



# Rochester Hills

## Minutes - Draft

### Planning Commission / City Council Joint Meeting

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Rochester Hills, MI  
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Home Page:  
[www.rochesterhills.org](http://www.rochesterhills.org)

#### PLANNING COMMISSION

*Ed Anzek, Deborah Brnabic, Gerard Dettloff, Greg Hooper,  
Nicholas O. Kaltsounis, Stephanie Morita, David A. Reece,  
C. Neall Schroeder, and Ryan Schultz*

#### CITY COUNCIL

*Susan M. Bowyer Ph.D., Ryan Deel, Dale A. Hetrick, James Kubicina,  
Stephanie Morita, Mark A. Tisdell, and David Walker*

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Tuesday, January 29, 2019

7:00 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

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### CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Deborah Brnabic called the Joint Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium. She welcomed David Walker, the newest City Council member and asked him to briefly present his background. She then asked the Commissioners to talk a little about themselves.

### ROLL CALL

**Present** 14 - Deborah Brnabic, Gerard Dettloff, Greg Hooper, Nicholas Kaltsounis, David Reece, C. Neall Schroeder, Ryan Schultz, Susan M. Bowyer, Ryan Deel, Dale Hetrick, James Kubicina, Stephanie Morita, Mark A. Tisdell and David Walker

**Absent** 1 - Ed Anzek

#### Quorums present - Planning Commission and City Council

Also present: Mayor Bryan K. Barnett  
Scott Cope, Director of Building  
Matt Einheuser, Manager of Natural Resources  
Ken Elwert, Director of Parks and Natural Resources  
Michael Johnson, Captain of Police  
Kristen Kapelanski, Manager of Planning  
Sara Roediger, Director of Planning and Econ. Dev.  
Leanne Scott, Deputy Clerk  
John Staran, City Attorney  
Bob White, Ordinance Supervisor

### COMMUNICATIONS

A) Letter from M. Hill, dated 1/29/19 re: Master Plan

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## PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Brnabic opened Public Comment at 7:06 p.m. Seeing no one come forward, she closed Public Comment.

## DISCUSSION

2019-0025 Auburn Road Corridor Update

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2018-0095 Request for Adoption of the 2018 Master Land Use Plan update (Planning Commission only) and discussion regarding implementation of the Plan  
*(Reference: Memos from Sara Roediger and Giffels Webster, the 2018 Master Land Use Plan and other related documents had been placed on file and by reference became part of the record thereof.)*

*Present for the discussion were Jill Bahm and Eric Fazzini, Giffels Webster, 1025 E. Maple Rd., Birmingham, MI 48009.*

*Ms. Roediger recalled the joint meeting a year ago to kick off the start of the Master Plan update. During the past year, staff had been hard at work with the consultants on a substantial update with extensive public involvement. They had gone through all the requirements from the State and were at the point where they hoped the Planning Commission would adopt the Plan. It would then go to the next City Council meeting for adoption as well to show unified support.*

*Ms. Bahm noted that the Planning Commission had seen modifications every month during the past year's process. She commented that it had been a really interesting project for them especially with all the public input opportunities. It started with a staff visioning to set some guiding themes. They updated the City's demographics and the market assessment that had been done in 2016, and they looked back at some of the more recent planning documents. The public input included an online survey with 750 responses and two open houses, one at Rochester College and the other outside at The Village of Rochester Hills. She noted that a lot of the members participated in the open houses, which she stated said a lot about the community. They had "Picture This!" which allowed people to upload pictures of things they liked in the community,*

*an art contest for youth, and they asked fourth graders taking a City Hall tour to answer some questions, such as what their favorite part of the City was.*

*Ms. Bahm advised that the goals and objectives had been updated. After considerable discussions, the Future Land Use Map was updated. Three different redevelopment sites were selected as places the City could envision redevelopment. Two were the landfill sites, and the third was the Bordine's site. They knew that those areas would be redeveloped at some point in the future, and it was their intent to provide some standards of what the City would like to see. She stated that housing was an important consideration. They wanted to make sure they could provide residents with housing now and in the future. There was an Implementation chapter, which she said was a very important part of the Plan.*

