



Rochester Hills
Minutes - Draft
Planning Commission / City Council
Joint Meeting

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PLANNING COMMISSION

*Susan Bowyer Ph.D., Deborah Brnabic, Gerard Dettloff, John Gaber,
Greg Hooper, Nicholas O. Kaltsounis, Marvie Neubauer, David A. Reece,
and Ben Weaver*

CITY COUNCIL

*David J. Blair, Susan Bowyer Ph.D., Ryan Deel, Dale A. Hetrick,
Stephanie Morita, Theresa Mungioli, and David Walker*

Monday, February 1, 2021

7:00 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Deborah Brnabic called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She wished everyone a good evening and welcomed Mayor Barnett, President Deel and City Council members to the Joint Meeting of the Rochester Hills Planning Commission and City Council. She stated that it was a pleasure to have them join the Planning Commission tonight. She wished to also welcome members of the consultant teams and City department staff. As always, she wished to thank Ms. Roediger for organizing and scheduling the yearly joint meetings.

Chairperson Brnabic explained the procedure for the virtual meeting, stating that, "In compliance with the Open Meetings Act, as amended, the Planning Commission and City Council will continue to move forward and carry out the meeting agendas using Zoom video conferencing to limit the potential exposure to the Covid-19 virus. Any member of the public who would like to speak on a particular agenda item or during Public Comment, which is for non-agenda commentary, you will be recognized by calling into the Zoom meeting and using the I.D. number. Once you are on the call, press 9 to speak on the phone or raise your hand in the Zoom application. All comments and questions will be audio only and limited to three minutes per person. All questions will be answered together after every person has had the opportunity to speak on the same agenda item. Each member of the public that wishes to speak will be asked to state and spell their name and give their address for the record. Members of the public may also comment on an item by sending an email to Planning@rochesterhills.org prior to discussion on the agenda item."

ROLL CALL

- Present** 14 - Deborah Brnabic, Gerard Dettloff, Greg Hooper, Nicholas Kaltsounis, David Reece, Susan M. Bowyer, Ryan Deel, Dale Hetrick, Stephanie Morita, David Walker, Theresa Mungiola, Ben Weaver, John Gaber and Marvie Neubauer
- Excused** 1 - David Blair

Quorum present.

*Also present: Bryan Barnett, Mayor
Sara Roediger, Director of Planning & Economic Dev.
Kristen Kapelanski, Manager of Planning
Paul Davis, Deputy Director, DPS/Engineering
Pam Valentik, Manager of Economic Dev.
Michelle Carley, Economic Development Specialist
Keith Depp, Project Engineer, DPS/Engineering*

Mayor Barnett said that it was really good to see everyone. He thanked the members for their service. He realized that none of them did it for the small paycheck, but hopefully, they saw their impact and felt a sense of pride being part of the organization. He wanted to make a couple of comments and "brag on our team" of talented professionals. He was glad that they could get together to get the insight of the Planning Commission and the direction of City Council to make sure that what the administration was working on was in line with their vision for the community. They all represented different aspects, neighborhoods, ideas and visions, while they all wanted to work on one collective vision to move the community forward. While they looked forward, he said that he wanted to take a second to look back. He claimed that the City did really well throughout most of 2020. Everything had seismically changed in how they delivered good government services, but the team did not miss a beat. The fact was, they were in as good of shape as they ever could have imagined pre-pandemic. The development projects were still on track, which was encouraging. The team had thrived with introducing innovation and the way they did business and how they connected. They had to do so many more things virtually. The City's website was updated and was in 79 different languages. They were introducing Rochester Hills Connect, where text messaging went straight to someone's phone and gave the latest updates. Building and Engineering were doing inspections virtually. The team had taken the bull by the horns and used the opportunity to not simply sit at home. The team was doing exceptionally well, and they would see a Planning and Economic Development team that was looking forward and not letting opportunities pass by. He thought that there were three things that they had to keep their eyes on that were substantive changes that he would love to have the Planning

Commission's feedback and thoughts about and the Council's expertise and thoughts. How they did business was going to change forever. They were going to have to look at commercial real estate and its future. Some people might say that it would be fine and some think that there will be a long-term impact on the kind of commercial real estate the City needed. He always talked about the City being the preeminent place to live, work and raise a family, and a lot of people were now working from home. People were getting used to not having a commute, and people might choose to live in places where the commute factor did not come into play. That gave Rochester Hills a strong, competitive advantage over many other communities. He felt that it was exceptionally important, as a community, to invest in quality of life. The Planning Commission and City Council's support of the Auburn Rd. corridor and Council's support of Innovation Hills were two really strong indicators of not stepping back but stepping forward and leading into the quality of life. They would also have to think about how retail and shopping were changing into the future. He talked weekly with the folks at the Village of Rochester Hills and many other retailers in the community to try to understand what was going to happen, from dry cleaners to movie theaters to restaurants to brick and mortar boutiques. They had to think about how the shopper of the future was going to engage and try to accomplish it. More and more people were shopping online, and they had to think about how that would change the need in the community. They were things that they never really had to tackle before. He said that they never viewed their competition as Troy or Novi or other peer communities. They viewed their competition as Disney or Amazon or Nordstrom, and the City was in the customer service business. If people could get a swing set delivered in 24 hours but they could not get a permit in three weeks, they did not care how long it took in Novi or Northville - they wanted something akin to other aspects in their lives. That was what they were striving to do and why they put together a strategy. They wanted to maximize a very talented team's effort so they were going after the businesses that made the most sense and impacted their residents the most. They wanted to create and improve the quality of life in a way that allowed them to continue to receive so many accolades. Everything he mentioned and the time they were in was exactly why they should be getting together. They really stressed the reason for a strategic approach, in particular with planning and economic development. He thanked the team for its tremendous efforts.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson Brnabic opened Public Comment at 7:12 p.m.

