

Heather Hanover
Chair

James Eshelman
Vice-Chair

Commissioners

Scott Dzurka, *Mayor*
Eric Hufnagel, *Commissioner*
Mark Holden
Melvin Renfrow
Eric Harger
Brian Mills
Vacant



PLANNING COMMISSION

DECEMBER 4, 2024
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the St. Johns Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Hanover at 5:30 p.m.

Members Present: Heather Hanover, Mark Holden, Brian Mills, James Eshelman, Scott Dzurka, Eric Hufnagel, Eric Harger
Members Absent: Melvin Renfrow
Staff Present: Chad Gamble, City Manager; Mindy Seavey, City Clerk; Chris Khorey, McKenna

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Holden seconded by Commissioner Mills to approve the agenda as presented.
YEA: Hanover, Holden, Mills, Eshelman, Dzurka, Hufnagel, Harger
NAY: None
Motion carried.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NOVEMBER 13, 2024 MEETING

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Holden to approve the minutes as presented.
YEA: Hanover, Holden, Mills, Eshelman, Dzurka, Hufnagel, Harger
NAY: None
Motion carried.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Chairperson Hanover asked if there were any public comments.

There were none.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A.450 E. Townsend – Rezoning from R-1 to R-2

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Dzurka to open the public hearing.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Mills, Eshelman, Dzurka, Hufnagel, Harger

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was opened at 5:32 p.m.

Chris Khorey, McKenna, discussed the rezoning initiated by the city commission since it is city-owned property. He said the goal of the city commission was to get this property developed using the 4 priorities listed in the letter that went out to property owners. He read the letter. He discussed the reason from R-1 to R-2, because R-1 is single-family homes only and the R-2 district is not multi-family category (but allows up to 4 units on the lot). It does not allow more than 4 units on a lot; it would have to be sub-divided. He discussed their analysis. R-2 zoning would be approximately 28-32 housing units. He said it would be appropriate to take public comment now. The planning commission does have written public comments in front of you.

Chairperson Hanover asked if there were any public comments.

Farris Cord, 407 E. Townsend, was present. He discussed: concerns about townhomes and people buying them to use as rentals; suggested encumbering the deed so it has to be owner-occupied; concerned with living in a home next to rentals; moving the street; paving the street is a plus; needs traffic control on Townsend and Swegles Streets, people are going a lot faster than 35 m.p.h.

Emily Edom, was present and said she also submitted a letter. She discussed: concern with volume of traffic and volume of people; is agreeable to 22 single-family homes; the traffic in the morning and throughout day is crazy, and there are a lot of pedestrians in that area; if the street is on the other side, it would just add to the traffic issue; hospital and school activity; and she would like to leave zoning the way it is.

Sherry Martens, corner of Swegles and Townsend, was present and submitted a letter earlier in day. She discussed: is agreeable to development of single-family homes, doesn't want apartments or townhomes; did look at the future planning and everything down to there is zoned as R-1; it is going to create a little pocket of R-2, congested housing; not opposed to development, but would like to see single family homes; concerned about traffic and the hospital changed traffic, soccer field; safety concern when you increase traffic there; and would like to see a 4-way stop or something implemented there.

Sue Pung, Swegles Street, was present. She discussed: has a lot of concerns; preference to develop it into greenspace; never thought it would be developed; traffic, noise, and build-up there; the town has expanded exponentially; how many more families can we take in; first ask, is community activity space; and if R-1, try to avoid routing people past our houses there.

Chairperson Hanover said she is a proponent of lining up the streets. She said she is not for re-zoning. We have very affordable houses and have approved a lot of duplexes recently (Searles area and south of baseball field). We need R-1.

Motion by Commissioner Harger seconded by Commissioner Dzurka to close the public hearing.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Mills, Eshelman, Dzurka, Hufnagel, Harger

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was closed at 5:47 p.m.

The planning commission discussed:

- Housing stock
- Economic climate

- What is the average income in our community and what is affordable?
- What shortages we have in housing stock.
- With R-2, we can do a bit of both in that area.
- The developers know the market needs.
- Duplexes aren't what they used to be.
- When the street is aligned, there will be some odd-shaped parcels, and we have to figure out what is best in that space.

Chris Khorey, McKenna, said they have a housing analysis as an agenda item and could discuss that before you deliberate.

City Manager Gamble discussed: this is a little bit different than the normal rezoning; the City is trying to understand what types of development would the city be able to encourage or get from respondents from a RFP; whatever the zoning is, it would be a request for proposals and we would ask for their designs of this particular area; the discussion at the commission level was it would give a little bit more flexibility and R-2 would allow a little bit more density.

Mr. Khorey said R-1 vs. R-2, both have the exact same setbacks and building heights; not talking about bringing things closer to the lot line; because it is city-owned property, we have the ability to control things more so than zoning; housing plan today vs. 5-years ago; we have a housing needs methodology we can run; the intent is to end up as a chapter of the master plan. He said there is a need for new housing, but we don't need to panic. This is a relatively affordable community, but the problem is that no one is actually selling their homes because there isn't a place to upgrade.

7. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Master Plan Update – Presentation of Housing and Build-Out Analysis

Mr. Khorey discussed:

- Housing Analysis Introduction
 - St. Johns/Bingham Township.
 - Compared to the Dewitt area.
 - Looked at the county as a whole.
- Population Trend
 - Everyone is up since 2010.
 - Age Breakdown.
- Net Migration Rate
- Population Projection
- Overall Supply-Demand Analysis
 - Homeownership and headship rates.
 - Estimated Housing Demand.
 - 73.% ownership; 26.3% renters.
 - Dewitt & County.
- Project Housing Demand
 - +359 home ownership by 2040.
 - +121 rental units.
 - Comparison to Dewitt. Dewitt has a bigger undersupply right now.

Commissioner Hufnagel asked about a review of the age of the current housing stock.

Mr. Khorey said they definitely can look at that.

Mayor Dzurka said in looking at data from the Tri-County Planning Commission, more than 1,000 of our units were built before 1940, and ¼'s built before 1970.

Mr. Khorey discussed:

- Housing Supply, 2022.
- Supply-Demand Gap.
- Table 14.
- Affordable Price Points
 - Interest rates.
 - Maximum monthly payments.
 - Affordability gap
- Senior Housing
- Starter Homes
- Buildout Analysis
- Clinton County Joint Planning Area Analysis

There was a discussion of:

- Jobs coming to this area: Midwest Cheese, Prevail Solar, etc.
- In the city, we don't have a lot of areas that could support larger homes.
- This property would not have large enough lots for upper end housing.
- Cost of infrastructure and how many units you can spread that cost onto to make it affordable.
- What the market is like and making it palatable to a development we would be okay with.
- Developers are not lining up to build \$500,000 houses here.
- This site doesn't need as much infrastructure as other sites.
- Whether R-1 or R-2, there is still going to be a lot of traffic on that corner, and we need to figure out how to relieve pressure on Townsend Road.
- Relocation and re-alignment of road; possible joint venture between the City and Bingham Township.
- Density
 - Site condominium and plat lot are required to have same dimensions.
 - Density does not change.
 - Harger said was getting at density piece. Does density change?
 - The city could put a restriction on that.
- How far south on County Farm Road is within the city limits.
 - City has not allocated resources for County Farm to be paved in the current millage. There is not a lot of housing there right now.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

A.450 E. Townsend – Rezoning from R-1 to R-2 – Recommendation to City Commission

The Planning Commission deliberated on the rezoning:

- The discussion focused on the city's future land use map, zoning changes from R1 to R2, and the implications for city character and housing density. There was debate over maintaining R1 zoning or allowing R2 to accommodate duplexes and single-family homes.
- Speakers expressed appreciation for public comments and letters received, highlighting their impact on decision-making. Concerns were raised about changes to the master plan and the importance of respecting property rights.
- There was a discussion on traffic safety issues in the area, with suggestions for a traffic study and potential solutions like roundabouts or four-way stops to reduce accidents.
- The conversation covered the need for diverse housing options, including high-end homes and affordable housing, to attract young people and support community growth.

Motion by Commissioner Eshelman seconded by Commissioner Mills that the Planning Commission recommend rezoning the property to R-2.

YEA: Mills, Eshelman, Dzurka, Hufnagel, Harger

NAY: Hanover, Holden
Motion carried.

8. COMMITTEE SITE PLAN APPROVALS - NONE:

9. CITY COMMISSION UPDATE – MAYOR DZURKA:

Mayor Dzurka said the City Commission is continuing conversations with the township (Bingham) on a joint water/sewer partnership; they did take up at the last commission meeting the noise ordinance and there were a couple of pieces in there in the timing that we had to go back and clean up and there was a question in terms of agricultural use. It will be coming back to the City Commission.

Mr. Khorey said they are targeting the January 27th meeting.

There was a discussion about golf carts and rental ordinance changes.

Commissioner Hufnagel asked if we need to have guidance in respect to the RFP.

City Manager Gamble said with both Commissioner Hufnagel and Mayor Dzurka here, we can discuss it at the city commission level.

Chairperson Hanover said it could be part of our packet (if the commission passed it or didn't pass).

Commissioner Mills asked if social district is a go?

Chairperson Hanover said it has been approved, but they have to have each individual establishment approved.

10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Eshelman said in reviewing walkability of Dewitt and a few other locations, a lot of them have on trails (like where it crosses M-21), something you punch, and it flashes yellow. He said it would really improve the walkability and safety of walkers and bike riders.

Chairperson Hanover said anything we do on M-21, since it is a state road, needs their approval.

Mr. Khorey said we have to get MDOT involved, which is doable. The planning commission's role is to identify it in the master plan.

Commissioner Harger said we heard a lot about walkability tonight (Townsend Road and Lansing Street).

Mayor Dzurka said the M-21 project has been pushed out to 2029 now.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Eshelman seconded by Commissioner Mills that the Planning Commission adjourn the meeting.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Mills, Eshelman, Dzurka, Hufnagel, Harger

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.