*President Tisdell mentioned that he had attended a conference in Grand Rapids for the Michigan Municipal League, and one of the breakout sessions featured Giffels Webster. The process of the City's Master Plan was held out as a benchmark for best practices in the State. He remarked that he was very proud to be sitting in on that. Also, there had been a particular focus on their outreach to get resident input. Ms. Bahm thanked him and said that they really like being able to do new strategies and approaches with a client and be able to figure out a way to help other communities and transfer that knowledge. She thanked the City for letting them get out of the box. She noted that at one of the open houses, a resident said that she had read through the Master Plan, and she felt that the City was really listening to them.*

*Chairperson Brnabic thanked the consultants for an excellent job. She said that it was just awesome being able to work with them through the process, and they were proud of the finished product.*

*Hearing no further business, Mr. Kaltsounis moved the motion:*

**MOTION** by Kaltsounis, seconded by Hooper:

**WHEREAS**, the City of Rochester Hills Planning Commission may prepare and adopt a Master Plan for the physical development of the City, as empowered by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Rochester Hills established a Master Plan theme of "Preserve, Enhance and Diversify," and contracted with a professional

*planning consultant to assist the Planning Commission with the technical assessments necessary to make the Master Plan for the City; and*

**WHEREAS**, *the Planning Commission and City Council held a joint meeting on January 17, 2018 to identify influencing themes for the Master Plan that included:*

- Age-Friendly Community: The Master Plan should explore what it means to be an “age-friendly” community and provide current and future residents of all ages with a variety of options for housing, transportation, goods and services, and community facilities/resources.*
- Sustainability: The Master Plan should direct growth, development, and redevelopment in ways that preserve natural features, reduce storm water runoff, and enhance non-motorized transportation.*
- Transportation: While the city will begin updating its Thoroughfare Plan in early 2019, the Master Plan should support connectivity throughout the city and anticipate how changing technology will impact our mobility; and*

**WHEREAS**, *the Planning Commission held two public open houses in conjunction with the development of the 2018 Master Plan Update on April 23, 2018 and September 15, 2018; and*

**WHEREAS**, *the Planning Commission held a public hearing on its proposed 2018 Master Plan Update on December 18, 2018.*

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** *that the Rochester Hills Planning Commission hereby adopts this Master Plan for the City, along with the text, maps, charts, graphs, and other descriptive materials contained in the Plan.*

*Chairperson Brnabic related that she had received a letter from Melinda Hill, which was placed on file.*

*Vice Chairperson Hooper stated that it was the fourth Master Plan he had gone through with the City. He was part of the selection team that hired Giffels Webster. They had never been used before, and he was very pleased with the product. It was a very professional team, and he thanked Ms. Bahm and Mr. Fazzini.*

**Voice Vote:**

Ayes: All  
Nays: None  
Absent: Anzek

**MOTION CARRIED**

*Ms. Bahm referred to the Implementation chapter, noting that they had done things a little differently. The Planning Commission would typically look at zoning ordinance amendments and Council would address advocacy action items, such as long term policies and other action items that might involve additional research and study. They stuck with some general timeframes; short-term was three years and mid to long-term was more than three. Those could change, depending on the resources to make some of those items happen. They identified a few short-term zoning items, one of which was the R-5 district. It was a new district that would provide the missing middle in the City in terms of density. She knew that the City was doing amazing things with the public investment in the Auburn Rd. corridor, and they needed to make sure that the area was ready for development to facilitate the kind of private investment the residents and business owners were expecting to see that would really make a difference.*

*Ms. Bahm explained that the R-5 district would replace the One Family Cluster district, which was not really a land use but more of a zoning style of development. R-5 would accommodate smaller and denser single-family residential dwelling units. The areas would generally be in the vicinity of four to six units per acre with smaller homes and lot sizes. The existing manufactured housing communities were put in the R-5 district. The manufactured housing site on Auburn had previously been shown as Industrial in anticipation of the housing going away due to financial issues, but it had come back and was being maintained very well. There were single-family homes and apartments in the City, but there were smaller things that fell in between, such as duplexes or tri-plexes. They would provide a little more density with a more walkable pattern over smaller footprints. She said that they wanted to get some direction from the members in terms of how the eventual language would be crafted. A proposed ordinance would be reviewed by the bodies again with a public hearing. She showed some images of varied R-5 housing and the areas in the Master Plan identified for R-5.*