Ms. Alaina Campbell, President, Rochester Regional Chamber of Commerce, commended Rochester Hills for its leadership, in particular, over the past year. She wanted to publicly voice the Chamber's support for the Economic Development Strategy that would be presented. Ms. Valentik had reached out to the Chamber, and they were able to participate in the Plan, and they had been excited to be able to provide input. She wished to commend Mayor Barnett, who briefed their members weekly, for his leadership over the past year. She had also welcomed Ms. Valentik, who was serving on the Chamber's Board of Directors, which was very strategic and key for their member businesses. She thanked everyone for their leadership, many of whom were involved in the Chamber. She knew many of them personally, and she thanked them for everything they had done to help support the small business community which, in particular, had been the hardest hit.

Chairperson Brnabic closed Public Comment at 7:15 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

2021-0021 Transportation Master Plan 2021 Draft

Ms. Roediger thanked everyone and commented that she looked forward to the joint meeting all year. It was a great opportunity for the two boards that really laid the foundation for the regulations and how the City would move forward in the future. She was excited this year to "tie a ribbon" around the Transportation Master Plan, which had been kicked off at last year's joint meeting. No action was being asked, and the Plan would be brought before the Planning Commission and City Council at future meetings for endorsement. The consultants would give a presentation, and then the Plan would be up for public comment for a week or so. She was excited for the members to hear about the Economic Development Strategy that her team had been working on for the past two years. Last February, they were prepared to present round one, but things changed, and they had to revisit the Plan. They spent the past year updating it, based on current trends. She would also present the PED Annual Report for 2020. She felt that all three documents were very important, and she was very proud of the efforts.

Ms. Colleen Hill-Stramsak, Project Manager with Hubbell, Roth and Clark, began the presentation. She said that they were trying to look at the City's transportation system from a holistic standpoint - safety for all users, capacity and emerging trends. They looked at strategies for reducing congestion, and would present information about street design, traffic calming and technology and give some updates on things the City was already doing very well. She noted that the last Transportation Plan had been done in 2008. The City had spent \$480 million in infrastructure

since then and improved a lot of roadways. In 2013, 16% of the roads were in good shape, and in 2018, 29% were. Roads in poor shape went down to 10%. She indicated that it was not the trend seen in most communities, and it was a testament to the City working with its partners RCOC, MDOT and neighboring communities that the money was well spent. There was \$50 million in planned or recently completed improvements scheduled for the next years. If the City was looking at improving a roadway from two to five lanes, it would cost \$6.5 million, for example, and a lot of roadways had been improved with those funds. Regarding funding opportunities, there were BUILD grants available through the Federal Highway for major projects. She advised that RCOC had recently received a grant for Adams Rd. from Hamlin to Walton Blvd. to do an environmental assessment. It had not been included in the Plan, and would take the next year. There was road funding available if new manufacturing was brought in. A good chunk of the major projects came from the Oakland County Federal Aid Committee; RCOC would get \$13 million and the rest was shared by 62 communities. It was highly competitive. The State gave funds to local agencies for safety; CMAQ funds were for reducing congestion and the Transportation Alternatives Program was for pathways and other non-motorized improvements.

Ms. Ann Marie Kerby, MKSK, showed a timeline for the engagement process. They met with the agencies and stakeholders three times. Representatives included members of the Planning Commission and City Council, MDOT, SEMCOG, residents and committee members. They met with the joint meeting group a year ago to talk about existing conditions of the transportation system and talked about best practices that might be explored. They also asked the members about their transportation priorities. There was an online survey and two virtual, public workshops. The comments helped guide the framework for the recommendations in the Plan. They catalogued all of the comments from each meeting, the survey and from emails received into a spreadsheet. They wanted to make sure that they incorporated people's ideas and concerns into the Plan. The most frequent comments related to congestion, road and infrastructure maintenance, intersection redesign, non-motorized connections, safety concerns and transit. They were able to identify priorities for improvements through an analysis and evaluation of existing conditions and congestion, traffic, crashes, gaps in the non-motorized network, practicality options for improvements, potential funding opportunities and a review of the engagement. Based on the feedback they received and their evaluation of the transportation system, a vision and goals were created. The main components emphasized a safer transportation system, easing traffic congestion, enhancing

multi-modal facilities, preparing for new technologies, maintaining infrastructure and roads and exploring public transportation options.

Ms. Hill-Stramsak talked next about recommendations. They encouraged investment in technology along the Adams and Walton corridors and to continue participating with RCOC and MDOT in autonomous vehicle and future vehicle investments. The City had already been onboard with the highly adaptive, controlled traffic system, and they encouraged working with partner agencies. They also recommended studying the potential for electrical charging stations in City-owned parking lots.

Ms. Kerby stated that one of the goals of the Master Plan was prioritizing pathway gaps. The Plan looked at recommended improvements suggested by the school district. There was a recommendation to implement a pathway crossing along the north side of Auburn at M-59, which appeared to be the most feasible. After surveying the public and stakeholders, there was some support for permitting lower speed e-bikes and scooters on pathways, and a recommendation was to consider revising the Ordinance to accommodate that. She turned it over to Ms. Roediger to put up a survey question to be answered anonymously at the meeting.

Ms. Roediger put the question on the screen, which asked for support for e-bikes and scooters on pathways. When done, she said that there was pretty good support by both boards to look into modifying the regulations to allow those on the pathway system.

Ms. Kerby said that another goal was to explore transit options. They evaluated what was currently available, but they wanted to have discussion about future options. The recommendations included working with the OPC and Oakland County agencies to establish transit connections, explore park and ride options and establish mobility hub demonstration projects near multi-family developments. The goal was to increase access to destinations and jobs and help reduce transportation costs for residents. She again turned it over to Ms. Roediger to launch another poll.

Ms. Roediger explained that they were looking for opinions about whether the City should look into some of the transit options. When done, she said that the results were pretty split, and it would be something that they would continue to look at.

Ms. Kerby advised that also as part of the recommendations, they looked at regulatory improvements or changes that could be made to the Zoning Ordinance. They recommended requiring multi-modal impact assessments, and not just traffic impact studies for developments that met certain square-footage thresholds, trip generation thresholds or projects that could be rezoned. The main goal was to help City officials and the public understand the potential implications of a development on the greater transportation system and improvements and mitigation that might be needed. They were looking at all modes of transportation, including pedestrian, bicycle, transit and vehicles. They encouraged bicycle parking when there was a significant change in use or new development. It could be incentivized through regulatory measures. For example, if bicycle spaces were included, then required parking spaces could be reduced. Electric vehicle charging stations could be incentivized, and required parking could be reduced if a developer installed those onsite.

