



Rochester Hills

Minutes - Draft

Planning Commission

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Chairperson Deborah Brnabic, Vice Chairperson Greg Hooper
Members: Ed Anzek, Gerard Dettloff, Nicholas O. Kaltsounis,
Stephanie Morita, David A. Reece, C. Neall Schroeder, Ryan Schultz

Tuesday, May 15, 2018

6:00 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Deborah Brnabic called the Work Session to order at 6:05 p.m. in the Auditorium.

ROLL CALL

Present 9 - Ed Anzek, Deborah Brnabic, Gerard Dettloff, Greg Hooper, Nicholas Kaltsounis, Stephanie Morita, David Reece, C. Neall Schroeder and Ryan Schultz

Quorum present.

Also present: Sara Roediger, Director of Planning & Economic Dev.
Kristen Kapelanski, Manager of Planning
Jill Bahm and Eric Fazzini, Giffels Webster
Maureen Gentry, Recording Secretary

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2018-0095 Master Plan Work Session - Giffels Webster

Present for the discussion were Jill Bahm and Eric Fazzini, Giffels Webster, 1025 E. Maple, Suite 100, Birmingham, MI 48009.

Ms. Bahm advised that they would discuss the public input received to date and the three redevelopment sites. She and her team had been doing a lot of research and gathering of information, and they were starting to synthesize some things. They wanted to get the Planning Commission's reflections about the public input. They had provided summaries for all of the visioning as well as the survey and open house. Regarding the public input, she felt that it was important to note all of the opportunities that had been and would continue to be given to the community. There was an online survey that ran from January 8th to April 30th. It was completed by 748 people, which they were very pleased about. Picture This! was the online platform that encouraged people to submit photos and provide comments about what they liked about the City. For some reason, it did not resonate as well with people, and there

were only 18 responses. On April 23rd, an open house was held at Rochester College, and about 40 people attended. Following the open house, they put together a story map, which would be available soon on the City's website. A story map was like a little website, where someone could look at each of the stations that had been set up at the open house and the posters that had been on display. Comments people had provided were also available to read.

Ms. Bahm noted that the City held tours for various fourth grade classes. The students were asked to answer a couple of questions, including what they liked in the City and what they wanted to see near their schools. Lastly, there was an art contest for kids up to age 18. Ms. Roediger said that they divided the 20 entries received into age ranges of eight and under and nine to thirteen. Kids drew or took photos of their favorite places in Rochester Hills. The Directors voted on the four winners, and they would be displayed in the Master Plan and at City Hall.

Ms. Bahm said that as with past Master Plan processes, there were always people who said they never heard about it. She felt that it was important to highlight some of the outreach efforts to get the word out. There were posters on display at the library, the OPC, the resource room at City Hall and at other locations throughout the City. There had been press releases, newspaper articles, personalized emails from the Mayor, open meetings, a water bill mailing to 23,000 people, a promotional video and announcements on Facebook and City Hall's electronic signage. They covered print, display and social media.

Ms. Bahm announced that complete results of the survey would be available soon. They had created a text analysis that reflected the most common answers. One question asked people to share three things they liked the most about the City. Responses were green space, downtown, parks, schools, a community field, safety and trails and nature, which she did not think was surprising. The thing people would improve most was traffic. People were concerned about development and losing natural features. The challenges most people thought the City faced were traffic and congestion, development pressure, aging infrastructure and land use conflicts. She pointed out that the City's Master Thoroughfare Plan (MTP) would address traffic, but the Master Plan should consider the impact of land use on traffic. There might be other things they could do with non-motorized travel or land use patterns that did not require a lot of travel between destinations to help get some of the traffic off the roads. For the most part, people seemed to be satisfied with the appearance of the City.

Mr. Anzek asked if anything in the survey cited specific sites related to land use conflicts. Ms. Bahm said that Premier Academy came up quite a bit.

Ms. Bahm next brought up housing. They asked people if they were to consider moving from their current home, if Rochester Hills provided what they wanted. Some people wanted a smaller home or a home with less maintenance. Some wanted a larger home. People wanted to live closer to where they worked or closer to outdoor recreation areas and cultural opportunities. People wanted to live in an area with more transportation options. Most people said that they thought they could get what they wanted in Rochester Hills. People said that they would like ranch, rental or condo homes that were more affordable. Regarding specific housing types for first or second time buyers, single-family, detached homes still seemed to be the most popular type people would like to see. Even though people expressed an interest in smaller housing and more affordable homes, attached condos and townhomes, it was close between “encourage” and “discourage.” Rental apartments were not encouraged at all. Senior housing was encouraged.

