

**APPROVED**  
**MARCH 18, 2024**

**CITY OF WIXOM  
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2024**

This meeting was called to order by Chairman Day of the Planning Commission at 7:00 p.m. at which time allegiance was pledged to the American flag.

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

**ABSENT:** Excused: Ray Cousineau, Mark Helsom

**OTHERS:** Ben Carlisle; Matteo Passalaqua (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:**

Vice Chair Tacy commented on page 6 to make a correction, "Phase 2 was dark, so she was glad to see lights on". The lights had just been turned on within a couple of days of that meeting.

**MOTION** made and seconded by Commissioner Lawrence and Commissioner Lada to approve the December 4, 2023, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes, as amended.

**VOTE:**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**Correspondence:**

January 23, 2024, City Manager Update

**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. Planning Commissioner Election of Officers

Chair Day opened the floor for nomination to the position of chairperson.

Vice Chair Tacy nominated Bill Day for the position of chairperson.

**MOTION** made and seconded by Vice Chair Tacy and Commissioner Lada to approve the nomination of William Day to the position of Chairperson.

**VOTE:**

**MOTION CARRIED**

Commissioner Lawrence nominated Cheryl Tacy to the position of Vice Chairperson.

**MOTION** made and seconded by Commissioner Lawrence and Commissioner Lada to approve the nomination of Cheryl Tacy to the position of Vice Chairperson.

**VOTE:**

**MOTION CARRIED**

2. Planning Commission Annual Report

Assistant City Manager Benson commented this is an annual report for the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. This document is a general summary of everything the Planning Commission did in 2023 as well as over the last couple of years.

Commissioner Lada suggested for the future to add an asterisk (\*) to those cases which did not happen. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated, often, the projects are somewhat underway in the process. He indicated he could make a note on the current status.

**MOTION** made and seconded by Commissioner Lada and Commissioner Lawrence to approve the City of Wixom Planning Commission 2023 Annual Report and move to City Council, as written.

**VOTE:**

**MOTION CARRIED**

3. Master Planning Workshop & Discussion

**Discussion:**

City of Wixom Planning Commission 2023 Annual Report is included in the packet to the Commissioners.

Assistant City Manager Benson gave an introduction. As the memo indicated, the current Master Plan was adopted in 2020, therefore, we are coming up in 2025 and due for an update. After conversations with Chairperson Day, he suggested it would be a good idea to do a refresher and then go through what the process would look like.

Mr. Carlisle indicated the first half of the discussion was going to be more background of what a master plan is, how we implement it and what the process is to create it. The second half of the discussion is going to be focused more on your existing 2020 master plan, what issues need to be addressed and what issues meet the current City goals and policies.

A Master Plan is to create for the future. This is the City's document to express and show what we want Wixom to be in the future. It usually anticipates changes. This is necessary to anticipate those changes in the next 20 years, be proactive and address those changes.

Mr. Carlisle presented a PowerPoint review and overviewed each of the bullet points under each topic. The PowerPoint overview is included in the packet.

Mr. Carlisle commented on why does the City plan. The City, like an individual or business has limited resources that need to be used wisely. This plan identifies those resources and allocates them in a wise manner for the benefit of the City. Lastly, it is to protect the quality of life and the environment. The City plans to create a vision for the future; anticipate change; create predictability; use physical, natural, social, and fiscal resources wisely; and protect the environment and quality of life.

A Master Plan is a general statement of the City's goals and policies; synchronizes public improvements and private development; provides a clear indication of City's direction for the future; serves as an educational tool and presents a clear indication of

the City's direction for the future; serves as an aid in daily decision-making; the statutory foundation upon which zoning decisions are based.

A resident, an elected official, a builder, a developer should be able to open the City's master plan to see the vision of what is intended in the future. The Planning Commission should be using the master plan as a decision-making tool at their meetings especially when it is regarding land use decisions.

The Planning Commission has the right afforded by the State of Michigan to enact a master plan which is done through the Planning Enabling Act (P.A. 33 of 2008). There is some general direction about what a master plan intends to do. Every five years after adoption of the master plan, a City is to open it up and determine if it is still relevant to the existing policies and goals.

Master Plan Laws and Purpose is required by Zoning Enabling Act (P.A. 110 of 2006), the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. Through the master plan, you can zone properties and enact a zoning ordinance. The zoning ordinance is based on the plan designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare. The zoning ordinance must align with the plan. It is very important that the master plan aligns with the zoning ordinance.

Elements of a Master Plan. The only State requirement is a land use plan. There is a lot more into a master plan than just a land use plan. Many times, there will be an economic development section, transportation plan, both public transportation, road networks, etc., special area plans. The VCA is a special area plan. If certain parts of the City want to spend more time to focus on, you can give a more detailed plan for that area as well as an infrastructure plan where a road network is going, where utility locations are, what you need to improve with regards to that and part of that is Parks and Recreation plan. Those should align to the City's master plan.