*Mr. Schultz mentioned that at the last Planning Commission meeting, they heard from an applicant proposing a development that would fit in with the R-5 context. It was a community based around people with developmental disabilities (IDD), such as autism, and adult-aged*

children who needed some type of similar housing. It would be almost a companion situation, where the parent could live in a smaller, single-family home and there would be a four-plex and a six-plex for the IDD's in the same neighborhood. He stated that it was one of the most well done presentations he had seen, and he believed that everyone on the Commission supported what the applicant was trying to do and the success he had in the past. Mr. Schultz said that he was really excited to try to help them navigate the process, and R-5 would fit right in. The applicant had previously done a development in the Ann Arbor area, and Mr. Schultz hoped that Rochester Hills would be the second place.

Ms. Bahm noted that Mr. Kaltsounis had mentioned using a PUD with certain developments. She agreed that it could be a great tool, but creating zoning district frameworks and standards that specified a type of development the City expected to see in certain areas would provide consistency. They would tend to see the same kinds of things, and it would also provide clear expectations for the development community about what the City envisioned. A PUD could be more general, and it was intended to be flexible, but having defined standards, such as form based standards that really spoke to where buildings should be on a site, what setbacks should be, how tall buildings could be, etc., would be beneficial.

Mr. Hooper said that the devil would be in the details with R-5 and with the parameters for developing. If developers found that they could not do what they wanted, they might go the PUD route, anyway. There could be different trade-offs and amenities in order to make it work for them from an economic standpoint. He commented that it would be interesting to see how it would turn out. He recalled that they talked a little about tiny homes. He was not sure what everyone felt about them. He added that the details would tell the tale of how the process would work.

Ms. Morita noted that one of the areas proposed for R-5 by Crooks north of the Trail was already completely developed. When the zoning ordinance was being crafted, she wondered if they would end up with existing nonconforming uses. She asked what the intent was when drafting the language.

Ms. Bahm said that it was a great question. She stated that they did not want to do anything that would limit a homeowner's ability to get financing or something, so they would have to work through the details. They would have to make sure that whatever language they put forward, it did not render properties nonconforming. Ms. Morita said that she knew that the map was for potential future use, but she was very familiar with the area,

*and she knew that they probably already met the density requirements. She said that it was the Streamwood Condos. She wanted to make sure they would not be creating a problem for those property owners already there. Ms. Bahm said that the development might just get an overlay rather than new zoning. Ms. Morita pointed out that there were two developments there - one in front and one in back.*

*Dr. Bowyer asked if the City could require R-5 developments to keep open space areas for a park, which she would like. Ms. Bahm agreed.*

*Mr. Hetrick asked the market for the R-5 style of housing. Ms. Roediger said that it is very good, based on the recent plans and PUDs staff had seen. There were often duplexes proposed. She mentioned Barrington Park, attached housing which sold out quickly. She said that the City was missing that middle housing, which was a national trend. People wanted to downsize, and they wanted more affordable housing, and alternative housing was selling.*

*Mr. Deel said that when they moved to Rochester Hills, they were not looking for density. They were interested in the family nature of the community. He felt that the City had to look at what it was as a community and whether they were really a more densely packed community or if they were more of a residential-natured community. He saw it more as the latter. He questioned whether the density they were discussing really fit in with the character of the community, and whether there was a reason it had not been developed in the City thus far.*

*Ms. Roediger claimed that it had been developed in the City in pockets. She agreed that the majority of the City had single-family, lower density housing, which would always be the primary land use for the City. They were trying to find alternative places for people who wanted to age in place and not have to leave Rochester Hills and who were waiting until later to start a family.*