Ms. Roediger launched another poll, which asked if electric vehicle charging stations should be pursued at City Hall, and there appeared to be a majority in support.

Ms. Kerby noted that they had put together some road diet alternatives for certain locations where it was feasible and in denser residential areas where walking gaps were prevalent. She explained that a road diet was a design solution that reconfigured a street where travel lanes were repurposed into other modes of travel. Benefits included safer traffic speeds, reduction of pedestrian crossing lengths and safety for all users. Drexelgate had been named as a missing pathway gap street. They were proposing three additional crosswalks. The travel lanes were currently 16 feet wide, so there was a lot of room to shift the north side curb and construct an eight-foot wide pathway. They would also add bike shares in the road. The other two roads they looked at for road diets were Barclay and Hampton Circles. They were noted as top priorities by the stakeholders and the public. They analyzed their existing crosswalks. It was recommended to add a few more crosswalks for Barclay Circle and to complete the connections at both ends of the Barclay and Hampton intersections. There were a few mid-block crossings currently existing on Hampton, but only two for the entire stretch. They were recommending adding nine additional mid-block crossings. Barclay Circle was currently five lanes, and they were recommending narrowing it to three lanes with bike lanes on either sides with buffers. For Hampton Circle, they were recommending going from three to two lanes and adding bike lanes.

Mr. Gentjan Heqimi, HRC, talked about the Auburn and M-59 crossing. He explained that they looked at the bridge crossings throughout the City to see where it would be feasible to make them more pedestrian friendly. Of all that they looked at, and with input, the M-59 crossing at Auburn was the most feasible because of its wide right-of-way. The cheaper option was to restripe the pavement to allow two five-foot wide bike lanes with buffers. The other would be to establish a shared use path, 12 feet wide with barriers. They analyzed the road network of the City in terms of congestion, safety, non-motorized uses, stakeholder input and infrastructure conditions to come up with locations for which they could provide recommendations. He mentioned the Action Plan, which was a subset of the overall recommendations. He showed a map that highlighted near term recommendations based on needs. He showed the intersections and corridors which showed the most congestion with the most opportunity for safety improvements. The corridors prioritized included parts of Adams Rd., Tienken Rd., Avon Rd., Rochester Rd., Livernois and Auburn Rds. Recommendations for those corridors included road widenings, which, most of the time was to install left turn lanes. Other improvements included access managements, signal modernization and intersection capacity improvements.

Ms. Hill-Stramsak summarized that the next step would be to leave the Plan up on the City's website for additional comment. They would finalize the Plan based on the input and take it to the Planning Commission and City Council in the next couple of months for endorsement.

Mr. Hetrick stated that the Transportation Plan was outstanding and very well done. He could see how the City could move forward based on the recommendations. He mentioned Adams Rd., which he felt was clearly in need of significant change, and he asked the status of the environmental assessment and the game plan ahead.

Ms. Hill-Stramsak said that RCOC was still waiting for its contract from Federal Highway, and then the assessment would take a year to eighteen months. Mr. Hetrick said that he was glad it was moving forward. He felt that looking at new technology and using electrification as well as autonomous vehicles would put Rochester Hills at the forefront. He said that he was 100% pleased that there was a road diet planned for Drexelgate. His wife walked their dog on Drexelgate, as did a lot of other people. He was happy to see that they wanted to put in a level of safety for people who wanted to walk, bike, run or push strollers. He thought that a road diet was good for other roads to drive multi-modal transportation. He remarked that it was a terrific job.

Mr. Kaltsounis thanked the team for the report, which he felt that it was very thorough. Regarding freeway crossings, he said that he would like to see a recommendation for Livernois. He asked if they could add something to the current Plan so that going forward, the appropriate parties would see that it had been identified.

Mr. Davis agreed that they could add that. In addition to Livernois, he advised that crossing Rochester Rd. through the M-59 interchange had been another area identified. There was not a pathway through the interchange on either side, and he felt that a lot of people could benefit from that as well. He stated that Livernois had been in the works for many years. It would probably require a full rebuilding of that bridge or a separate pedestrian bridge crossing, which would be very expensive. He knew that when M-59 was widened, the Road Commission and the City reached out to MDOT to see if they would incorporate the rebuilding of that bridge, but they would not do it. If it happened, it would be a 100% City cost, and at the time, it was not something the City could move forward with. He did not think that anyone would disagree that it was a primary area where a pedestrian improvement would be very valuable. He thought that one of the drawings identified the area as a concern, but he agreed that it could be emphasized.

Mr. Kaltsounis asked if the current pathway system was suitable to handle e-bike and scooter traffic. He wondered if there were areas where they could not travel because of the condition of the pathway. Mr. Davis agreed that there were gaps, but the City tried to fill those where they were able to do so. He did not think that the additional traffic from the bikes would be a problem. The pathway cross section had four inches of asphalt, and he claimed that there were parking lots with less than that. The Ordinance did not currently allow e-bikes. Mr. Kaltsounis knew that e-bikes and scooters were becoming more popular, and that the pathways down the main roads were great. He wanted to make sure they documented things to have as guidance down the road.

Regarding the Smart transportation system, Mr. Kaltsounis stated that he had initially been for it. But he wondered if there was some type of alternate system with smaller vehicles that could pick people up and take them where they needed. He questioned whether it should be Smart or another autonomous company they should invest into, as they might get a few more votes for that.