Mr. Carlisle also indicated there are a lot of elements in a master plan, PA 33 of 2008 which include maps, plats, pictures, charts, descriptive, explanatory, and other related matter. Text, graphics, or a combination of both can be included. The master plan is what visually represents the vision of what your community is trying to achieve.

Mr. Carlisle explained the master plan is the City's policy document, it is not your law. It is the vision of what the City is trying to achieve. The zoning ordinance is the regulatory document; the laws and regulations. The regulatory document must be based on your master plan.

Master Plans are Evolving. When master plans were written 20 years ago, it was all text. It was not very interesting; it was not a good read. Primarily, it was focused on land use; it was non-community driven. Now master plans are much more evolved, a

lot of social issues, housing issues. It is more graphically interesting. It is very community driven. There is a much heavier emphasis on community engagement. Lastly, there is a heavy focus on implementation.

The Three Whats? What is important to our community? So what? Why are these issues important? Now what? What do we need to do?

Creating a successful master plan. Community driven; community input to reflect stakeholders' vision and goals; considers all aspects of a community; visually appealing and easy to read/understand; aspirational/inspirational; realistic and implementable.

Typical process to a comprehensive plan, a complete rewrite of the master plan, typically, takes about 18 months. The first year from kickoff to drafting of the plan, community engagement, survey, data analysis, a lot of check-ins with the community, check-ins with the Planning Commission, check-ins if there is a steering committee to make sure the right points are hit with the plan but, it is mostly in the drafting phase. It is recommended to update your zoning ordinance to make sure it is consistent and aligns with your master plan which takes six months to a year. If there is a comprehensive update, it is typically two-to-two-and-a-half-year process from start to finish. This is a realistic timeline. A lot of the time is due to State requirements of notification. There is a two-month public notification process. If there are only certain portions tweaked or strengthened, it can be shorter than 18 months. It is, typically, not less than a year. State requirements still have to be met whether you are doing a major update or just a minor update to the master plan.

Vice Chair Tacy inquired if a review of the master plan as it currently stands, what do you use to gauge whether it is holding up very well versus needing a complete rewrite? Mr. Carlisle commented a master plan is a 20-year plan. Within the 20 years, it is updated approximately two to three times. A community vision about whether you think the plan is valid is a decision that the Planning Commission would make; it is a decision that the City Council would make with guidance and input, but does it still uphold and if it doesn't, how big of a lift needs to be made into what is anticipated as a community vision?

Mr. Carlisle indicated there are some elements of the City's current master plan that should be addressed, whether it is comprehensive or not. It is going to be a lengthy, engaged process.

Vice Chair Tacy asked if we do a complete overhaul, how do you end up not having the community look like it started this way and then there was a dramatic shift, to not look disjointed? Mr. Carlisle indicated when a master plan is rewritten, whether it is comprehensive or updates, there must be a reality based on the plan at the time you started the rewrite. Vice Chair Tacy stated if you are doing this with a 20-year goal in

mind, you are looking ahead to the potential places that you can go to based on your community input; you should not end up with a build out that looks like it kept stopping and starting and going into different directions. There needs to be continuity between your existing plan and your future plan. Assistant City Manager Benson commented the planning enabling act says it should be reviewed every five years. The reality is that most of the communities do not look at every year, every five years. Sometimes it will be ten years. Wixom is being proactive on this, partially related to redevelopment efforts downtown.

Chair Day commented in terms of land use, at the time of the overhaul five years ago, the City already had the Assembly Park property to deal with and to consider, we already had the VCA, the dramatic residential expansion. He indicated that a rewrite would have to spend more on areas that weren't included. Assistant City Manager Benson stated yes, as an example, we might want to further address the future of the Beck and 12 Mile area or the remaining acreage parcels left or further reaching areas of the VCA where there has been more development. Updating the VCA ordinance last year went further than the master plan specifically said. It is opportunities to tighten up some of the goals; it can be about refinement as well.

Mr. Matteo Passalaqua continued with the PowerPoint presentation. He indicated the point of the evening is to provide a level of context and questions that the Planning Commission should decide in what kind of lift is needed. There will be questions throughout the slides. Those questions are more for consideration now and answered later. There is a tool to collect that information from the Commission.

Wixom Master Plan Timeline. Last major comprehensive update adopted in August, 2020. By State statute, City must review Master Plan every five years. Based on direction from the Planning Commission, City Council, staff and stakeholders, updates may be specific updates/amendments or could be comprehensive rewrite.

Wixom Master Plan Organization. Organized by topic sections: community resources, transportation, neighborhoods, business centers, community character, village center, land use. Each section is organized: goal statement; multiple objectives; implementation strategies. It is the broad goal, objectives associated with it and then specific implementation strategies for each section.