*Ms. Bahm liked Mr. Deel's question, because it was both acknowledging what the City was and what people liked about the community. It also showed that a lot of people who came and talked about housing through the process talked about how much they wanted to stay in the City, but they were not sure they could. They were not taking the whole density of the community and changing it. It was nice to have places where they could offer different housing styles or form while still preserving the single-family nature of the rest of the community. It was nice to have the opportunity to concentrate commercial and higher density residential*

*uses in areas to take some of the pressure off other areas to be able to keep larger lots and less density. People would be able to find anything they wanted in the City.*

*Mr. Schultz heard a concern that alternate housing products came with lower values. He stated that it was certainly not the case. He pointed out Brewster Village, a 30-unit development on Brewster north of Walton that came before the Commission recently. They were single-story, smaller lot condos starting at \$450k. He suggested that people should not think that alternate housing came with lower value, because it was just not the case.*

*President Tisdell related that the City had about 20,000 large lot, single-family homes, and about 75% of baby boomers wanted to sell their homes before they retired. The Mayor recently spoke with AARP, and the City was featured about its efforts to retain seniors. He reminded that they also had to draw new people in. As the boomers wanted to sell their four-bedroom, two-and-a-half bath colonials, many residents wanted to come in, but a lot of them could not afford \$450k homes. He agreed that there was a missing niche, and it was not being proposed from fence line to fence line. He thought that those developments could bring in some younger families that would later be candidates for buying the larger single-family homes when their families grew.*

*Mr. Kaltsounis clarified that the properties designated for R-5 currently had a density similar to R-5. That was how the Planning Commission looked at it. There was one area that was questioned by people who visited during public hearing, and changes were made. Two of the areas were currently at that density, so there would not be much change than what there was already. He felt that they could see a revival of areas. He remarked that the City was a victim of its success which was evident by the prices of homes. He was always amazed when he heard what properties were going for, but they were selling. He maintained that why certain areas were proposed for R-5 was well thought out.*

*Mr. Hooper added that R-1, 2, 3 and 4, which made up 95% of the City, were not changing. R-5 was a small portion of the City. He said that it would come down to economics, because land was expensive. There had to be a certain sized home to get a return on investment.*

*Ms. Roediger advised that staff would be working with Giffels Webster to start drafting some ordinance language, recognizing the comments made. She said that another important district was along Auburn Rd.*

*They had to determine how to accommodate private investment, and they were proposing an ordinance for that area as well.*

*Ms. Bahm liked that they had a discussion about the public investment in Auburn Rd. prior to discussing the Master Plan. The residents and business owners would see the level of detail and investment being provided by the City, and she felt that it really upped the game in that area. There was a planning vision for the Auburn Rd. Corridor Plan, and they talked about the need for some zoning standards and a framework that would get at the heart of what was special about the area to direct growth in a consistent and critical manner. That would be the benefit of having a specific zoning district for the area rather than using a more general PUD to develop there. She noted that the area was designated as commercial and Flex 2 in the Master Plan, and it was also identified as an area where additional housing was desired. They all agreed that it was suitable for the missing middle type housing, given its walkable nature and the opportunity for smaller units, which they wanted to make sure were well designed.*

*Ms. Bahm advised that there had been significant conversations with the Planning Commission about whether three stories or more might be appropriate along the corridor. The Master Plan text that accompanied a sketch showing a three-story building said that a zoning change should not be imminent in the area. They knew that there was a lot of public input in developing the Auburn Rd. plan, and people had expectations of what they would see based on that document. They talked about the feasibility of redeveloping properties that were viable and the cost of construction. She wished to talk about exploring additional heights for the area, and she asked for input before they went further down the road. The challenge for the district was about how to facilitate new construction and private investment, which they wanted to encourage. She stated that it was very important to mitigate the impact on adjacent residential neighborhoods. They had a lot of tools for doing that, such as form-based zoning standards for height, setbacks, design, uses and parking. She showed some images, which she said were ideas for conversation only, of three and four-story buildings in other cities and how they were done to reduce the impact of the height.*