Ms. Bahm brought up transportation next. The City wanted to recognize the role of land use in the MTP. Generally, most people traveled around the City in their own vehicle. Some traveled by bicycle to certain locations, mostly parks or friends’ homes, and only 13% of respondents used a private transportation service such as Uber.

Ms. Bahm stated that parks were encouraged by nearly all respondents. If there was some vacant land, people living nearby would like it to stay in its natural state or made a park. That was not always doable, not only from a private property standpoint, but also for the operational and long-term maintenance of parks.

Regarding small scale retail and restaurants, entertainment and cultural uses, they were encouraged by a majority of respondents. People also liked the idea of mixing uses. Manufacturing uses were discouraged. Common responses to goods and services people would like to see were restaurants, transportation options, public transit, Costco and a splash pad. The survey asked what the three most important qualities people looked for in a community, and most people said school districts, family friendly and access to natural features, good quality services and proximity to retail and restaurants. One question asked was whether people would recommend living in Rochester Hills, and most people said

that they would. There were several comments about housing and transportation.

Ms. Bahm talked about the open house, which was held on April 23, 2018. There were five stations. One was called Planning for Change. That was intended to be food for thought, giving people context for technology, changing ways people lived and worked and how that might impact how they continued to live and work in the City. There were some demographics of existing conditions. There was a station on housing, the redevelopment sites and one for open comments. The responses to housing were very consistent with the survey responses. People wanted smaller housing types that were more affordable than those currently available. People wanted to stay in the community but go from a larger home to something smaller, but they were not sure they could afford it. People talked about wanting natural features to continue with the protections the City had in place as well as expand those.

Ms. Bahm said that the fourth grade survey was probably her favorite. The kids had such wild responses. She loved it that 12 kids thought a Ferris wheel was a good thing to have near their school. Some of their favorite places in the City were their house, the parks, The Village and downtown. That was very consistent. Mr. Anzek saw that fourth graders really liked Starbucks. Ms. Bahm added that they liked smoothies and cookies and donuts. They liked food and ice cream places. There were more creative responses in the complete report.

Mr. Dettloff asked if the attendance picked up at the open house. Ms. Bahm said that it really did not. Doing it from 4-7 p.m. seemed like a good time to do it, but she was surprised that more people did not come.

Mr. Schroeder noted the one comment about green spaces downtown, and he asked if people were referring to downtown Rochester. Ms. Bahm agreed that they were. Mr. Schroeder felt that there were a lot of people who did not know the difference between Rochester and Rochester Hills. Ms. Bahm said that was absolutely true, because people did not necessarily pay attention to the jurisdictional boundaries.

Mr. Schroeder brought up attached condos versus single-family site condos, and he wondered what comments were received about attached condos. Ms. Bahm said that the comments were mixed. People were looking for nice homes that were more affordable over those that were currently available. Some people felt things were too dense. She stated that would be the balancing act they would explore as they moved forward.

They should try to determine how to provide the kind of housing that kept people or let new people move in to the City in appropriate places.

Ms. Morita said that she looked at the documentation they received back in March, and she got confused. In the most recent submittal, the table numbers did not match with what was in the text. It appeared that it was correct before, but it was no longer correct. Ms. Bahm said that they would make sure they were corrected. She offered that it was still very much a working draft, and she apologized. Ms. Morita said that it took her a lot longer to get through it, because she did not know what she was supposed to be looking at. Sometimes, table one would be next to chart one, and it got confusing. She suggested that instead of using chart and table, that they used the word inset and make it numerical. Whether it was a chart or a table would not matter. She felt that would make it a lot easier to follow. The numbering was off. She referred to page seven under Population and Households and it read, "As can be seen in table two below.." However, below that was actually chart one. She thought that they were referring to table two on the next page. On page 15, there were diagrams with no numbers. On page 19, it referred to a table nine, but there was no table nine. There was a table 10 on the next page, but she did not know if that was table nine or not. Table 10 on page 20 had a typo. It should have read (EXCLUDING ONLINE SALES), but SALES was spelled SALS. On page 23, the table shown at the last meeting was supposed to be updated, but it was not. There were typos in the chart. On page seven, State (of Michigan) was not capitalized, and "the" before it should have been capitalized, because it was a proper noun. She said that she tried to read and get through it, but she got frustrated not knowing which chart or diagram was being referred to, and she threw her hands up about halfway through.