Community resources talks about City services keeping up with the demands of the community including residential, commercial, and industrial. Transportation goal is to create well designed neighborhoods that contribute to a sense of community which provide housing opportunities suited to the needs of a variety of household types and will contribute to the quality of life for current and future residents of Wixom. Business area goals are to provide for a suitable amount of business development that will offer goods and services. Increased employment opportunities, and a sustainable tax base to support the desired facilities and services in Wixom. Village Center Area goal is to

continue to provide the quality of life that Wixom residents have come to expect by offering public facilities, resources, and services that meets current and future demands. Community Character ensures that new development and other physical changes in the City protect the character of the community and emphasize Wixom's historic, cultural, natural, and other positive elements as it is application to the site and surrounding area. Land use goal is to provide a diverse mixture of land uses in the City that supports a sustainable balance between residential and business development and serves the needs of residents, workers, and visitors.

Goals. Are the 2020 goals still relevant? Do they need tweaks or comprehensive reconsideration?

Future Land Use Plan. Multifamily: 9-12 units per acre; suburban residential: 15,000 square feet; medium residential: 12,500 square feet; dense residential: 7,200 square feet; mobile home residential: as required by state law; VCA: Traditional Downtown Commercial and Residential development; Neighborhood Business: small scale commercial development with residential character; General Business: Large scale shopping centers; Freeway Service: uses suited to serve freeway traffic; IRO: Campus style industrial and office parks; Light Industrial: warehousing; manufacturing and assembly; Special Mixed Use: retail, research and development and technology-based development. Special area plans for acreage around I-96 freeway; Public: city owned land and facilities; Parks: city parks and private golf courses. Is the future land use map reflective of current City goals and objectives? Does the zoning ordinance implement the vision of the City?

Assistant City Manager Benson added it is a great opportunity when you are looking at your future land use plan of imagining not what is there, currently. There may be sections of town or specific properties in some cases where you can recognize it is an older development, maybe it is not doing well. Future land use is the opportunity to set that overarching policy statement and you may not implement or may. Not have a request or proactive rezoning of that property for ten years, but when you set the stage upfront, it creates the circumstances to do that. On the flip side, it can be one of the very preliminary steps of facilitating redevelopment in situations where it is less of an issue in Wixom but as Wixom becomes older, it will become more of something that we will have to think about, are there sites or areas that aren't working in the context that they used to and need to be reimaged?

Implementation: Organized into: immediate (1 year), short (2 years), mid-term (5 years), long (10 years plus). Very development focused; not very detailed/strategic.

Mr. Passalaqua indicated what's interesting about Wixom's current master plan's implementation is that it is very development focused specifically with the VCA. It doesn't have a lot of detail or strategy. It should be understood what are you charged with in year one and two, three, four and five, etc. Wixom's master plan has the bones.

Mr. Passalaqua indicated the skeleton needs to be built into a section and then all that information should really be concentrated into the implementation section as opposed to throughout the document.

Mr. Passalaqua commented there are overall observations of the master plan in its current state and some considerations that they think are worthy for deciding what kind of a scope we have in front of us. Some of the topics they feel were not addressed or under addressed was housing. With the large developable residential sites in the community trickling away, the next five to ten years are going to be important with housing. Housing is a hot topic, nationally, and it is worth revisiting in this section, and, potentially, strengthening it up with the types of residential goals or housing goals that the community is going to have. Natural resources/open space/sustainably is a highlight which Wixom has. It doesn't speak to the importance of preservation or requiring these types of elements in development within the community. Infrastructure may be an important spot to strengthen as it relates to referring to it in the master plan. It may benefit from its own section or a sizeable prop-up within one of these sections within the master plan. It is a critical role of the community's future planning. Economic development: There is an emphasis on economic development across the plan. There isn't one spot on the plan that outlines what the economic development strategy is or the resources available. What are the expectations of the community? It might be worth having something in the master plan to refer to.

Assistant City Manager Benson commented the economic development strategy has been updated but that is not reflected in the master plan, or the new Parks and Recreation master plan adopted in December, 2023. There is an opportunity to reconcile and make sure that these documents are working in tandem.

More graphics and visually appealing. These displays catch the reader's eye and lights a curiosity, it gets them to engage the document a little bit more. Implementation should be a heavier focus. Future Land Use Plan should be reviewed to ensure consistency with City vision and policy. Update demographics based on 2020 census; significant population increase between 2010 and 2020. Update plans/considerations based on changes in consumer behavior (pandemic, remote work declines of traditional commercial strip centers, etc.). Special Area Plan(s). Industrial revitalization, I-96/Wixom Road, other areas?

