

Heather Hanover
Chair

To Be Determined
Vice-Chair

Commissioners

Scott Dzurka, *Mayor*
Vacant, *City Commissioner*
James Eshelman
Eric Harger
Mark Holden
Brian Mills
Melvin Renfrow
Wendy Ward

Chad Gamble
City Manager



CITY OF ST. JOHNS
PLANNING COMMISSION

JULY 12, 2023
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the St. Johns Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Hanover at 5:31 p.m.

Members Present: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Staff Present: Chad Gamble, Kristina Kinde, Chris Khorey, Justin Smith

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Dzurka asked to add an item under new business for conversation regarding overnight parking as item I.

A motion was made by Commissioner Eshelman and supported by Commissioner Mills to approve the agenda as amended.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mayor Dzurka and seconded by Commissioner Mills to approve the minutes as presented.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

4. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS

No public comments

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

A. 500 N. Lansing Contractor's Storage Building Special Use

A motion was made by Mayor Dzurka and supported by Commissioner Eshelman to open the public hearing.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

Chris Khorey from McKenna explained that the site at 500 N. Lansing is currently zoned mixed use. Storage for a contractor is not specifically listed as a permitted use, but is similar to other similar uses. Therefore, the applicant has requested a Special Use Approval.

A motion was made by Mayor Dzurka and supported by Commissioner Eshelman to close the public hearing.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

B. FC Mason Conditional Rezoning

A motion was made by Commissioner Eshelman and supported by Commissioner Mills to open the public hearing.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

Chris Khorey from McKenna explained that a conditional rezoning application for the rezoning of the block bounded by Spring, Higham, Oakland, and Railroad Streets from R-3 High Density Residential to CBD Central Business District with Conditions.

Ken Harris owner of FC Mason discussed the history of the property when the first housing unit was built on this property.

A motion was made by Commissioner Eshelman and supported by Mayor Dzurka to close the public hearing.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

C. FC Mason Building Height Special Use

A motion was made by Mayor Dzurka and supported by Commissioner Eshelman to open the public hearing.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

Chris Khorey from McKenna explained that this parcel is currently zoned R-3 and is in the process of being rezoned to Central Business District (CBD). The CBD has a maximum height restriction of 35 feet on all buildings. The proposed construction of the 26-unit apartment building will exceed the 35-foot height limit in the CBD by 2 feet, for a total building height of 37 feet. The applicant is seeking Special Land Use approval to construct a building that exceeds the height restrictions for the St. Johns Central Business District.

A motion was made by Commissioner Mills and supported by Commissioner Eshelman to close the public hearing.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

D. Psychological Patients Zoning Amendment

A motion was made by Mayor Dzurka and supported by Commissioner Eshelman to open the public hearing.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

Chris Khorey from McKenna explained the purpose of this amendment is to remove the cap on psychological patients in medical facilities.

A motion was made by Commissioner Eshelman and supported by Commissioner Holden to close the public hearing.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

E. Chickens Zoning Amendment

A motion was made by Mayor Dzurka and supported by Commissioner Eshelman to open the public hearing.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

Chris Khorey from McKenna explained the purpose of the amendment would allow for the keeping of chickens on properties in the City and defining of other animals in the City.

A motion was made by Mayor Dzurka and supported by Commissioner Holden to close the public hearing.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. 500 N. Lansing Contractor's Storage Building Special Use

Chris Khorey explained the request for a Special Use Permit and that because the site is zoned MU Mixed Use District it does not specifically list this as a permitted use but is similar to another allowable Special Uses. Discussion regarding the backyard gravel area that appears to be storage but is a turnaround area and the lots associated with this business for clarification.

Motion made by Commissioner Eshelman and seconded by Mayor Dzurka to recommend approval to the City Commission, conditioned on Site Plan Approval.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

B. 500 N. Lansing Contractor's Storage Building Site Plan

Chris Khorey explained the request for a Site Plan Approval at 500 N. Lansing Avenue. The applicant proposes to construct a new storage building for Youngstrom Construction on the currently-vacant site. He explained the gravel area behind the building as a turnaround area, parking requirements, landscaping, lighting, and building design include windows. He also discussed concerns such as no dumpster enclosure location or design has been proposed, transformer located currently in the front of the building. His recommendation would be to have the transformer in back or side yard.

Commissioners discussed the location of the dumpster, the gravel turnaround area, the solid plan design for the downtown, sidewalks, the drainage related to the gravel turnaround area, and not allowing parking on gravel.

Motion made by Mayor Dzurka and seconded by Commissioner Holden to approve the Site Plan with a condition that a revised site plan must be submitted when the transformation is finalized and transformer must be located in a side or rear yard, the location of the dumpster and type of dumpster enclosure, and that the gravel turn around comply with City ordinances and that it is used for turn around purposes only and not parking or storage.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

C. FC Mason Conditional Rezoning

Chris Khorey explained that this is a rezoning application for the rezoning of the block from R-3 Density Residential to CBD Central Business District. The current zoning does not allow for the additional 26 units. The conditional rezoning would require additional parking spaces and the application would be 1 parking space per unit. There are currently 40 units plus the additional 26, for a total of 66 units and there are currently 66 private parking spaces.

Commissioners discussed the space in the parking lots and the requirements of the current tenants regarding 1 or 2 vehicles.

Ken Harris explained there is not a requirement but that once the new city parking plan is in place, he believes there will be residents in the apartments that will move to on street parking as it is closer to their units.