Ms. Bahm asked Ms. Morita if she had any comments about the content. Ms. Morita said that she could not even get there, because she did not know what she was supposed to be looking at. She noticed that the historic districts reference had been removed and some changes were made, and she thanked them for that. She wanted to make sure it was not going to City Council any time soon. Ms. Bahm said that it was a long way from going anywhere. She apologized, and agreed that it made things confusing and harder to follow. Ms. Morita said that it made it harder for her to provide constructive feedback when it was hard for her to read. She indicated that she read difficult stuff all day long, and she had been frustrated with the set.

Mr. Reece asked what people meant or what value it was when people

talked about affordable housing. Ms. Bahm said that people were not specific with a dollar amount. She had a conversation with someone at the open house who said that when she wanted to downsize, she wanted to downsize the house, but she did not want to have to pay more money than she currently did. There was a concern by those retiring and empty nesters who might have a more limited income. Mr. Reece said that it was about attracting younger people. Ms. Bahm said that young professionals and college students talked about having the opportunity for smaller homes that were more affordable. Mr. Reece thought that it would be helpful to find out what that price point was. There was not a lot of land left, and developers would not develop land without a return on investment, particularly with homes that were \$150k. They continued to see developments starting at \$350-400k and higher. He did not know if affordable housing was a realistic expectation for the City. Ms. Bahm said that they might think about alternative types of housing, not single-family homes that were \$150k, but perhaps accessory dwellings allowed on a larger lot. Those were concepts they might want to talk about as a way to provide opportunities without relegating a whole area of \$150k homes. They could perhaps be mixed into other types of development. Maybe there were opportunities with commercial and residential for densifying and redeveloping an area. They might offset the costs of housing by allowing other uses.

Ms. Bahm explained that there would be three redevelopment sites to focus on. First was Cardinal Veteran's Landfill area at M-59 and Hamlin. It was the old softball site with 97 acres. It was adjacent to the Clinton River Trail, and it contained landfill and non-landfill properties. The current zoning was Regional Employment Center. There was a consent judgment that governed the property from 2004. It allowed quite a bit of development on the site, which she felt was appropriate considering the future land use designation. It allowed two million s.f. of office, hotel and commercial, a maximum of 500k s.f. of free-standing retail with a significant number of stories and varied setbacks, and it was intended to be built as a cohesive development through a PUD. Remediation would be required on the site, so there was the ability to add a lot to the site to recoup some of those costs. They asked people at the open house about this as a redevelopment site, and there was no interest in seeing any big box retail or medical buildings. Their ideas included detached condos or ranch homes with manageable yards, a walkable neighborhood and institutional uses or live/work.

Mr. Anzek asked if they (Giffels) pursued further to find out why there was objection to medical uses. Ms. Bahm said that they did not. They had

been written comments. Mr. Anzek said that was surprising. Ms. Bahm suggested that was something they could explore further. Giffels had identified what they understood to be the history, but they needed to know more about what had happened in the past and what constraints or limitations there were. The questions about what the public did or did not want to see there were only asked at the open house. She wanted to hear from the Commissioners about any other constraints they were aware or ideas they had for the site. Mr. Schroeder asked if there were any questions about infill with big houses in smaller, older residential areas. Ms. Bahm said that it was not discussed for that location.

Ms. Bahm felt that there were opportunities to develop a cohesive neighborhood and to use interior road networks to provide better access management in the area and take some of the pressure off of Hamlin. If it were built out to the extent permitted by the consent, it would increase the tax revenue. She pointed out that the consent could always be modified with agreement between the property owner and the City. If there was something different that was desired by the City from what the consent judgment allowed, how it could be changed could be discussed with the property owner. She thought it would be helpful to be as clear as possible in the Master Plan update to let the development community or property owners know what the City would really like to see there. She asked if there were any other comments about the site or things they should know about the site and the surrounding area.

Ms. Morita asked if they explained the environmental problems and methane when they talked to people about the site. Ms. Bahm said that they did not have the environmental report for that site. Ms. Morita questioned whether people would still think it was a good idea to have residential homes on that site if they knew about the environmental concerns.

