



# Rochester Hills

## Minutes

### Planning Commission / City Council

### Joint Meeting

1000 Rochester Hills Dr  
Rochester Hills, MI  
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Home Page:  
[www.rochesterhills.org](http://www.rochesterhills.org)

#### CITY COUNCIL

*David J. Blair, Jason Carlock, Ryan Deel, Carol Morlan,  
Theresa Mungioli, Marvie Neubauer, and David Walker*

#### PLANNING COMMISSION

*Deborah Brnabic, Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Anthony Gallina, Dale Hetrick,  
Greg Hooper, Marvie Neubauer, Scott Struzik, and Ben Weaver*

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Monday, January 29, 2024

7:00 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

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#### CALL TO ORDER

*Chairperson Brnabic called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and welcomed attendees, Mayor Barnett, President Deel and City Council members to the January 29, 2024 Joint Planning Commission and City Council meeting. She welcomed the consultants and City staff in attendance. She offered congratulations to Marvie Neubauer and Jason Carlock for their election to City Council, Theresa Mungioli and David Blair for their re-election to Council, and welcomed Dale Hetrick as an appointed member of the Planning Commission. She asked anyone wishing to make a public comment to fill out a speaker's card and to hand it to her.*

#### ROLL CALL

**Present** 13 - Jason Carlock, Ryan Deel, Carol Morlan, Theresa Mungioli, Marvie Neubauer, David Walker, Deborah Brnabic, Sheila Denstaedt, Gerard Dettloff, Anthony Gallina, Dale Hetrick, Scott Struzik and Ben Weaver

**Excused** 2 - David Blair and Greg Hooper

#### Others Present:

*Bryan Barnett, Mayor  
Sara Roediger, Planning and Economic Development Director  
Chris McLeod, Planning Manager  
Ken Elwert, Parks and Natural Resources Director  
Dennis Andrews, Parks Manager  
Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary*

*Council Member Blair and Mr. Hooper provided prior notice that they would not be in attendance and were excused.*

#### COMMUNICATIONS

*None.*

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

*Chairperson Brnabic opened the floor for public comment for non-agenda items. Seeing no members of the public wishing to speak and no comment cards submitted, she closed public comment at 7:05 p.m.*

## DISCUSSION

### 2024-0044 Presentation of Parks Concept Plans

*In attendance was Ken Elwert, Parks and Natural Resources Director, Dennis Andrews, Parks Manager, and consultants David Barczys and Delia Rodi, Niagra Murano.*

*Mr. Elwert introduced Mr. Andrews, noting that he has been on board for about a year and a half. He noted that this plan is the culmination of much public input.*

*Mr. Barczys explained the process that the consultant team and City staff went through in preparing the needs assessment for the City's parks, which included staff involvement, online surveys, open houses, and analysis of the feedback from these avenues. He noted that they are at the design process, which is what will be shown tonight.*

*Ms. Rodi reviewed the various park properties, starting with Brooklands Park. She stated that the park is a hidden jewel and commented that there is a small-town feel to it and commented that it would have a town square urban artistic feel with the proposed updates. She noted that security has to be looked at as well. She reviewed the concept plan noting the following:*

- Extend the existing pattern of the splash pad*
- Include an expanded playground area*
- Incorporate a common space for town square and market areas*
- Incorporate shaded shade sails, shaded bench seating and illuminated landscaping and seating*
- Expand the paved area*
- Incorporate Art on Auburn*

*She mentioned that additional landscaping would be proposed to provide a sense of barrier for the space against the sidewalk.*

*Mr. Elwert asked for any comments or input.*

*Mr. Hetrick stated that he loves the downtown feel, noting that this is what the Brooklands is supposed to represent.*

*Ms. Mungoli asked if there are pollinator gardens being planned.*

*Ms. Rodi responded that they could incorporate pollinator gardens.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that there would be children running around so they would have to keep that in mind.*

*Ms. Mungioli asked if the shaded seating was the same throughout.*

*Ms. Rodi responded that they were trying to be cost-effective.*

*President Deel stated that this is in his Council District and commented that they nailed the design concept.*

*Chairperson Brnabic commented that she was not sure that she liked the look of the shade sails, noting that it was difficult to see on the picture.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that the sails would not be blue and yellow as the photo example showed.*