Commissioners discussed the drawing provided and parking on Oakland that was on an original drawing. It was explained that is not a part of this conditional rezoning application. Further discussion regarding the rezoning and whether it is just related to this project, the combining of parcels and the affect of the OPRA on those parcels, the potential for an easement by the parcel containing the parking lot for use by this new apartment complex

A motion was made by Mayor Dzurka and seconded by Commissioner Eshelman to recommend approval of the Conditional Rezoning to the City Commission with the addition of an easement for use of the parking lot.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

D. FC Mason Building Height Special Land Use

Chris Khorey discussed this is a request for a Special Use Permit that if approved to be rezoned to CBD has a maximum height restriction of 35 feet on all buildings. The proposed construction for the 26-unit apartment building will exceed the 35-foot height limit in the CBD by 2 feet, for a total building height of 37 feet.

A motion was made by Commission Renfrow and seconded by Commissioner Eshelman to recommend approval to the City Commission for up to 37 feet, conditioned on Site Plan Approval.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

E. FC Mason Site Plan Approval

Chris Khorey discussed the site plan is for Phase 3 of the redevelopment of the old FC Mason industrial facility. This would contain 26 units – 11 two bedrooms and 15 one-bedroom apartments. If the conditional rezoning is approved, the proposed 26 units will be a permitted use by right.

Discussion regarding the dumpster that will be utilized by this apartment, landscaping, signage, lighting, angled parking, additional parking space needs, and current parking on Oakland Street.

A motion was made by Mayor Dzurka and seconded by Commissioner Eshelman to approve the site plan conditioned on the approval of the Conditional Rezoning Agreement, the approval of the Special Use for the height of the building, address set back requirements during lot combinations and an easement granted to use 26 spaces in the currently parking lot.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman
Nay: None

Motion carried

F. Psychological Patients Zoning Amendment

Chair Hanover explained this is an amendment to distinguish the difference between a psychological patient and an incarcerated patient.

A motion was made by Mayor Dzurka and seconded by Commissioner Eshelman to approve a resolution to recommend adoption of an ordinance to eliminate the limit on psychological patients in medical facilities.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman
Nay: None

Motion carried

G. Chickens Zoning Amendment

Chris Khorey explained this a new section in the zoning ordinance, an ordinance to regulate the keeping of animals. This would define four different types of animals. The ordinance would show the keeping of domesticated animals as pets, livestock, and exotic or wild animals. Discussed the expansion of the livestock section which includes the keeping of livestock with fur, chickens and bees. Chris explained the zoning regulations for chickens include which districts would be allowable, the number of allowable chickens and the coop requirements.

Commissioners discussed how this would affect kennels, the setback requirements for the coop, how this correlates with an HOA, how this affects the Michigan Right to Farm Act, the permit system for the zoning permit for chickens, the pets section and how it states pets not just dogs. Discussion regarding changing the wording of the pets section to dogs and the correlation to the current zoning restriction that is only for dogs. Request made to determine what licensing is required with the county for dogs and cats. Continued discussion regarding the number of pets and how we compare to other similar size communities. Discussion regarding removing the pets section for the approval of this ordinance.

Motion made by Mayor Dzurka and seconded by Commissioner Eshelman to approve a resolution to recommend adoption of an ordinance to regulate the keeping of animals to City Commission contingent on revised language to exclude the Pets section of the ordinance.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried

H. Election of Vice Chair

Chair Hanover explained our Vice Chair is no longer on the Planning Commission and asked for any nominations for this position. Commissioner Renfrow was asked if he was interested and declined at this time. Commissioner Holden stated he did his time as a chair and will let others decide. Commissioner Renfrow recommended bringing this back to the next meeting and he would be willing to think about the Vice Chair position until this time.

I. Overnight Parking

Mayor Dzurka explained that he wanted to bring up that that City has been making changes to the parking lots and that a plan has been approved. He mentioned there may be some issues with the hotel. There are currently two lots behind the hotel and one is for daytime only and one has allowable overnight parking. We are currently having issues with parking spots available for the overnight guests and they are having to walk multiple blocks.

Ken Harris discussed his concerned that some of the changes made to the parking plan will affect his guests and that capacity is the problem.

Discussion regarding the lot behind Kurt's appliances and the changes to those lots. Discussed how to utilize current infrastructure to create more spaces. Ken Harris requested an engineering overview of how many overnights parking spots were removed from parking lots and how many on street parking spaces were gained.

Mayor Dzurka mentioned that when this was voted at the City Commission level, a lot of assumptions are being made of where people are going to park. There is some revamping of certain lots so we need to monitor as the new plan moves forward.

Further discussion by Commissioners and Ken Harris regarding past discussions at the Planning Commission level and the DDA related to downtown parking and how the plan was eventually passed and the one-way streets.

Discussed how having a parking problem is a good thing and that shows growth in the downtown. Further discussion regarding the continued monitoring of the new parking plan to ensure we have the appropriate parking for all businesses in the downtown.

7. OLD BUSINESS – NONE

8. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Eshelman said he is honored to be on the Commission and to serve.

No further comments.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mayor Dzurka and supported by Commissioner Mills to adjourn the meeting at 6:26 pm.

Yes: Hanover, Dzurka, Harger, Holden, Mills, Renfrow, Eshelman

Nay: None

Motion carried