Dr. Bowyer thanked everyone for all the work. She noted that she sat on

City Council and the Planning Commission, and she was one of the stakeholders for the Transportation Plan. She thought that the evolution of the Plan, incorporating the comments and feedback from everyone, was great. She recalled that five years ago, the Mayor's Business Council was at the auto show, and she and Ms. Morita were looking at the electric cars. They both thought that it would be an awesome idea to have charging stations at City Hall and the DPS facility and to get some electric cars for the City workers. She thought that it was great to see that after five years, it might happen. She noted that the Paint Creek Trailways Commission approved electric bikes about two years ago. She noted that it was extremely crowded on the weekends. She did not see how they would be able to stop people from using scooters and e-bikes, so she felt that they should just be allowed. She considered that the cost to make some of the improvements would be very expensive, but she felt that in the short term, where there was a very wide roadway, people felt like they could speed, and striping would narrow the road and reduce speeds and not be too expensive. With the bridge by Auburn, it would be nice to have a striped pathway on the side so people could feel safer without it being extremely costly. She indicated that she would be all for mass transportation, but she maintained that it would be cost prohibitive. Instead of having Smart stop once in Rochester Hills and increase everyone's taxes by \$200 per year, they could look at some other format, such as Uber. Or she suggested that the City could have its own internal system where someone could be picked up and taken to a destination. She claimed that it would be a lot cheaper than using Smart, which would have one bus line and would not connect the City. She believed that the City needed to look at its own bussing system with regards to mass transit. She thanked everyone for their work and efforts and felt that it all came together as a nice Plan.

Ms. Morita said that she had had the pleasure of serving with everyone either as a Planning Commissioner or on City Council. She mentioned that there was a little more history with the Smart issue, and she was a little disappointed to see it being presented. It had been made clear over and over again that Council had no appetite to look at a millage situation with Smart where they would suck \$3.5 million a year out of the community for something that would not get people where they needed to go. Council looked at it, and she and Mr. Tisdell (former Council President) met with people from Smart. It was not something they supported at the time, and she would not support it now. She cautioned both boards against talking with Smart. To be polite, the City allowed them to come in for a 45-minute presentation. They took the fact that they had presented to Rochester Hills to other communities, and said that

Rochester Hills was talking with them so those cities should, too. It was not that the City was talking to them or considering Smart; they just let them present, because they were trying to be polite. Her experience with Smart was that they had been less than forthright with the City about their intentions. She felt that they had misused their conversations, and she cautioned again against talking with them. She and Mr. Tisdell had done some other research in terms of entering into an Uber contract that could potentially supply City-wide, last mile, discounted rides for people, which seemed to be a better fit for the community. Generally speaking, most people had cars, and if they did not, it was because they could not drive. Even if someone was at home, without a car, they could not get to a bus stop. Regarding the scooter issue, she was on the Paint Creek Trailways Commission when the motorized bikes were authorized, and there was a speed limit placed. She would be concerned about having scooters on pathways. Hypothetically speaking, someone could take a regulator off a scooter, and it could go pretty fast. She would not like to see those on the pathways - she felt that it would be asking for trouble. She thought that motorized bikes would be fine, but they would have to look at speed limits for them. There were a lot of people walking. Where she lived, in the Hamlin/Adams area, people walked to Innovation Hills, and the pathways were full of people. It was dangerous for her to get in and out of her street because she had to look for pedestrians coming both ways.

Ms. Mungoli said that it was good to see the Planning Commission. She thanked them for coordinating the meeting. She wondered if there was a way to have a bigger font for some of the pages. It was hard to read some things, and if there was a way to make it easier for people to see, she said that she would appreciate it. Regarding safety issues, she mentioned Adams Rd. When developments came through, she asked how many driveways were allowed for a parking lot. At the corner of Adams and Walton, on Adams, she counted approximately nine driveways. A right turn on red was allowed at the intersection. She thought that there was an easy way to address safety in some areas by looking at the number of driveways allowed in and out of shopping centers, and to perhaps restrict right on red at the intersections. She pointed out that there were always a number of accidents at the Adams and Walton intersection. Regarding electric charging stations, she noted that she worked in automotive, and she knew that electric and autonomous vehicles were coming. She thought that it should be left up to a shopping center to decide if there was a demand. They would put them in if there were residents looking for them. She would not want to see the City arbitrarily providing an incentive or reducing the number of parking spaces because of charging stations. Too many times, there was not enough parking, and she would not want to

see it reduced more because they were allowing people to charge when the number of electric or autonomous vehicles were outnumbered by the ICE vehicles. She suggested that they should keep an eye on what was in the community relative to electric vehicles. She said that as someone who ran in the community with a husband who rode a bike all over the community, with regards to how the pathways were shared, if they were going to allow faster vehicles, she thought that they needed to do some education for the people who walked. There were people walking dogs with leashes that expanded and contracted and took up an entire pathway. It was sometimes not safe for someone to run on a path with a dog walker with an expandable leash, let alone a faster vehicle. Last year, she had added something about safety on bike paths to her article in the Hills Herald. She wanted to make sure that they were being consistent in the words - that pathways equaled bicycle paths equaled trailways. She noted that the Paint Creek Trailways Commission looked at e-bikes and scooters that could go faster. She mentioned "road diet," and suggested that education would be needed for that, as well. She stated that having painted stripes did not mean that it would necessarily slow people down. She said that she wholeheartedly supported Ms. Morita's statements about Smart, and until there was a proven need, she did not think that it was something the City should spend money on.

President Deel thanked the Commissioners who came and gave their time and talent towards the project, which he maintained was extremely worthwhile to do. He thanked MKSK and HRC for their presentation and Ms. Roediger and Ms. Valentik for their hard work putting the plans and meeting together. He thought that there was real value in having a wide-angled lens looking at the future. He had been thinking a lot lately about how the nature of work was changing, noting that he had been into his office twice since April of last year. Many of his neighbors had been working at home, and a lot had been told that it would be permanent. He remarked that his car got three weeks to a gallon. Transportation needs had changed, and they had learned a lot about what they could do remotely. Autonomous vehicles were right around the corner, and that would change the way they lived and where they lived. They had to look at what kind of community people wanted to spend more time in as they potentially lived where they worked. In making improvements to safety and walkability, making room for alternate modes of transportation like scooters and e-bikes made a lot of sense to him. He noticed that it had been integrated into the Plan, and he was happy to see those things addressed. Regarding the road diets for Drexelgate and Barclay Circle, as someone who drove them a lot, he felt that it was clearly needed. It would not just be a safety improvement but a quality of life improvement.

It would also have a traffic calming effect. He stated that it was a fantastic Plan, and he thanked everyone for their hard work in putting it together.