*Ms. Mungioli commented that she was trying to envision the market area.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that he was not sure that they would go down that road as it is not a large enough area for a farmer's market, and perhaps it would include a few electric elements.*

*They moved on to show the concept for Bloomer Park, noting that it is a vast park different from all of the others, and a hidden jewel. The history of the park was mentioned with hosting Olympic ski competitions. It was noted that it is like a mini national park and the desire was for relaxed natural beauty. The focus would be not just on the northwest corner of the park but would bring people to other areas of the park. While it was mentioned as a possible site for incorporating a dog park, they are looking more to Nowicki for that use. The following features were mentioned:*

- Treetop overlook*
- Riverwalk*
- Development of a Great Lawn Pavilion and Great Lawn to be able to stage larger events*
- Northwest corner has a large drop-off in elevation allowing for the possible creation of a boardwalk by the Clinton River*
- Pump track*
- Matching Stone Pavilion*
- Butterfly pollinator gardens*
- Wildlife observation deck*
- Dog park area*

*Mr. Elwert noted that feedback has asked for a dog park. He added that the velodrome is definitely coming down, and there is the possibility for an amphitheater or pump track with asphalt hills for roller bladers or serious mountain bikers. He noted that 150 to 200 students use the trails. He asked for feedback on the idea of a small level amphitheater.*

*Ms. Morlan asked if it could host organized concerts.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that it could. He explained that the group that ran the velodrome has fulfilled the terms of their contract and demand has dropped*

*substantially.*

*President Deel asked if the City would have liability with a pump track.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that it would be less liability than a beach like at Spencer Park, and no more than other things. He added that it would not be staffed except in the event that there were tournaments.*

*Mr. Walker asked if skateboarders would use it.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that they could, although it would not be the primary focus.*

*Mr. Gallina stated that he would support the amphitheater, noting that it would offer use for the community.*

*Mr. Hetrick suggested that the boardwalk is outstanding, and could have a cost similar to the rope bridge at Innovation Hills.*

*Mr. Elwert commented that this is a dream project, and would be pending, given the right combination of sponsors. He stated that this is a long term vision to move forward with as a concept.*

*Mr. Carlock asked if there could be a way to do both the amphitheater and the pump track, with seating in the center of the track.*

*Ms. Densteadt asked where the next closest pump track is and how many people it might bring.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that he did not know the answer, as there are not a lot of them in the state.*

*Ms. Neubauer commented that her child is on the biking team, and there are 1,000 kids who participate and train at Bloomer; and they want the pump track as they leave the city to go to other facilities. She suggested putting the amphitheater at another park.*

*Mayor Barnett commented that he has never been to a pump track, and he would lean toward an amphitheater for overall community use. He mentioned that Orion Township's amphitheater gets 500 to 800 people per event.*

*Mr. Weaver asked if it would be the same size of amphitheater as in Lake Orion.*

*Ms. Mungioli questioned having walkers and bikers on the same paths and asked how that would be managed so they can coexist on the trails.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that the pollinator trail would probably not allow bikes.*

*Ms. Mungioli questioned the existing Stone Shelter's improvements.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that it would essentially be doubled in size.*

*Mr. Struzik suggested more signage in Bloomer for bikes to yield to pedestrians.*

*Mr. Elwert stated that this is more detail than what is being looked into tonight, and mentioned that they could design trails for walking and trails for biking. He commented that they would consider this as they are going through the process.*

*The discussion moved on to Spencer Park, and it was mentioned that the online survey highlighted its relaxed natural beauty. The following concept improvements were noted:*

- A main pavilion*
- Playground improvements*
- Boardwalk*
- Splash pad*
- Lakeside picnic shelter pavilion*
- Increased walker access to lake, as the current trail does not allow getting close to the water*
- Boat launch*

*Mr. Hetrick asked if the main pavilion would be new.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that it would be larger, and there would be different options for it to be year-round with restrooms and a warming kitchen, or it could be a prefab building with no bathrooms. He commented that the difference is a million dollars.*

*Mr. Hetrick asked about the idea of a floating island.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that they do not think that they are going forward with that.*

*Ms. Mungioli asked if the gate and entrance would be maintained requiring people to pay for entry, and if there are tennis courts that may or may not be used.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that those are a part of the Spencer Park paving, and they are not well utilized as a tennis court.*

