no units can be directly accessed from the outside. Mr. Lewan indicated that is under the definition of climate controlled self-storage, but he would be more specific.

Vice Chair Tacy inquired if the Commission was comfortable with the building height maximum. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated the City of Troy had a five story U-Haul structure built on Rochester Road, adjacent to residential. At that time, it was a permitted use. Five stories was taller than people had thought. For a point of reference, Assistant City Manager Benson indicated there are some limitations on major roads in Wixom, but he was also thinking of the industrial zoned properties along Pontiac Trail. Those are, currently, vacant, or partially vacant areas that could be fit for this type of building. Assistant City Manager Benson recommended having a limit of building heights whether it is three or four stories, which could be a conflict and concern south of Pontiac Trail. Commissioner Lada indicated 40 feet is not four stories. Mr. Lewan indicated screening would not count; if there are some architectural features, it would be the top of the actual roof structure. Chairman Day stated he thought 40 feet would be reasonable for building height. Chairman Day indicated there is a five story height limit in the VCA.

Vice Chair Tacy indicated the Minutes for the February 6, 2023 meeting discussed drive-up, self-storage facilities kept off Wixom Road, Beck Road, and Pontiac Trail. There was not a discussion about climate control, only the self-storage facility, itself. Vice Chair Tacy stated she thought it was no storage units on main streets such as Wixom Road, Beck Road, and Pontiac Trail. Mr. Lewan indicated he did some research and looked at other ordinances, and it made sense to him that those were pulled out as very different kinds of land uses. Commissioner Carter stated the implication being the outdoor storage where you have no idea what it looks like, should stay away from the

main roads. Mr. Lewan stated yes, he wanted to keep the idea of outside storage away from Pontiac Trail, Wixom Road, Beck Road, etc.

Mr. Lewan stated from a developer's perspective, they are going to be most interested in having the visibility from the road.

Chairman Day stated every climate controlled self-storage is simply a box with four sides and a flat roof. Vice Chair Tacy stated she was less inclined to worry about the developer's feelings, and more so looking at the standpoint of being a consumer. For instance, if she were to look for a storage unit, she would look it up. Chairman Day agreed, he would look it up.

Mr. Lewan indicated an applicant would have to meet the architectural design standards of the current zoning. If the industrial building comes in, they would not be allowed to be a box because they must meet those standards such as a certain amount of glass, etc. That would be the same for this type of use. Mr. Lewan indicated he could "beef up" the architectural standard in addition to what is in the current ordinance.

Commissioner Carter inquired about the outdoor storage north of West Road. At one point, they were talking about using a berm as part of their visual block. Mr. Lewan stated they would have to meet the current standards for landscape buffering that are contained within the ordinance; and meet all the screening ordinances.

Mr. Lewan stated the current ordinance requires if you have an industrial zoned property and the area next to a residential zone, the ordinance is written, climate controlled, in theory, could be next to residential use, zoned property. It is probably unlikely but it could happen. You would have to install a buffer type A, which is a 50-foot-wide green strip, and then a certain number of plantings every twenty feet of which abuts residential zoned property. The Planning Commission could require a solid, screened fence. Vice Chair Tacy stated the subdivision on Maple Road, southwest of the railroad tracks get it from two different directions. There is a piece of land that is all M-1 on either side of them.

Mr. Lewan inquired if the Planning Commission is still proposing any kind of self-storage as a special land use; they meet the standards, the City would have to determine if it is a special land use. Special land use in the M-1 district would not be a use permitted by right.

Mr. Lewan stated for special land uses, he tries to compare the special land use to uses that are permitted by right in the district. There are a lot of M-1 uses, next to residential zoned or used property; some of the uses are permitted by right.

Mr. Lewan indicated mini warehousing, in general, other than the negative, visual aspects, which have to do with outdoor storage, it is a low utility user, it is a low police and fire generator; it is almost no noise, almost no traffic.

Commissioner Lada spoke about a business with hi-lo's backing up all night long, every night. Commissioner Lada indicated he would hear the beep of the hi-low's backing up. The whole area is buffered, not just by the setback and zoning, but also buffered by the Air Line Trail. It is Milford, not Wixom. Mr. Lewan stated those kinds of impacts are important to consider.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated from a property tax perspective, if the building is climate controlled, multiple stories, newer construction, the building values well, and they do sell well. There is no doubt that they are valuable from that perspective. From a job creation standpoint, they are useless. This is really the core of this original topic. The City receives too many calls, and they like the idea of other industrial uses for job creation, other taxable benefits, but there is a place for them. A discussion like this is helpful for the City.

Commissioner Carter indicated that the storage unit could not be used to store products or supplies; he was curious about supplies and what it means. Mr. Lewan indicated that is the existing language from the current ordinance and is used to prevent people from operating businesses out of those facilities.

Vice Chair Tacy noted on the proposed changes, it goes from E to G, there is no item F.

Assistant City Manager Benson asked the Commission if there were any specific changes; otherwise, the plan is to then schedule a public hearing as the next step.

Hotels.

Vice Chair Tacy indicated the Commission did not receive any paperwork for the hotel discussion. Mr. Lewan indicated the paperwork was the little cross off because there is really no paperwork on the hotels.