Mr. Fazzini said that people were not even aware of the consent judgment, and that it was developable. He talked with a few people from the neighborhood to the north that expressed interest in what happened to the site, but the comments on desired uses were varied. They primarily wanted to see green and open space with some interest in residential development, similar to what their neighborhoods had.

Ms. Morita believed that there was a project proposed for the site with medical office buildings in conjunction with the School of Medicine at Oakland University. Mr. Anzek agreed that it was a target the City was pursuing when Dr. Russi was the President at OU. Beaumont wanted to

locate its medical school and a hospital on the site.

Mr. Anzek said that all the uses spelled out in the consent were not a guess; it was based on sewer capacity. REI was the developer, and Schostak Brothers had taken control. It went from an office developer to a retail developer. There had been a lot of interested parties, and Pamela Valentik, the City's Manager of Economic Development, has had six qualified firms that could locate there. Aside from the two million s.f., the other premise of the consent was that the contaminated fill would be removed, and clean fill would be brought in. Someone would be obligated to do some venting and leachate collection, and it was anticipated that it would be a clean site. He suggested that residential could be a possibility.

Ms. Morita said that she recalled from her time on the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority that some of the depth of the fill was 20 or 30 feet. Mr. Anzek said that it was 40. Ms. Morita advised that the developer was looking at leaving some in place and venting it and putting in piers and a building on top of that, and it was really complicated. Mr. Anzek said that REI looked at several options. They put down ten-foot high piles of dirt to measure the settling from year to year. They concluded that every year they would have to add another eight inches of asphalt on parking lots. Ten inches of dirt was equal to a base and an asphalt overlay in weight. They could put buildings on pilings, but parking lots on pilings was very expensive. He agreed that it was a difficult site. When the removal was considered viable was when the land was so inexpensive. They figured that once they did the removal, it would still be below market in 2003.

Mr. Kaltsounis asked if someone could do the work that had to be done and then add a subdivision by a highway and make enough money doing it. Mr. Bahm did not think someone could do just housing. Mr. Kaltsounis wondered if they needed to focus more on something other than housing. Ms. Bahm said that was a good point. There was a site that had to be cleaned, and it would not happen without some sort of benefit to the owner. She felt that the community should be aware of that as it they looked through the Master Plan. In exchange for cleaning the land, there would be redevelopment. People would be concerned about traffic, density and appearance. They had to figure out if there were things they could do to the site to make it a little less impactful, such as adding interior road connections, landscaping standards, and other non-motorized and transit opportunities. Mr. Anzek said that if she had not seen it, Ms. Bahm should take a look at the M-59 Corridor Study. It

showed how to route some roads across the site, connecting to Avon Industrial and to the M-59/Crooks interchange. The counts back then were about 22,000 per day on Hamlin Rd. and it was designed for 56,000 trips per day, so there was some cushion to handle some traffic. He thought that they could look for better access from the site to the Hamlin/Adams interchange. Drivers had to go down Hamlin and make a Michigan left the way it was currently.

Ms. Morita thought that the other thing they needed to consider, especially if there were residents who thought housing should go there, was that people did not have any concept about how noisy it was. She was farther away from the intersection, and it was loud, and she did not think anyone would want to site a home there.

Mr. Fazzini talked about the Hamlin/Avon landfill area. There were mixes of landfill and non-landfill properties designated on the Future Land Use map. The section (24) was divided by School Rd. There were areas with a high likelihood of development, some with medium, some low and some were unlikely to be developed. He pointed out the Kingston landfill, which was originally a sand and gravel extraction site with legal landfilling beginning in the 1970's, including legal steel slag in 1977. In 1983, new owners began improving site drainage and filled unused portions of the pit with clay. In 2014, a rezoning request was submitted and denied to develop the site west of that (Six Star) as a 77 acre, 490-unit manufactured home park. The applicant's environmental analysis stated that there was municipal waste 30-35 feet deep. Sinking and ventilation was a primary concern for development of a park. He pointed out Helen V. Allen Park, south of School Rd. and said that a connection, either physical or parkland, could be pursued through the less likely developable area to Borden Park. The connection could be on separate parcels to the rear of the existing industrial uses on Hamlin Rd. A physical connection would be dependent on navigating the Ladd Drain, a small pond and the Kingston pit and tying into that. A common comment at the open house was to support redevelopment of the landfill as green space or recreation uses. A secondary comment was for residential development. He said that there were four, independently-operated waste disposal sites at one time. Towards the northwest corner, there was a site where diseased trees were brought in from Highland Park. That was considered unstable but not contaminated.