*Ms. Mungioli commented about the boardwalk around the water and expressed concerns to the wetlands and wildlife.*

*Mr. Elwert noted the boardwalk's rounded edges and that water would flow underneath it.*

*Ms. Mungioli asked about the boat launch and if more boats are being rented.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that it would not be for more boat rentals, but for someone*

*to bring their non-motorized boat or kayak in.*

*Mr. Struzik commented that he loved the boat launch and being able to bring in personal watercraft.*

*Mr. Weaver stated that creating coves may enhance wildlife, create fish habitats, and provide housing for ducks.*

*Mr. Elwert noted that the slope of the lake gets steep very quickly.*

*Mr. Barczys stated that it is 18 feet deep in the center.*

*Ms. Morlan asked if children could jump off of the boardwalks and if there would be fences. She asked how often the lake is frozen.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that this would not be the intention. He noted that only three times in the last eight years they have had an ice hockey tournament.*

*Mr. Struzik suggested hosting some winter events there.*

*Discussion moved on to Nowicki Park. It was noted that the park is 30 acres of open meadows and tall pine trees that frame the views of the meadows. The following concepts were presented:*

- Dog park and pool*
- Boardwalk*
- Water feature*
- Pond*
- Traditional trails*
- Flower field, pollinator trail, beehive*
- Stone/water/ice feature*
- Playground*
- Office service building with public toilets*
- Pavilion*

*It was mentioned that 50 percent of the trails are already there and the trails could be comprised of crushed stone, gravel or mowed grass.*

*Mr. Hetrick asked why a playground would be constructed if it was supposed to be natural.*

*Mr. Elwert noted that there are many neighborhoods around it.*

*Ms. Morlan stated that she would support this.*

*Mr. Elwert noted that this is the next park that is being recommended and stated that he is curious what the thoughts are on approximately \$5 to 6 million dollars with no construction designs.*

*Mr. Weaver asked if there were any plans to widen Adams Road. He stated*

*that if this park is enhanced, Adams would be worse. He asked if they could choose natural materials for the playground equipment.*

*Mayor Barnett responded that they could do all of that this year for a nominal amount, and noted that Nowicki is still up against Bloomer and Borden for funding.*

*Mr. Carlock asked if there were any usage statistics.*

*Mr. Elwert responded that there were not, as it is not paved.*

*Ms. Roediger commented that she has observed people walking their dogs and children riding bikes in the park.*

*Ms. Denstaedt commented that she would love to see the uses.*

*President Deel noted that Nowicki is an area of town that does not feature enough parkland and it should be a high priority. He stated that traffic needs to be addressed. He commented that they need more natural-looking playground equipment, and asked if the water feature already exists.*

*Mr. Barczys noted that the pond and the boardwalk would be approximately \$1 million.*

*Mr. Elwert asked if there would be any issues or concerns with having a dog park in this location.*

*Ms. Munglioli commented that Bloomer would be closer to Rochester.*

*Mr. Struzik stated that he likes the dog park in Nowicki.*

*Ms. Morlan questioned whether they considered Tienken Park for a dog park.*

*Mr. Elwert thanked the consultants for their efforts.*

**Discussed**

**2024-0042**

**Natural Features Inventory**

*Ms. Roediger noted that the City has been working with ASTI Environmental in updating the locations of the various natural features in the city. She mentioned that the update has been in process for two years and was last done in 2005. She noted that there is no set time in which to undertake the update, and the City wants to ensure that developments are using the features as they should be. She explained that ASTI walked the entire community and came up with three different levels of natural features. Most were of base quality. She explained that in ranking the wetlands, they looked at the size of the natural feature, the core area, and landscape connectivity. She stated that the wetland acres are relatively stable, and essentially are the same or a little be more that the previous study yielded, and woodland coverage is about the same.*

*Mr. McLeod noted that wetlands and woodlands are a part of the natural features. He explained that as a part of the process, the public will get noticed to any change to the recorded wetland boundaries noted in the survey. He stated that the wetlands touch about 3,600 properties but there will also be some new areas. He noted that an interactive map will show wetlands being removed and added.*

