CITY OF LUDINGTON
PLANNING COMMSION
MINUTES 02/05/08

A meeting of the Ludington Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, February 5, 2008. The meeting was held at the Ludington Municipal Building, 400 S. Harrison St., Ludington, MI and was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Clay Olmstead, Chairperson.

ROLL CALL: The roll call showed the following results:
Present: Chris Pontz, Clay Olmstead, Chris Gamble, Mike Nekola, Joe Moloney and Tom Coleman

Absent: Gary Schnitker, excused, Robert Garrett, excused and Kaye Holman, absent

Also Present: Recording Secretary, Carol Ann Foote and City Manager, John Shay

AGENDA APPROVAL:
Chairman Coleman announced that NorthShore Villas asked to be taken off the February agenda.
Commissioner Olmstead made a motion to approve the agenda, with changes, seconded by Commissioner Moloney. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:
Renee Humrich, Carriage House Real Estate, stated that the real estate community and the community as a whole, has taken hold of the NorthShore Villas project and they hope that it can be resolved and go forward in some capacity.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:
Commissioner Olmstead made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2008 meeting, seconded by Commissioner Moloney. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:
None

NEW BUSINESS:
North Shore Villas:
Chairman Coleman told the Commissioners that NorthShore Villas had been on the agenda asking for an extension of their Special Land Use for a Planned Development. He stated that they had communications with the City office earlier in the day withdrawing their request and asked to be removed from the agenda. It was Chairman Coleman's understanding that with the denial by the DEQ for the marina, they were going to take another at how the at how they were going to lay out the project. Rather than extend the Special Land Use now, knowing that they would have to come back anyway, they would let it expire and come back when they have new plans.

City Manager, John Shay, addressed the Commission. He stated that NorthShore Villas had received a denial from the DEQ for the marina permit. Both the DEQ and Corps of Engineers felt like there would need to be significant changes made, before they would get their approval. The second consideration is the economy itself. The way it is right now, the developers are not sure if the buyers that they are targeting would make that kind of investment. They did indicate that when they do start any type of construction, they want to do it in the spring. They have about a one year construction time-table and would like the condos to be available in the spring time. Basically, because of the economy and the denial of the marina permit application, they will re-evaluate the design of the project. If they come back with a significant change in their site plan that has already been approved, it would mean going through the whole planned development process anyway.

Appoint Sub-committees:
Chairman Coleman appointed the following sub-committees:
Text: Holman, Schnitker, Coleman
Zoning: Olmstead, Garrett, Pontz
Special Land Use: Nekola, Moloney, Gamble

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:
Comprehensive Plan:
Chairman Coleman stated that the Comprehensive Plan is a guiding document for both the Planning Commission and City Council. He said that the Comprehensive Plan was finished in June, 2004 and normally runs in five year increments. They would be looking at making changes next year. He said that they had done very well with some of the action plans.

Franchise Business Arrangement: Limited action and is a DDA and City responsibility. Need to review current status. PC involvement minimal but should encourage action.

Chairman Coleman said that this would be seasonal and would fluctuate. This would be things like kite rental or kayak rentals. He said that he did know about one, "Dave's Dogs" that was operational. Commissioner Nekola said that when this issue first came up, the Stearns Park covenants came into question. He asked if that had been explored. City Manager, John Shay, stated that Stearns Park did have deed restrictions with respect to commercial activity. He said that there could be commercial activity related to the beach itself. If someone came along and wanted to sell sunscreen, towels or hats, it would probably be ok. The deed would certainly restrict fourteen vendors lined up along the beach turning it more into a commercial endeavor. The City is allowed to sell food at the concession stand. No one else can sell food there, except during Gus Macker. Chairman Coleman said that Scottville has a farmer's market in the fall and that there might be a place for something like that in Ludington. He said that they would be appointing an adhoc committee to take a look at this. Commissioner Nekola stated that there had been talk about a year ago regarding blocking off James St. at the clock tower. Chairman Coleman said that discussions had started again. Commissioner Pontz stated that the DDA looked at that possibility at last months meeting. They proposed to use potted evergreens to close off the area, just to see how it goes and how people liked it. Chairman Coleman said that the package could start there and broaden out into something real special.

