



Rochester Hills

Minutes

Planning Commission

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Chairperson Deborah Brnabic, Vice Chairperson Greg Hooper
Members: Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Anthony Gallina, Dale Hetrick, Marvie
Neubauer, Scott Struzik and Ben Weaver
Youth Representatives: Janelle Hayes and Siddh Sheth

Tuesday, February 18, 2025

5:30 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

In compliance with the provisions of Michigan's Open Meetings Act, Public Act No. 267 of 1976, as amended, notice was hereby given that THE ROCHESTER HILLS PLANNING COMMISSION would hold a SPECIAL WORK SESSION on Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the Auditorium at the Rochester Hills Municipal Offices, 1000 Rochester Hills Dr., Rochester Hills, Michigan 48309 to discuss the City's Master Land Use Plan along with the City's consultants Giffels Webster.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Brnabic called the Planning Commission Special Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m., Michigan Time.

ROLL CALL

Present 7 - Deborah Brnabic, Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Anthony Gallina, Marvie Neubauer, Dale Hetrick and Scott Struzik
Excused 2 - Greg Hooper and Ben Weaver

Others Present:

Sara Roediger, Planning and Economic Development Director
Chris McLeod, Planning Manager
Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary

Mr. Hooper and Mr. Weaver provided prior notice that they would not be in attendance and were excused.

Chairperson Brnabic welcomed attendees to the Special Work Session. She noted that if anyone would like to speak during Public Comment or under the discussion item to fill out a comment card, and hand that card to Ms. MacDonald. She noted that all comments and questions would be limited to three minutes per person.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Thomas Yazbeck, 1707 Devonwood Drive, expressed concerns that the City's Master Plan may not be innovative enough. He highlighted that household sizes are shrinking and demand for diverse housing types is growing, but restrictive zoning limits housing supply and prevents people from finding suitable housing. Yazbeck argued that walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods are

desirable and better for seniors aging in place. He urged the City to be innovative and consider solutions like accessory dwelling units, reduced parking requirements, smaller lot sizes, and mixed-use development, suggesting pilot projects to test these solutions in specific areas.

Scot Beaton, 655 Bolinger, noted that dwelling units over garages are also called FROGS (finished room over garage), and stated that they could bring more housing options. He expressed concerns about the need to listen to young people and the importance of education, highlighting the high ranking of Rochester schools. Beaton argued against urban sprawl and for increased density, suggesting exploring ways to reinvent the city and increase density in certain areas. He mentioned an upcoming proposal with transitional architecture that will be coming to the Regular Meeting later in the evening. He noted that 85 percent of the residents of the city do not want change, and this is understood that 85 percent of the areas will not change. He stressed that change can happen in certain areas.

DISCUSSION

2025-0041

Master Plan 2025

(McLeod Memo dated 2-13-25, Overview of Sustainability Priorities Discussion dated 2-12-25, Sustainability Background Information dated 2-12-25, Sustainability Bracket, and Minutes from the Planning Commission Regular Meeting of 12/10/24 and Worksessions of 12/10/24, 11/19/24, 10/15/24, 9/17/24, 7/16/24, 6/18/24, 5/21/24, 3/19/24 and PC-CC Joint Minutes of 1/29/24 had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.)

Present representing the City's Master Plan Consultant, Giffels Webster was Ian Hogg.

Ms. Roediger introduced the third and final topical discussion work session focused on sustainability in Rochester Hills. She emphasized that this Master Plan will be included on an interactive website, providing easily accessible information and recommendations. She highlighted Mr. McLeod's work in creating an interactive hub for the PED Annual Report and the updated Natural Features Inventory. She explained that the goal is to establish a baseline, and then brainstorm future recommendations for sustainability in the Master Plan.

Mr. McLeod provided a detailed description of an interactive Master Plan website that is being developed. He stated that it is driven by the desire to create a resource that is engaging and informative for the public and to create a plan that is not going to just sit on a shelf. He stated that this web-based format will be more accessible and user-friendly than a traditional PDF document.

He highlighted the online Natural Features Inventory, stating that the website is a combination of GIS and a story map that creates an intuitive interactive and hopefully attractive web map. He explained that it tells the story of the City's natural features and allows users to explore different aspects of the city's environment.

He showed how users can click on any parcel or enter an address to see if it is impacted by a natural feature, the quality of that feature, and relevant City ordinances. He noted that the map also provides detailed scores for each natural feature based on specific criteria, such as total habitat and core area.

He explained that the primary goal of the interactive master plan is to make information about the city's natural features easily accessible to both the public and city staff. He commented that he believes that this website will be a valuable tool for planning and decision-making, as well as for educating the public about the importance of environmental protection in a user-friendly and interactive approach.

He explained that there is a legend and scoring matrix included. He stated that the map includes detailed information about each natural feature, categorizing them as high, medium, or base quality, as defined in the Natural Features Inventory adopted last year. Users can delve deeper into specific features like wetlands and woodlands, and view how they are regulated within the city. The map also shows steep slopes and floodplains, including acreage data.