Chairperson Brnabic said that she had a bit of a safety concern with the road diet for Barclay Circle. She claimed that the road was extremely busy. She mentioned the Chase Bank at Rochester and Barclay Circle and the difficulties people had exiting. The left turn lane on Rochester Rd. was always backed up to turn on to Barclay Circle, and she noted the east/west traffic from Wabash to Barclay Circle. She had a concern about adding bike lanes in that vicinity because of the traffic and drivers not paying attention. The road would be taken from four lanes to two lanes, which was a concern. She said that she absolutely supported alternate forms of transportation, but she felt that the area she had mentioned deserved a little more discussion because of its situation. She supported something like an Uber contract that offered discounted rides versus something like Smart. She remarked that she also supported having a bigger font. She thanked the presenters, and stated that the Plan was very well put together and appreciated. She opened the discussion to the public.

Tom Yazbeck, 1707 Devonwood Dr., Rochester Hills, MI 48307. *Mr. Yazbeck stated that he was really glad that the City was embracing non-motorized transportation. He liked the bike lanes planned for a lot of locations and the addition of sidewalks and crosswalks. He was happy to see the progress that had been made to the Auburn Rd. corridor. He did feel that it was regrettable that City Council continued to oppose Smart, and he felt that they should reconsider that opposition. He thought that a lot of the new developments were making public transportation more viable in the community. Currently, the only public transportation Rochester Hills had was the OPC transit service that served people with disabilities and seniors. It was an essential service that had helped his relatives, but it had huge limitations that prevented it from being a reliable commute option. In his opinion, joining Smart would be the best way for Rochester Hills to provide a transit solution for everyone. A lot of similar communities had voted every year to be a part of Smart. He was a Smart rider, and he said that there were others in Rochester Hills who were as well. They had to drive to get to the bus stops. He was not an employee of Smart, but he had been following their plans for improvement for the next five years or so. They were rolling out micro-transit, which he felt would be a much better solution and more affordable than Uber or Lyft contracts. He believed that the Council and Mayor strove to maintain an innovative, inclusive and sustainable City and had a long history of fostering regional cooperation, and he felt that opting into Smart would be*

an excellent way to show how committed the City was to its civic values.

Corey Rowe, 1556 Charter Oak Dr., Rochester Hills, MI 48309. *Mr. Rowe noted that he was an OU graduate. He thanked everyone for exploring transportation mobility improvements for the community with the Transportation Plan. He said that he was also a frequent Smart rider between Troy and his graduate courses at Wayne State. He expressed his shared support for bringing Smart service to the City. He realized that there had been some mixed discussion. He stated that micro-mobility was something that Smart had been focusing on heavily. It had been brought to Farmington Hills recently, and they planned to bring it to other communities. In the past four months, they had expanded service around the area, including to Troy Beaumont. He stated that their service had only been getting better, and since the City had been creating walkable places, such as the Brooklands District and with the proposed Hamlin Circle improvements, he felt that it was an important next step. He would like to see all employees, residents and students have equal access to those places the City was building. He also mentioned that the OU shuttle had been discontinued last year, which left students on campus without a car no way of traveling to places around town. He had been one of those students. He lived in a dorm for a year without a car. He did not think that should be an issue for a major university with 20,000 students. He felt that the City should reconsider Smart and allow it to come to a vote.*

Scott Struzik, 2735 Stonebury Dr., Rochester Hills, MI 48307. *Mr. Struzik said that he greatly appreciated the time and effort that the Planning Commission, City Council and City staff put into guiding the growth of the City and its transportation infrastructure. He complimented staff, HRC and MKSK on their efforts to incorporate public feedback into the document. The draft Plan was crafted on a foundation of metrics and data and refined with feedback from the residents of Rochester Hills. Some of the aspects of the Plan that he was very excited about and supported were the road diets for Drexelgate, Hampton Circle and Barclay Circle. He thought it was great that the Plan was addressing roads that were built too wide. To Chairperson Brnabic's point, he did not think that the intention of the Plan was to remove all of the lanes for Barclay Circle at the intersections. He lived within walking distance of the area, and he maintained that Barclay Circle was too wide. He did not think that there was enough traffic to justify two through lanes in each direction. He agreed with adding bike lanes on Hampton and Barclay Circle. He agreed with the addition of a continuous center turn lane for Auburn Rd. from Barclay Circle to Culbertson and the completion of*

several pathways throughout the City to provide critical connections for pedestrians and bicyclists. The access management considerations would help increase safety and decrease congestion, especially at the intersections. Regarding the improvements for pedestrian safety over M-59, he greatly preferred Alternative B, which provided a dedicated safe space for non-motorized traffic that would be great. He walked and biked over that road a lot, and he felt very unsafe. He said that the planning process had received a lot of feedback regarding transit. Transit was something that folks in the City, including him, were already using. In order for him to take a Smart bus to his job downtown, he had to first drive to Troy. He said that he would love to see the City explore expanding the bus system to include Rochester Hills and to connect its residents to the rest of the region. He suggested looking at more roundabouts in the future. He would like to see one at John R and Hamlin and John R and Avon. He claimed that roundabouts greatly reduced fatalities and serious injury accidents. He would also like to see more mid-block crossings on some of the major roads. He thanked everyone for their time and review of the Transportation Master Plan. He was very excited about the transportation infrastructure throughout the City, which he was proud to call home.

Kristy Plesscher noted that she did not live in Rochester Hills, but she worked at the **Leader Dogs for the Blind, 1039 S. Rochester Rd., Rochester Hills, MI 48307** as a certified orientation and mobility specialist. She stated that what the City had done so far to make it walkable and accessible for people with disabilities was very impressive. She had worked in other cities and states, and the accessibility features here were among the best. She said that it was really inspiring to see the team working to make that even more robust, and she thanked everyone for their efforts. She also wanted to express her support for fixed route bus services in Rochester Hills. As Mayor Barnett had stated, Rochester Hills strove to be the premier place to live, work and raise a family. She said that it was difficult to underestimate the value of a robust public transportation option for people who were non-drivers, and she felt that equal access to the community was the best way to make Rochester Hills a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Mayor Barnett thanked the residents for their constructive comments. He indicated that one of the hallmarks of a good City was one that was looking forward and planning for its future. That was why they did a Transportation Plan and a five-year Economic Strategy which would be presented shortly in the meeting. He was happy to see the statistics