Mr. Anzek said that the primary problem with Stan's Trucking, also known as Six Star, was that the landfill was not lined at the bottom. For years, the City had been trying to determine what to do with those sites. They did

not have highway frontage, and there was not a good draw. There were some potential and viable uses. At one time, it was considered for a nine-hole golf course. If the Highland Park piece was included, it could have been an 18-hole course. That was a pursuit until SOCCRA decided to keep their land. There was a lawsuit years ago, and the City was awarded surface rights. They thought that a golf course would be fine, but SOCCRA wanted to keep it for (perhaps) a golf course, but nothing had happened with it. As far as what could be there, he would not want to see a couple hundred acres of RV storage parks. He suggested that it could be fun to pursue the SOCCRA land as an experimental solar farm. The surface would not have to be penetrated. The schools could run it, and the City could share in the revenue. The other possibility could be open recreational fields. A lot of people had looked at the sites for open and enclosed soccer fields. The large tract on Dequindre could handle several soccer fields. That would not be offensive to neighbors, because there were none.

Chairperson Brnabic asked if the methane gas was still being monitored down School Rd. Mr. Anzek said that it absolutely was - it was permanent. All of the homes on the east side of Park St. had some type of computer monitor or wire sensor buried in the backyards that was connected to a system in a shed on School Rd. There was also venting for the methane. After there was a blast in April 2000, 12-inch pipes were put in with holes to draw the methane out of the ground. There was a burn out there for several years to burn off the methane. Mr. Fazzini added that it was monitored bi-weekly.

Ms. Bahm noted that Bordine's was the third redevelopment site. They reassured folks at the open house that it was not imminent, but the City was aware that at some point, the family could want to sell the property. The City should identify some things they would like to see there. There was a concept in early 2007 for 300k s.f. of retail space, an 84k s.f. nursery, 72 dwelling units and a walkable environment. It was a little like The Village. The recession came, and nothing happened with the site. Because of the changing face of retail, they did not know if something of that magnitude would still be viable. They might want to consider more residential, such as the smaller, more affordable and flexible units they discussed. They could provide guidance in the Master Plan to encourage that type of development. She asked if anyone had any thoughts.

Mr. Dettloff asked if the owners were actively seeking to do something. Ms. Bahm did not think so. Ms. Roediger said that they were not actively,

but they sometimes looked to see if there were rising opportunities.

Mr. Anzek stated that the future of retail was uncertain. There would not be one big Amazon. The future was putting a little fear in shops and anchors about making a big financial commitment. He liked the idea of a mixed-use, well planned, walkable development. That was what made The Village so successful. He thought that something like that could work. When he spoke with the folks from Bordine's, they always wanted to be at that corner, because it was a very high volume, retail corner. They grew the crops up in Grand Blanc, but they loved selling out of the site. He liked the idea of housing on the second or third floor. He thought that they had to be open to anything. They could not state that it should be housing or it should be something else - he thought that it should be all of them. Ms. Bahm summarized that he liked flexibility and walkability. Mr. Anzek thought that was the desire with everything the Commissioners were working on. Ms. Bahm considered the residential rooftops across the street. Mr. Anzek noted the bank that was just approved north of Bordine's. Ms. Bahm asked if four stories would be acceptable. Mr. Anzek said that it depended. If it was located in the center, he did not think it would be intrusive.

Ms. Bahm noted that over the next two months, Giffels would take the suggestions and all the input and come up with some recommendations to discuss with the Planning Commission at the July meeting. They anticipated having a second open house for the draft Plan in late summer, and in early fall, there would be distribution of the Plan to the reviewing bodies. Then in the middle to late fall, they would hold the public hearing for adoption.

Discussed

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business to come before the Planning Commission.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Chairperson Brnabic reminded the Commissioners that the next Work Session would be held on July 17, 2018 prior to the Regular Meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business to come before the Planning Commission and upon motion by Mr. Schroeder, seconded by Mr. Kaltsounis, Chairperson

Brnabic adjourned the Work Session at 6:59 p.m.

Deborah Brnabic, Chairperson
Rochester Hills Planning Commission

Nicholas O. Kaltsounis, Secretary