West End of Ludington Ave.: Plans prepared and outgoing. Looking for money. Responsibility now with City. PC involvement is to continue to monitor. *

Chairman Coleman said that there had been a slight adjustment to the location of the walkway. That was because of issues with the DEQ, but it was a simple move and now there is a nice view. Other than that, it has been approved by the City Council. Now they are looking for money. The Planning Commission will continue to monitor the progress.

Waterfront Overlay: Public pedestrian and non motorized access is provided and general standards being used. PC involvement is to continue to monitor and act as opportunity presents itself.

Chairman Coleman said that this had to do with walkways along the waterfront, and it was pretty much on the way. If you start at the City limits, there are wide shoulders on Lakeshore Dr. going into Stearns Park around Waterfront Park to the car ferry. He stated that there were not many cities in the state that could say they had public access to the waterfront for that long of distance. NorthShore Villas has proposed a walk for the public. Things have progressed very nicely. The Planning Commission should monitor the progress.

Encourage Park Use (and improvements): Park Advisory Board authorized by City but positions not filled as volunteers have not stepped forward. PC involvement is to continue to monitor and help find some volunteers. *

Commissioner Moloney said that he thinks that the Park Advisory Board may be all set with volunteers.

Tree Program: No action. PC responsibility to help get something started.

Chairman Coleman said that he would like to add maintenance to that item. A city with a long-term plan has a plan for removal of trees and a plan for replacement. The thing that they may be missing is the ability to take care of the little ones that have been put in. There is a Tree City Program that works with the National Arbor Society. They have recognized cities that have encouraged putting the right kind of trees in the right place. There are some policies that the Planning Commission could put together to help the City with there efforts in improving their ongoing tree program. Commissioner Gamble asked if the City had investigated the possibility of becoming a tree city. Chairman Coleman said that he had looked into it and the still have a ways to go before they do that. There are policies that have to be put in place and there are monetary considerations. It is not a one shot deal.

Neighborhoods----Ongoing efforts. Different direction to start. Joe and Mike continuing to see what can be done. Difficulties encountered and progress slow. PC involvement continues.

Chairman Coleman said that this was different than what was in the book because it needed to be dealt with differently. Commissioners Nekola and Moloney have been working diligently on this as progress could be made over the last four years. We are continuing to work on this as we see what can be done. Commissioner Moloney said that there were problems that were beset by things beyond their control. There have been some nice things done, such as more residential use downtown. We have met with

Heather Loney and are working with her on some goals that we have identified. He stated that Ms. Loney was working on a city-wide census that would identify the median income level. If that is within a certain level, the City may be eligible for additional money for neighborhood projects.

Park Plan--- Needs to progress. See above. City responsibility. PC involvement is to continue to monitor. *

Chairman Coleman stated that this refers back to the Park Advisory Board. When one gets into place, the other starts to happen.

Non-motorized Network----Bits and pieces in place. Needs to have the pieces connected. PC involvement is to help out as possible.

Chairman Coleman stated that this is one that they had worked on, but did not know that they had. The walkways and wide shoulders are non-motorized. We have not gone in and connected all the pieces. We need to put together a system for non-motorized walkways. We need to take a hard look at it this year. We need to do some small things like putting in bike racks, as Commissioner Moloney suggested. Commissioner Moloney stated that when he is out walking at night, there are more and more people walking. Quite often, you can not see them at night. He said that he had an idea of a "Be Seen, Be Safe" concept for Ludington. Maybe have reflective vest for people that wanted to get out and walk to encourage pedestrian safety. Chairman Coleman said that people should be encouraged to use more of the non-motorized walks to get them off of the major streets.

Brownfields: Ongoing successful program*

Chairman Coleman said that the City and Mason County were working together on this. He said that when a brownfield is involved in a project, it seems to go very well, thanks to Mr. Shay and the County.

Access Management US -10: Ordinance developed by local agencies and MDOT. County has approved. City needs to formalize. PC involvement is to get final recommended language in place for City approval.

Chairman Coleman said that the County had passed a resolution for Access Management but does not know what the townships are doing. The City has a meeting to work on getting it into our Ordinance.

CBD Design Standards----No progress. City responsibility (DDA and Heather?). PC involvement is to help out as possible.

Chairman Coleman said that the Planning Commission had not done anything on this. It is more of a City responsibility. He said that Heather Loney had been working on some improvements for the downtown area. Commissioner Pontz reported that the DDA had discussed color coded signage. They are trying to come up with a plan that MDOT would agree with. The main focus is on the corner of James St. and Ludington Ave. in order to incorporate James St. more than it is now. City Manager, John Shay, said that Commissioner Pontz's committee was actually looking at standards for sign design in the downtown area. Heather Loney has applied for grants to improve downtown facades. We do not have a formal design standard, but we work with the property owners and an architect to come up with a rendering of what the façade would look like. Then everyone would have to sign off on it. The City would not use the grant money to put up an awful looking façade. We are also looking at some rental rehab units which are more of an interior renovation. Chairman Coleman said that the City of Scottville was holding a design workshop. He asked Carol Foote to check with Scottville about sending a representative to the workshop.

Sign Program---Limited progress, some in place. Could use improvement. PC involvement is to review current ordinance and suggest other action.

Chairman Coleman said that the Planning Commission needs to look at the sign ordinance. There may not be any changes to be made, but they need to look at it.

Coast Guard Station----Ongoing and progressing. Waiting for environmental studies. PC involvement is to continue to monitor. *

Chairman Coleman said that they were waiting on environmental studies. The Coast Guard wants to do a federal study and the City wants to do their own study.

Ludington Avenue Architectural Preservation Overlay---Needs work. PC involvement is to develop possibilities.

Chairman Coleman said that an adhoc committee had been appointed in December, Commissioners Gamble, Garrett and Schnitker. They are looking at some architectural preservation. Commissioner Gamble said that he would attend the Scottville workshop.

Road Diets---Some done, west end of Ludington Ave. and Lakeshore Drive. City discussion with MDOT and businesses on possibilities from Rath Ave. to William St. PC involvement is to continue to monitor.

Chairman Coleman talked about the work that had been done on Lakeshore Drive and the new boulevard on the West end of Ludington Ave. He said that there were ongoing discussions on the section from William St. to Rath Ave.

Chairman Coleman said that if you looked at all of the issues, six have been almost completed. There are three or four that they really need to look at. He suggested working on the tree program, non-motorized network and downtown architectural preservation this year. He also encouraged the Commissioners to do some small, fun projects. Have a list of smaller issues that maybe an organization or a committee might do. He said that he would also like to work with the City on these projects.

Daycare:
Chairman Coleman said that he had Williams and Works look at daycare facility issues. He went through the material that was sent with the packets regarding state requirements. He said that most of the requirements worked for the county and the townships, but very few applied to the City. He said that daycare with six or less was considered a residential use. The group daycare is from 7 to 12 children and requires a special land use. A special land use also allows us to determine if there is a problem in the neighborhood. A note was received from a resident on Maple St. voicing concern. He said that the group day care homes in the City were scattered with the exception of a grouping on Maple St. There are two that are right next to each other, the others are over a block away from each other. Chairman Coleman's recommendation was to leave it as it is. Treat them as a special land use and take a good look at them. Commissioner Nekola said that the part that the Ordinance does not have is "not more that 1,500 ft. from each other". He said that when they do get a clump of daycares, the language would take care of it. If you had one come in right next to the other, it would be hard to turn down the special land use. He said that they should make it very clear. Commissioner Pontz said that he would like to see that also. He said that you would eliminate the clutter. Chairman Coleman said that 1,200 or 1,500 ft. was a lot. He will refer this to the Special Land Use Committee to review.

SITE PLAN REVIEW REPORT:
None

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:
Chairman Coleman reported that they had a contract with Williams and Works for professional services. He said that they also had an educational budget of $500.00 this year. There will be a smart land use workshop coming soon. Chairman Coleman said that he would like to go and Commissioner Holman expressed interest.

ADJOURNMENT:
Commissioner Moloney made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Pontz. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Ann Foote, Recording Secretary

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Tom Coleman, Chairperson