about roads in good condition going up and in poor going down, and he praised DPS. He said that it took a commitment by the City Council, and it was nice to see the residents recognizing that. He noted that he had been heavily involved in the public transportation issue from several different angles over the last decade. He was generally a fan of public transportation, and he had seen it work in a lot of places in his travels across the country, but the City would always be incredibly protective of its residents. To date, they had not seen a really good proposal for public transportation, although the folks from Smart had come the closest. He knew that they were continuing to refine their plan, and he encouraged continued conversations. However, nothing had come close to service levels where he would feel comfortable in supporting it. He understood the need for moving people around and that mobility had changed dramatically. He mentioned the ride that only took people from OU to Rochester/Rochester Hills. There were about 60,000 users in 2013. Last year, there were 7,000. That was from a commuter school, and there was a dramatic decline in the use of that type of fixed bus route. He felt that a Uber-like approach was the way of the future and the only way it would work in Rochester Hills. They held a survey last year that asked about public transportation, and 38% of people agreed or strongly agreed that public transportation would be helpful. 31% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and the remainder had no opinion. However, only 5% of the public would pay for it at the rate that Smart was proposing. They would have to present a plan that was palatable and valuable. The recognized value would be a public willing to pay for it. They would have to raise the percentage from 5% to more than 50%. To date, there had not been a cohesive plan that addressed the specific needs of the residents of the City. The City was not anti-public transportation and would love to be a regional partner, which Rochester Hills did in every way, but they had to protect the citizens and make sure that what they were getting was worth what they were paying for. The conversation would have to evolve to meet the needs of the residents, and they would continue it moving forward.

Ms. Roediger recapped that the Plan would be up for public comment for the next week and that it would be presented at the next Planning Commission and City Council meetings for endorsement.

2021-0023 Economic Development Strategy - Planning and Economic Development Department

Ms. Roediger introduced Pam Valentik, Manager of Economic Development and the City's new Economic Development Specialist, Michelle Carley, who joined the City several months ago. She noted that Ms. Carley had many years of marketing experience in the private sector

in a number of industries. She turned it over to Ms. Valentik.

Ms. Valentik stated that creating a strong business community was not something new for Rochester Hills, and they had been doing economic development for a long time. However, the Strategy was new, and she was very excited to bring it before the members. She maintained that economic development was not just accomplished by an Economic Development Manager or Economic Development Specialist - it was very much a team effort. They relied on the Planning and Economic Development Department and other departments to truly deliver customer service. The Mayor provided a face of leadership when talking with prospects. The Planning Commission and City Council set the policies that managed the City and helped celebrate the wins. They relied on other external partners, whether it was the Michigan Economic Development Corp., Oakland County, the Chamber or others to help deliver economic development efforts. She commented that interestingly enough, 2020 was a good year for economic development strategies. The MEDC and Oakland County recently adopted new economic development strategies. For the past year, she had been sitting on the task force with SEMCOG, as it was finalizing details for a regional economic development strategy. She stated that the timing for the City's Strategy was perfect, and they were building off of their successes and working to support their regional partners' strategies. She emphasized that any good strategy included constantly watching the market. They had seen some major disrupters in the past few years, such as the transitioning of the auto industry into all things about mobility, Industry 4.0, the next industrial revolution, and retail shifts to online and the effect that would have on retail real estate. She knew that Commissioners Hooper and Reece could speak to what was happening in the construction industry. Prices for materials and labor were rising, and they had to be mindful of that when bringing in new projects or in trying to attract new projects. They had to think about tomorrow's workforce. She stated that there were a lot of unknowns in their ability to plan. The pandemic and economy were selective. In talking with real estate brokers, she had found that they were having their best year ever. In talking with a restaurant or dry cleaner or retail store owner, they were really struggling. They were constantly looking for trends or data to track the needs of their businesses to make sure the strategy reflected those. Seeing more empty office buildings meant that more residents were working from home. It was creating a new face for what they would see in the office market. She stated that the industrial market was on fire. Companies were moving out of the City and back into the suburbs. In July, Michigan reported the highest number of new business startups in

over ten years. She indicated that as with any strategies, there were strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Some could be controlled, some could not. Some things would change and some things never would. She was always looking for opportunities for such things like expanding the industry clusters they had, promoting the City image, recognizing that they were in a hot real estate market and always engaging with their companies. All of it was working towards a vision - to retain and attract good companies in order to provide quality careers for the residents and to attract talent for the larger region.

Ms. Valentik said that their role was to be a sales team promoting the City. Their strategy had to reflect who the customers really were. She showed a list of customers, including a small business that operated a store, a home-based entrepreneur, a medium-sized manufacturing company and a large international firm. It also included the work force who were critical to the businesses. It was also about the property owners and developers because they made sure there was quality, affordable real estate.

Ms. Valentik mentioned the five key elements she believed would work to maintain Rochester Hills' community of good businesses and continue to make sure that it was the preeminent place to invest, work and thrive. They included fostering entrepreneurship, attracting national movers and shakers, boosting international business development, supporting property owners and developers and welcoming talent and workforce.

Ms. Valentik stated that small businesses were the majority and the life of the community. The City was proud of the entrepreneurs in the community. They needed the small businesses to support the Auburn Rd. corridor improvements. The businesses needed help to survive that construction as well. They held meetings with those business owners and shared that there were business counseling services and training programs and marketing ideas, and they connected them with the Chamber. When the business to consumer businesses really needed help this year, the City was there. Staff passed out PPE kits, provided promotional support and helped with financing programs. In 2020, the economic development team provided assistance to over 600 businesses for their immediate and long-term needs.

Ms. Valentik said that nothing made her more proud than to read headlines about the City's businesses, for example, when 2491 Street Food opened its first Michigan location. She was especially proud when she heard that Molex was relocating its headquarters from Auburn Hills to

Rochester Hills. She remarked that any time they could see Robert Redford and Rochester Hills in the same headline, they were doing something right (his Sundance franchise was coming to the Village later in the year). It was those types of headlines that brought positive, global PR to the community. Within certain industries, it really put Rochester Hills on the map. She mentioned that a couple of years ago, she had attended a robotics trade show in Chicago and she had the opportunity to meet some business executives from New Zealand. She was asked where she was from and mentioned Rochester Hills but before she could point it out further, the gentleman said that he knew where Rochester Hills was, because he had been there, and it was the headquarters of FANUC America. She stressed that they wanted to bring more of those movers and shakers to the community.