*Ms. Mungioli asked if the map was currently live.*

*Mr. McLeod responded that it will be ready when the notices will be sent out.*

*Ms. Roediger noted that this inventory is not intended to replace a professional wetland delineation.*

*Mr. McLeod stated that this is an indicator but still a wetland determination would have to be done on individual properties for development. He noted that this item will be targeted for the second meeting in March.*

*Ms. Mungioli asked if this includes private land, park space, and storm drains.*

*Mr. McLeod confirmed that this includes any property within the city.*

*Mr. Hetrick commented that this is terrific. He stated that he would hear consistently that Rochester Hills is being overdeveloped, even though this development has not disrupted the natural features.*

*Mr. McLeod noted that the City's Ordinance protects its natural features.*

**Discussed**

**2024-0041**

**Master Plan Kickoff**

*Present were Jill Bahm and Joe Tangari, representing Giffels Webster, the City's planning consultant.*

*Ms. Roediger introduced Ms. Bahm and Mr. Tangari, and explained that staff is kicking off the Master Plan Update this year in conjunction with Giffels Webster, and it will reflect the changing trends and desires of the City.*

*Ms. Bahm stated that she was delighted to be a part of the team and as an extension of staff, and noted that Giffels Webster was a part of the 2018 Master Plan as well. She commented that it is interesting to hear all the comments and questions about the other projects in the city and noted that it is a great background for what they are doing. She explained that in 2018 the theme was preserve-enhance-diversity. In working with staff and talking about the process for four to five months, this year's focus will be different. She stated that there is a real need for an educational focus in the community. She displayed the Mayor's introductory video highlighting the Master Plan process.*

*Ms. Bahm stated that this will be a new kind of Master Plan for the City and will focus on how the environment affects daily lives, how people will get around,*



*shop, and get to parks. She noted that there will be many opportunities for people to participate in smaller group discussions and provide different types of input. She explained that the city was reviewed and it was determined that it will be divided into focus areas consistent with the high school boundaries. She noted that the process will include envisioning, and then strategizing on what fits for the City to continue to be innovative. The Plan will focus on sustainability and placemaking and will be an online document. Each phase has a goal. Mobility, community health and economic health will be guiding themes.*

*Mr. Tangari commented that overdevelopment has been expressed as a concern, along with concerns about the aging population and how senior housing can be taxing on emergency services. He pointed out that Michigan's population is not growing at all. He stated that the City is well run, fiscally-responsible, and focused on customer service and community relations. He noted that there is a strong sense of community and a desire to preserve that. He explained that in 2017, there were concerns about drones and autonomous vehicles, and now EV infrastructure is of concern.*

*Ms. Mungioli asked how many people took the master plan survey that the City offered and if there was one thing that stood out.*

*Ms. Bahm responded that 24 City staff participated in the survey.*

*Mr. Tangari commented that traffic cut across every category as a concern, and they would be seeking solutions and looking into technology for traffic management.*

*Mr. Hetrick questioned as the Master Plan evolves how it would affect the Transportation Plan.*

*Ms. Roediger responded that the Transportation Plan recommended roundabouts and turn lanes, and that is different than looking at it from a land use lens. She commented that if more mixed uses and connectivity are provided, the idea would be that this would take some cars off the roads and reduce traffic rather than stopping development.*

*Mr. Hetrick commented that older neighborhoods have no walkability, and have no placemaking or a gathering place. A newer neighborhood can create those places.*

*Mr. Tangari stated that there is an opportunity here to create those spaces. He mentioned that older neighborhoods have a more connected street network and there are a lot of ways to get those spaces.*

*Mr. Dettloff stated that he is happy to hear that the approach will be strong community engagement as that is always the weakest link. He expressed kudos to Giffels Webster for being on the cutting edge with this approach.*

*President Deel asked if anything had come up with respect to the increase in working from home. He noted that he personally goes into the office once a*

week. He noted the increased the usage of parks and asked how that may impact planning.

Mayor Barnett commented that while traffic is a concern, and Rochester Road traffic is so bad, there is a question as to how much people are willing to do to solve it, such as consideration whether to widen Adams Road. He noted that a push toward affordable housing means denser or taller homes. He mentioned that people dislike the solutions more than the problems. He stated that one interesting thing is that the changing transit to the community will be impactful moving forward, and he noted that this did not exist in 2018.