Mr. Passalaqua commented there is some homework to be done; questions for consideration tonight and to be answered later. There is a survey that will be distributed in the coming days to the Commission.

Mr. Carlisle indicated they are not looking for any decisions tonight, just some direction, and some thoughts that you may have. We will send a survey that will focus on this discussion and bring back for future discussion with this Commission.



Chair Day indicated what we envision for this City is evidenced in what has been done with the VCA and the design guidelines for the VCA. He stated he would like a master plan to suggest that Pontiac Trail be traffic calm through the City in the hope that we will get retail/restaurant development on both sides of Pontiac Trail and have a street that can be crossed at regular intervals such as you would find in Milford or Northville, where you don't have traffic rushing through. He also indicated as the City offices age, and needs updating, he would like to see any updates follow the VCA design guidelines to make it more cohesive.

Commissioner Lawrence indicated community engagement is referenced a couple of times, and community review, he asked how we secure any community input beyond the dozen or two people/residents that are involved in Commissions, Boards and Council. Mr. Carlisle indicated they have a community engagement plan which outlines how to get additional input in the community that you don't traditionally get. Every community is different. They will be creative; do a combination of traditional which is meetings and workshops, combination of technology, surveys and other websites, other ways of input. Commissioner Lawrence commented the way to engage people in their condo complex and other surrounding complexes, is to visit during the HOA meetings and to present a plan or handing out flyers.

Vice Chair Tacy inquired when the branding campaign is rolled out, would that be a time to create buzz? Assistant City Manager Benson stated yes; from a timing perspective, we will have to see how those two things reconcile. Working through the branding process, there will be a moment when we will get more residents' attention than we might otherwise, so that's a great note.

Mr. Carlisle indicated he would send a survey out with all of the questions. He asked if it would be helpful if they also sent examples of other master plans of like communities. Chair Day indicated yes; more information is always helpful.

### **Call to the Public:**

No public comments.

### **Staff Comments:**

Assistant City Manager Benson commented it was good to see everyone; a few meetings had been cancelled. Thus far, the number of site plans submitted has slowed down. We are still getting a lot of preliminary talks regarding projects. A couple of projects, potentially, of decent size will be coming but it will be sporadic. Otherwise, it gives the Commission an opportunity to look at ordinances or look at the master plan.

Assistant City Manager Benson gave a quick update on the Renton redevelopment. Proposals are due for the first round on February 12<sup>th</sup>. Likely, there will not be a proposal for a development partner at this point. It is not surprising. It will mean that we will need to look at the process in terms of a slightly different format, more open ended, or other marketing opportunities to consider using a broker. There has been a lot of news lately about commercial real estate struggling nationwide in terms of loans. They are looking at all those factors.

Vice Chair Tacy inquired about the CVS or Rite Aid buildings, if there has been any traction, movement, ideas? Assistant City Manager Benson said yes, there has been ideas. He did not want to dive too far until there is a formal submittal; the redevelopment opportunities are interesting. There haven't been any pharmacies that have been interested in refilling those former pharmacy locations. Assistant City Manager Benson stated traditional strip centers are struggling; they lack visibility, and often poorly maintained. He did not anticipate the struggles with strip retail centers going away or changing.

### **Commission Comments:**

Chair Day indicated he thought there is a sign problem in the VCA. The Wixom Dental sign is so bright; it is garish. The other sign is the 11 11 Burgers and Chicken. Chair Day stated this is a box sign. Box signs are not allowed in the VCA. When Kumon came in and they wanted to install a sign with their traditional O with the child's face in it, the Commission said no because it was a box sign. Yet, there is this huge box sign on this building. Also, Trail's Edge coffee has gone a long time without a proper sign. Assistant City Manager Benson stated in both cases, the Wixom Dental sign and the 11 11 sign did receive permits. Chair Day stated this is very upsetting. Vice Chair Tacy stated the Commission had spent a lot of time working on what they would and not allow for signage. Assistant City Manager Benson commented he would investigate the specifics.

Chair Day indicated the code enforcement person was new and allowed a sign with Raceway and it shouldn't have been allowed. That business is gone. Assistant City Manager Benson stated he would provide follow up on the circumstances behind those particular signs. Chair Day indicated we need to enforce the ordinances, not adjust the ordinances.

There was a discussion in reference to traditional retail strip centers struggling. Assistant City Manager Benson indicated there is not a heavy desire to build retail right now. There are circumstances in reference to the east retail that he could not speak to right now. In the annual report, there are some notes on the conversations with the owner of east retail. Chair Day commented Milford or Brighton's downtown blocks are, essentially, strip centers. They serve as the same function as a strip center, but they are out in front where they get some attention.

Commissioner Lada commented he will not be at the next Planning Commission meeting to be held on Wednesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

This meeting of the Planning Commission was motioned and adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Mona Freiburger  
Recording Secretary