Ms. Valentik indicated that she could not take all the success for the direct foreign investment in the City. About ten years ago, they were pleased to welcome a new French company to town, Rayconnect. Since that time, Rayconnect had brought five additional operations to the City, including its North American headquarters. They currently employed close to 400 people in the community. She recalled the City's property on Hamlin Rd. when they were trying to find a buyer. The buyer ended up being a Germany company right across the street - JENOPTIK. They were exploding globally and needed to build a state of the art tech campus and found the City's property a great opportunity. The City's most recent success was its partnership with AdduXi and the creation of its French Corner. The French Corner was an incubator for French companies that might be looking to enter the U.S. market. In the 20 months since they had opened, they had secured 14 businesses and had even garnered a visit from the French Ambassador of the United States. She advised that there were 50 foreign-owned businesses in Rochester Hills. Since 2015, international companies had brought \$120 million of new investment, creating and retaining 1,025 jobs. She stated that all of it was based off of their relationships, and she would continue to market Rochester Hills' attractiveness to international companies.

For years, Ms. Valentik had been holding retention visits with businesses and when she asked their biggest need, it was always talent. In 2014, the Mayor's Business Council met with businesses to share the resources available to help them fill jobs and find new talent. They also developed a program called Talent Connect, which was a partnership with universities, where they brought in new graduates to meet with businesses and hopefully to retain that talent in the City. They engaged youth when looking for opportunities to educate tomorrow's workforce. The City had

prided itself on having a record low unemployment rate, which was currently close to 4%. However, when selling a community to a prospect, that could be a negative. She tried to call it a good problem. The most important factor influencing a business decision was labor availability. It beat out things like real estate, taxes and incentives. She stressed that they would work to grow Rochester Hills' talented workforce.

Ms. Valentik mentioned the Village of Rochester Hills, which offered retailers a walkable, downtown feel with free parking. It was a lifestyle image that many retailers were looking for. EEI Global was a manufacturing building that people looking from the road or from the Trail would not know that it was. To appeal to the next generation of talent, businesses were sharing that a facility had to speak to a corporate culture and be a welcoming environment. The last piece of the Big 5 was to partner with property owners to maintain Class A commercial real estate and promote Rochester Hills to developers.

Ms. Valentik concluded that it was their strategy, and if the City agreed and supported the direction of the Big 5 to meet the City's mission to provide a long-term approach to economic development, she promised to spend every day focusing on working on it. Next would be to create an Action Plan to create specific programs and initiatives that would accomplish what they were trying to do. The Action Plan would identify any partners that would want to be involved in those programs and the resources needed. She mentioned that partners were already sharing ideas. Ms. Campbell of the Chamber had a whole list of things she wanted to do with the City based on the Big 5, and staff was very excited to roll up their sleeves and get into that. They would always listen to their customers' needs to determine their priorities as they moved forward.

Ms. Valentik mentioned that she had shared the strategy with partners, including SEMCOG, the Chamber, business owners and others, and the feedback they had received had been very positive. They believed that the City was moving in the right direction. She thanked everyone for the support they had given to the Planning and Economic Development Department and to the customers. She said that their support made her job a joy, even in the very difficult year they just had. She said that it had been an honor and pleasure working in the Planning and Economic Development Department and to follow the City's mission and strategy for how they could support their customers. Chairperson Brnabic stated that the strategy was excellent.

Mr. Hooper said that it was one of the great stories of Rochester Hills, led

by Mr. Roediger, Ms. Kapelanski, Ms. Valentik and their team. He stated that those ladies were absolute rock stars, and that the City was blessed to have them lead the Planning and Economic Development component of the City. He said that he absolutely supported the plan. He remarked that the leadership and intelligence shown by the ladies was phenomenal. He thanked Ms. Valentik for coming from Troy, and indicated that there was no question that her work showed.

Mr. Kaltsounis echoed Mr. Hooper's comments, and he said that the Strategy was great. He always said that there had to be a plan and an execution for the plan, and he thought that it was a really good first step. He mentioned fluidity and said that obviously, the environment was different. He stated that working from home had definitely changed industry. He had talked with some executives who said that they would like to keep people working at home. He wondered if they should be focusing more on the larger residential developments since there was not much space left to develop. He asked how they would keep businesses' footprints in the City.

Ms. Valentik said that she was not the best person to comment about the residential market. There were three things they were watching, and commercial real estate was one they were keeping a very close eye on. She said that a majority of their residents were in professional positions, and that was why they were able to work from home. For those businesses, she believed that the long-term strategy would turn into a hybrid situation. She did not think that businesses would completely move out of office buildings and close offices. Training new employees in a remote setting was difficult, and they wanted to make sure they were fostering a culture of teamwork. She thought that there would still be a need for office and commercial space. People might start to work from home half of the time. Her concern was what could happen with the retail side. They were seeing very big shifts in consumers' behavior, and Covid did not help retailers. It would take a change in customers' attitudes and perceptions. If footprints were getting smaller, they had to think about working with property owners and developers to make sure they were providing real estate to meet businesses' needs. There would be a balance of listening to the business owner customer and property developer customer as well. Mr. Kaltsounis said that he felt comfortable that the economic development team was looking out for the City, and he wished them much success in the future.

Mr. Hetrick said that the Plan was absolutely outstanding. The blueprint put together to create a vision for the future of how to manage much of the

uncertainty and have a game plan to be able to deal with it made sense to him, especially as a Council member. When he thought about things like the Auburn Rd. corridor, where, after seeing a blueprint, they had to come up with a lot of investment for the area, he knew that it was related to an economic development program that allowed them to make that investment. The Strategy gave them a vision so that as things evolved, and things came before them where they might have to allocate potentially significant funding, they would know where it was coming from. It gave him a level of comfort knowing that there was a game plan that would allow them to make decisions in a data driven way. He thanked Ms. Valentik for the great job.