Mr. Lewan stated he had in his notes, not a lot came out of the Planning Commission discussion for changes. This discussion was a response to several inquiries that they have received in the IRO district for hotels. There was some concern that the IRO district was being taken up by non-industrial office uses. One simple way to address that is to remove it as a permitted or special land use in the IRO district. This is what the cross off on NP is supplied to show. Otherwise, they are not proposing any changes to any text. The other change that would come along with this is if this change is made, Mr. Lewan and Assistant City Manager Benson would recommend that the three hotels that are, currently, located in the IRO district be rezoned as FS (freeway service) to

avoid a non-conforming situation. Pre-existing, legal non-conforming uses would limit their ability to make upgrades to the buildings, add onto the building, add on parking, etc.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated Sam's Way are all zoned B-3, which is still permitted in B-3; still permitted in VCA core as well. Theoretically, there are pieces on Grand River that are either B-3; if someone is interested in two pieces, they would try to rezone them as an option.

Vice Chair Tacy indicated one of the items was to tighten up or expand the architectural control, if possible. There are hotels that lack luster. She did not know how much of that was corporate driven by the look to be maintained or if they can exert a little more influence on causing a nicer looking facility.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated the Commission has the ability to control the design requirements. They will default to their corporate identity to the strongest degree possible. He has seen developers pull out of projects, who needed a variance to meet and did not demonstrate a hardship. The project stopped.

Mr. Lewan stated he did see the comment regarding architecture, and there are architecture design standards in the zoning ordinance. Mr. Lewan stated he was not an architect, and he did not know how to address it. Vice Chair Tacy stated she would like to have an architect come in to speak with the Planning Commission. She stated the DDA is working on the City's identity. Vice Chair Tacy indicated the Commission spent a lot of hours looking at the VCA and gave Robertson and Cohen a lot of information to elevate what was brought in. Chairman Day stated he drive through that subdivision, and he thought some of the things that the Commission insisted upon have helped and has made a huge difference in how the subdivision looks in terms of being more traditional. Assistant City Manager Benson stated speaking to an architect is a reasonable request, and he could facilitate making this happen.

Other:

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated he asked Mr. Lewan to look at uses in the IRO district. He stated he wanted to open the conversation and to discuss the permitted, not permitted, or special land uses in the IRO district. He wanted to inquire to the Planning Commission if commercial recreation could be a special land use in the IRO district; partially because that's been driven by some requests and conversation that they have had. Developers have come to the City asking about soccer domes; different than Total Soccer. There are a variety of commercial recreation uses that often go in the industrial districts. Assistant City Manager Benson mentioned Top Golf, etc.

Currently, Total Soccer is in M-1.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated special land use is not specified in IRO. The request would come before the Planning Commission. Vice Chair Tacy stated she did not have a problem with putting the Beck Road, 12 Mile, and I-96 land piece under the IRO, special land use.

Commissioner Lada inquired about the “social” club which could be an Elks Club, Moose Club, etc.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated the IRO, transportation warehouse, storage and waste hauling uses, there were nothing in those boxes. To clarify, Assistant City Manager Benson is going to double check in case they are not addressed and clarified.

Assistant City Manager Benson asked the Commission if this meets their expectations, specifically, for IRO in terms of warehousing, storage and waste handling being permitted as a special land use. Chairman Day stated yes.

Commissioner Grossi inquired about the hotels and rezoning to freeway service, FS, if pole signs had anything to do with those freeways. Assistant City Manager Benson stated pole signs are prohibited or all new ones.

**New Business:**

None

**Call to the Public:**

No public comments.

**Staff Comments:**

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated Dan’s Excavating was supposed to be on tonight’s agenda. He stated, at a minimum, there appears to be a communication issue which is very surprising. ICP is now involved with this, who is the property owner that Dan’s Excavating is leasing from. Assistant City Manager spoke with Dan’s Excavating and Flint Development. They have not made progress on coming to an agreement. There is some dispute regarding their easement that already exists covers and doesn’t cover. Assistant City Manager Benson stated he has since seen a copy of the easement agreement. He has not been told by them directly to take this forward and move this to the Planning Commission. It is his hope to help coordinate a resolution and to appear before the Planning Commission for the June 5, 2023 meeting.



**Commission Comments:**

Vice Chair Tacy stated she had a request to include information which references discussion from previous meetings such as Minutes in the packets.

Vice Chair Tacy indicated this may refer to the DDA, the little booklets that were handed out for the ribbon cutting for the Air Line Trail, if the extras make their way to hotels that operate in the Wixom area. She stated she visited Holland, Michigan and they were given a nice coupon booklet informing them of different venues in the downtown area. She spoke with someone who stayed in Wixom and they had no idea there was a downtown Wixom. They stayed at one of the hotels but nothing caused them to visit the downtown area.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated he will see if there are more of the packets or where to get more packets. They are working on building that relationship and is work in progress.

Commissioner Lada indicated Renaissance Logistics got their sign up; the banners are down. He thought the sign looked nice. Mr. Lewan indicated the first sign that came to them was a series of three boxes; the request was denied and had them come in with separate letters. There is a standard that says no box signs are permitted.

Assistant City Manager Benson reminded the Commission of the next joint meeting for Renton Redevelopment which will be held on May 31, 2023.

Tonight was Commissioner Carter's last meeting. They will be celebrating his 20-year tenure with a proclamation at City Council on the June 13<sup>th</sup>. Assistant City Manager Benson stated Commissioner Carter will be missed, and his services are greatly appreciated. Chairman Day echoed Assistant City Manager Benson's comments; it was great having Commissioner Carter on the Commission and he will be missed.

Commissioner Carter inquired if there was a replacement for him yet. Assistant City Manager Benson stated the plan is for the Mayor to name a replacement at the second meeting in June, so they will be at the first meeting July.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

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

Mona Freiburger  
Recording Secretary