Ms. Roediger noted that there has not been an announcement of a public meeting date yet, and stated that she hoped that Council and the Commission will help to spread the word, as a multi-faceted approach to get the information out.

Ms. Bahm suggested that when Council and Commissioners receive emails regarding this from the project team, that they share these emails.

**Discussed**

**2024-0051**

**Other Zoning Initiatives**

Ms. Roediger commented that after the extensive zoning ordinance updates undertaken last year, there are still number of topics that the Planning Commission may wish to look at that have come up in working with Code Enforcement, including the raising and keeping of chickens, gateway and streetscape implementation, maximum size of houses on small lots, and accessory structures. She noted that even pizza vending machines have been mentioned.

President Deel asked what a review of accessory structures would entail.

Mr. McLeod responded that Code Enforcement has been dealing with lot coverage issues and what constitutes lot coverage. He noted that there are larger structures being built on smaller lots.

Chairperson Brnabic asked if the Zoning Ordinance can be changed administratively.

Mr. McLeod responded that it could not.

Chairperson Brnabic asked if the Commission would see any changes regarding the keeping of chickens before it is approved.

Ms. Roediger responded that there has not been a public hearing yet.

Mr. McLeod stated that any change will need to go through the formal process.

Chairperson Brnabic questioned how soon the Commission would see any proposed changes.

*Ms. Roediger responded that they will try to get to them as there are gaps in the agenda.*

*Mr. McLeod stated that if there is not a significant amount of work to be done, that the various topics could possibly be grouped together as an agenda item. He commented that the short answer is perhaps they can come forward later in the spring or early summer. He noted that the Master Plan process is fairly aggressive at this point.*

*Chairperson Brnabic stated that her concern is with lot coverage, and she would consider that more urgent. She commented that she does not want to see it happen where two large homes are built side by side with little setback, and noted that it would be a fire issue. She stated that she is not as concerned with chickens.*

**Discussed**

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **2024-0043**

#### **Planning and Economic Development Annual Report**

*(Memorandum to Planning Commission and City Council dated 1/29/24, PED Annual Report had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.)*

*Ms. Roediger introduced the PED 2023 Annual Report and commented that from both a planning and economic standpoint it provides a good summary to look back on the year. She noted that Mr. McLeod provided a timeline tied to the map, and pointed out that a lot of the activity was along Rochester Road.*

*She stated that the Planning Commission would be asked to review and accept the report this evening.*

*Mr. Hetrick commented that it had come up in discussion previously the changing trends relative to office space versus commercial space, and he asked what the goals are toward changing office space.*

*Ms. Roediger responded that this will be discussed as a part of the Master Plan Update. She commented that Pam Valentik, Economic Development Manager, is always in the know for every vacancy as to how to fill those spaces and how to divide them for smaller tenant spaces. She stated that this goes along with the Economic Development Strategy.*

*Mr. Dettloff commented that the report deserves an award for the format and asked if it was being considered.*

*Ms. Roediger asked the Commission and Council Members if they had any other comments or changes.*

*Seeing none, it was moved by Neubauer, seconded by Denstaedt, that the*

*Planning Commission accept the 2023 PED Annual Report.*

*After a voice vote by Planning Commission members, it was announced that the motion passed unanimously.*

**A motion was made by Neubauer, seconded by Denstaedt, that this matter be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye** 8 - Neubauer, Brnabic, Denstaedt, Dettloff, Gallina, Hetrick, Struzik and Weaver

**Abstain** 5 - Carlock, Deel, Morlan, Mungoli and Walker

**Excused** 2 - Blair and Hooper

**Resolved**, that the Rochester Hills Planning Commission hereby accepts the 2024 Planning and Economic Development Annual Report.

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

*None.*

### **NEXT MEETING DATE**

- *City Council Regular Meeting February 12, 2024*
- *Planning Commission Regular Meeting February 20, 2024*

### **ADJOURNMENT**

*Hearing no business to come before the Planning Commission and City Council, and upon motion by Neubauer, seconded by Denstaedt, Chairperson Brnabic adjourned the meeting at 9:24 p.m.*

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*Deborah Brnabic, Chairperson  
Rochester Hills Planning Commission*

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*Ryan Deel, President  
Rochester Hills City Council*

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*Jennifer MacDonald, Recording Secretary*