*Mr. Kaltsounis asked how the rear of the buildings and the height would affect the residents. Ms. Bahm said that it was important to consider that impact because of the shallow lots. It would be important to have language about not having blank walls, and perhaps using step backs and other things to reduce the impact of massing and height. They did*

*not want to create a barrier from the residents to the street; they wanted to make it integrated and more welcoming. Mr. Kaltsounis reminded about the alleys, and Ms. Bahm agreed that they were important. Mr. Kaltsounis said that it would also be important to get public input about the height. Ms. Bahm agreed that they would not have ordinance language the next day and that it would be important to go through a process, especially in light of the Mayor's comments about how the residents felt about the area. It would be important to use private buildings to create the public realm. The public realm was the sidewalks, the streets, the park and the parking lots. They wanted to make sure that the walls of the buildings were done right to create a walkable, friendly, nice space that was economically viable.*

*Mr. Hetrick felt that the comment about integrating the buildings so the front and back had an appeal to the residents was absolutely critical. That should include landscaping and whatever else could be done so the residents did not feel like they were looking at a giant brick wall. In terms of the building styles, the ones that stuck out to him were those that had some space in between. To have a half a block of a two-and-a-half story building seemed a bit excessive to him. He would like to see patios (balconies) recessed on both sides so the residents in the back were not seeing a giant wall. He asked if the R-5 standards would be strictly for the commercial district or if they would spill over to the residential district. The residential that abutted the corridor might want to look more like an R-5 district. He asked where the boundary of the proposed ordinance district would be.*

*Ms. Roediger responded that they were talking strictly about the Auburn Rd. corridor, which was a half-mile. The intention for the district was for it to be mixed-use; there could be first floor retail with residential above or there could be some first floor residential buildings. As the project evolved, it might expand further down Auburn towards John R. They were not looking to move into the neighborhoods to the north or south, however. Mr. Hetrick felt that it was a first good step. He was thinking more about how the residential properties might develop once the corridor started building towards its vision.*

*Chairperson Brnabic asked if zoning in the area currently allowed more than two stories, and Ms. Roediger said that there was a two-story maximum. Chairperson Brnabic noted that the discussion was about considering additional height. She remembered talking about putting a committee together, consisting of residents, business owners, Council and Commission members and staff. Ms. Roediger said that initially,*

staff wanted to take the temperature of the two bodies. Chairperson Brnabic stated that she did not think she could support four stories, and she was not quite convinced about three stories, but seeing the examples helped.

Mr. Schroeder said that they needed to consider parallel parking and traffic with the two-lane road. They would be adding a lot of people and cars without adding parking, and they would have to provide parking.

Ms. Bahm said that there would be parking on both sides of the street. She suggested that perhaps some areas might be more residential so there would be fewer customers. It would be possible to live and work in a building. Mr. Schroeder did not think that there would be enough employment to consider having people live there.

Dr. Bowyer stated that she liked the idea of going to three stories, and she would be comfortable with that. She said that some of the examples helped, for example, with a stepped back level, it did not feel like three stories from the road. She reminded that once all the land in Rochester Hills was built out, they would have to go higher, and that it was the future. She suggested that with row housing, there could be garages underneath.

Mr. Reece agreed with Chairperson Brnabic. He was not at all in support of a four-story building, and he would marginally be in support of three. He did not think that those types of buildings were necessarily what the City needed to be in the future. He had been vocal about it at other meetings, and he reiterated that he was not supportive of four stories. He put himself in the residents' places who would have to look at the buildings every day. He felt that their lives would be impacted significantly. He did not think that the renderings represented their intended neighborhood. Regardless of the alley and what a rendering with trees might look like, and he reminded that in the winter there would be no leaves, if a three-story was put in someone's backyard, it would be like looking a big wall. He stated that Rochester Hills was a residential community, and as mentioned, they could not be all things to everyone. He felt that they needed to stick to their roots and fit that type of development where it could. He stated that he would absolutely not be in favor of four stories, and he would have a hard time swallowing three.

Ms. Roediger summarized that as with R-5, they would start drafting language and come back for more discussion. They would start the process to engage residents and other groups. It would be the Auburn Rd. zoning district - a unique area with unique regulations.