Ms. Valentik said that they looked forward to bringing forward an Action Plan with greater details to identify resources needed and to be able to track metrics.

President Deel thanked the team for the presentation which he thought was fantastic. In Rochester Hills, more and more they had seen people living, working and raising a family. In some ways, he felt that life would return to normal, but in some ways, things would be changed for the good. They had to determine what they needed to give people who were doing all three things in the City. He loved the concept of treating the business community as customers. They had positioned themselves well with the Auburn Rd. corridor to be able to offer things people could not find anywhere else. He noted the increased park attendance during the pandemic. He knew that they were one of the desirable aspects of Rochester Hills. He asked staff to think about what the Council could do to allow them the flexibility to be able to sell the City. He asked them to think about things Council could do from a policy perspective that would allow for more flexibility for businesses, such as allowing more mixed uses on the same floor, and to be able to address the changing business climate.

Mr. Dettloff considered that 2020 had most likely presented the most challenges for Ms. Valentik in all her years with the City. He gave major kudos for keeping a positive attitude and putting together the Strategy. He echoed others' comments and stated that it was an outstanding job. He asked about Oakland County's level of support.

Ms. Valentik agreed that it had been a difficult year. It was much different than the 2009 recession in how things changed. Sometimes it was hard to respond, because they did not know what the businesses needed. She felt that Oakland County had done a fantastic job of rolling up their

sleeves, getting creative and finding money to help fund what the businesses needed. The PPE kits she passed out came from Oakland County, and the City was the distributor. She said that Oakland County was really trying to work with the small businesses. She thought that the implementation and sharing of programs with the local partners could be a little better, but the terms of the programs were changing daily. She added that with organizations working together, the businesses were going to get a lot of support. Mr. Dettloff said that to have success in unchartered waters was a huge accomplishment, and he appreciated the above board dedication.

Ms. Mungoli commented that it was great work, and she gave kudos to the team for their flexibility, adaptability and outreach to the businesses over the past year. She suggested helping connect some of the small businesses that did not have a web presence with web vendors to be able to shift their businesses more online. She would like to find out what trends there might be for small businesses. As people were shopping more online, she wondered how to mold the messaging in partnership with the Chamber to get people to buy online from a local business so they stayed vibrant in the community. That went with sustaining businesses and not having the City pick winners and losers but making sure that they all had equal opportunity. At some point, she would like to know more about the impact of State and Federal regulations, such as how an increased minimum wage might affect the small business community and how it might change the retail makeup in the City. Ms. Mungoli thanked Ms. Valentik, and said that she would be interested in seeing some of the trends and in having a discussion about the Action Plan. She remarked that the Mayor was lucky to have so many great people working with him.

Ms. Valentik responded that the Chamber was working to connect small businesses by creating a physical place for them to be able to come and learn and develop online tools. They were working on a series of videos, including how to host a webinar. She would be partnering with the Chamber to be able to promote that as a resource. Ms. Mungoli thanked her and said that she would like to know more about connecting with the non-profits in the community. They were used to doing in-person fund raising, and doing that kind of outreach electronically made it hard to raise funds. She realized that the non-profits might not be considered a business in the community, but they were very much a sustaining part.

Ms. Valentik thought that their new name was "Social Entrepreneurs," and as with all entrepreneurs, they would work to support them as well.

Chairperson Brnabic reiterated that the report had been very well done, and she thanked her for her presentation.

2021-0022 2020 Planning and Economic Development Department Annual Report

Ms. Roediger advised that as part of the State legislation, they were required to prepare an Annual Report of the Planning Dept.'s activities, which she noted, had been put together by Ms. Carley. How the year looked when it started and when it had ended were two very different things. Instead of focusing on business retention visits, they were passing out PPE kits and helping with grant writing and other things. Instead of focusing on zoning ordinance amendments, they were working to get all the boards up and running on Zoom and having virtual concept meetings to keep up progress with developments. She noted that the report summarized the actions of the Planning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Historic Districts Commission, the Local Development Finance Authority and the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and showed other data of activity. She indicated that despite the year they had, a number of developments had been approved, including adding over 200 diverse, multiple-family units to the City's housing stock. She was asking the Planning Commission to accept the document, and it would then be forwarded to City Council to accept. She stated that the team was very thankful for everyone's support, and she hoped that in 2021, they could get back to business and their original goals.

Mr. Kaltsounis noted that he appreciated the support he had as Secretary of the Planning Commission, but he thanked Ms. Gentry, who he said was the real Secretary. Hearing no further discussion, he moved the following:

MOTION by Kaltsounis, seconded by Reece, the Rochester Hills Planning Commission hereby accepts the 2020 Annual Report for the Planning and Economic Development Department.

A motion was made by Kaltsounis, seconded by Reece, that this matter be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 7 - Brnabic, Dettloff, Hooper, Kaltsounis, Reece, Bowyer and Weaver

Abstain 5 - Deel, Hetrick, Morita, Walker and Mungioli

Excused 1 - Blair

Chairperson Brnabic stated for the record that the motion had passed

unanimously.

Mr. Dettloff thanked staff for a great job, and he asked how the vacancy rates compared with 2019. He commented that the 2020 rates could have been a lot worse. Ms. Valentik said that they could see some of the rates going up in 2021, noting that restaurant closings and the holiday season might affect business decisions. She agreed with Mr. Dettloff and said that she was shocked to see that the rates were as low as they were. They would continue to watch the retail and office markets, but she advised that the City did not have a lot of office inventory.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Chairperson Brnabic said that it was always a pleasure working with City Council. The City was fortunate to have so many dedicated Council members representing the community. She said that they were also blessed to have a great Planning and Economic Development Department.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Chairperson Brnabic reminded the members that the next Planning Commission meeting was scheduled for February 16, 2021, and the next City Council meeting was scheduled for February 8, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no business to come before the Planning Commission and City Council and upon motion by Mr. Kaltsounis, seconded by Mr. Reece, Chairperson Brnabic adjourned the Joint Meeting at 9:35 p.m.

Deborah Brnabic, Chairperson
Rochester Hills Planning Commission

Nicholas O. Kaltsounis, Secretary

Ryan Deel, President
Rochester Hills City Council