He added that the map compares natural features to land use, providing a visual representation of their impact. He highlighted a "before and after" feature, demonstrating that the city's natural features have remained largely unchanged over the past 20 years due to effective ordinances and enforcement. He noted that some areas, like woodlands, have even increased due to more accurate mapping and identification.

The map also identifies the most sensitive natural features in the city and describes their characteristics. He mentioned that the Forestry Division contributed to the identification and qualification of these features.

Mr. McLeod emphasized that this interactive map will be a valuable tool for both City Staff and the public, providing easy access to information about Rochester Hills' natural features.

Ms. Roediger noted that an interactive website is what is envisioned for the Master Plan, and could encompass tabs for individual neighborhoods allowing the user to zoom right in and find demographic data and specific recommendations for each neighborhood as well as the city as a whole. She commented that she has never seen anything like this from other communities. She stated that while it is very common to have interactive zoning maps and development maps, to have this level of information linked to the Ordinances making it pretty easy for the average resident to go and click on a parcel and find information is extremely transparent and huge.

Commissioners commented that this is an award-worthy type of accomplishment.

Ms. Roediger stated that a lot of the efforts in the coming year and beyond will include this more interactive web-based information.

She noted that Ian Hogg from Giffels Webster was in attendance to lead a

discussion about some of the different sustainability recommendations and topics to think about, and the worksession will include a sort-of March Madness-type game to get to the priorities. She explained that the group will make choices about priorities and see what the sustainability "final four" will be that will come out on top from the Planning Commission as things to focus on for the Master Plan moving forward. She indicated that with the Commissioners present, they would break into three groups.

Mr. Hogg explained the exercise, and how the groups would arrive at their "final four" in four categories. He stated that after the groups had the chance to find their "final four" each group would review their results.

The Commission broke into their groups and began the exercise. After the exercise, the groups summarized their results.

Group one highlighted their final four as wildlife and habitat preservation, being age-friendly, places to meet and connect with others including bike and walkability, and a supported workforce. This broke down into a final two of bike and walkability and being age-friendly. Bike and walkability was the ultimate final result.

Group two listed infrastructure and being bike-able, being age-friendly, supporting wildlife habitat, and fostering innovative technology and research. Wildlife and habitat preservation and fostering innovative technology and research made their final two, and the ultimate winner was fostering innovation and technology.

Group three reported that their "final four" of sustainability in Rochester Hills, the biking and walking, supporting the economic factors through quality local jobs, and high tech innovative technologies. Biking and walking was a final winner and was tied in with technology.

Group four stated that they discussed that they could pick whatever they wanted to pick, but would question how they would know if it was affordable. They mentioned stormwater as an imminent problem, walkability and viability around the schools, and stated that research and fostering innovative technologies could merge with creating local jobs, suggesting partnering with universities to create a network.

Ms. Roediger stated that the results will help guide the draft recommendations, and the next worksession would be in April. She mentioned that relative to economic development strategy, these are a lot of the things that Pam Valentik is working on and will be important in the long-term. She noted that the Master Plan will drill down into the neighborhoods, and suggested that they will be working with the Engineering Department to look where flooding problems most occur and could identify more specific targeted areas to focus on addressing stormwater.

A question was raised how to incentivize developers to actually plant trees rather than to pay into the Tree Fund.

Ms. Roediger noted that when the Tree Preservation Ordinance was updated a few years ago, it increased the percentage of trees on the property that had to be saved and noted that this obligation cannot be opted out of anymore.

Mr. McLeod noted that there are ongoing conversations with the Forestry Division relative to the cost of paying into the Tree Fund. He mentioned that the City's cost per tree is calculated low because of the ability to do bulk purchases, and this needs to be balanced between the City not being allowed to overcharge for things to make money.

The Commissioners asked if they were the first group to undertake this type of exercise.

Mr. Hogg noted that there were similar exercises; and mentioned that it was Ms. Roediger's and Mr. McLeod's idea to incorporate the idea of a "final four" bracket with March Madness coming up.

Ms. Roediger reviewed the upcoming timeline, noting that the goal is to use May as a month incorporating the next level for public involvement and push the draft plan out on social media and online, have a public meeting, and meet again with stakeholder groups. June will be a month to regroup and again look at the modifications and review comments and get a final draft prepared for review. She explained that State Law notes that the Master Plan must be out for public review for 90 days, and this will put the Plan out in draft form for comment over the summer with an anticipated fall adoption date. She thanked the Commissioners for their input this evening.

Discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no further discussion for the Work Session, it was moved by Denstaedt and seconded by Neubauer to adjourn the Work session at 6:50 p.m. The Planning Commission then reconvened for the Regular Meeting after a short break.

*Deborah Brnabic, Chairperson
Rochester Hills Planning Commission*

Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary