

DISCUSSION

2025-0204

Discussion of HDC Mission and Goals

(McLeod memos of 5/1/25 and 7/3/25, Draft HDC Minutes of 5/8/25 had been placed on file and by reference became a part of the record hereof.)

Mr. McLeod stated that the Planning Commission is nearing the end of the Master Plan process, and noted that they want to ensure that the Plan incorporates the ideas and thoughts of each aspect of what the City should be doing. He pointed out that in 2018, the historic elements of the plan were not necessarily carried within the plan at that time. He stated that the Master Plan as of now does a much better job of that, and talks about developing specific guidelines for each of the contiguous historic districts within the city and then assessing the need for specific overall guidelines for Rochester Hills that would be more generally applicable to the non-contiguous districts as it pertains to people coming forward with additions and modifications. He suggested a straw vote to ascertain if this is what the Commission as a body would like to be a part of developing.

Vice Chairperson Granthen asked if a joint discussion with the Study Committee might be warranted.

Mr. McLeod responded that if this is something that the Commission decides they want to go forward with, the logistics can be determined later when the time comes. He explained the elements of the master plan relative to land use, rezonings for economic development, and encouraging bringing in new and different businesses, and noted that this would be specific to the historic district.

Ms. Lyon suggested that a prioritized list be discussed with pros and cons first before deciding.

Mr. McLeod stated that for historic properties it would be to ensure Historic Districts Commission review is fully integrated into the site plan review development process for non-residential historic resources in the City, and gave Yates as an example that will ultimately be going to the Planning Commission. He stated that they want to make sure that something the Planning Commission may say they want to see on the site is not in conflict with what the HDC wants or is approving. He noted the idea is that everyone needs to work in unison, and offered the example of the Planning Commission calling for brick while the HDC notes that a building should look a certain way and should not have brick. He pointed out notes he just wrote about landscaping and the color of the foundation of the Yates storage building to add to his site plan review notes.

Ms. Lyons stated that it should be for all properties, residential and non-residential.

Mr. McLeod added that the goal is to develop ways to further promote the existence and importance of the historic resources in the city. He noted that the

next goal is working with Oakland County to promote historical assets as well as for tourism. He commented that he thinks that there needs to be a further integration between what happens here at the HDC and what happens at the Museum for instance. He stated that he thinks that it is a matter of ensuring that they are doing everything they can to promote the historic resources and utilize them the best way possible to not only convey the history of the city but also to promote people coming to and exploring the city. He suggested more could be done with social media, and mentioned bringing more people to the Earl Borden awards or more so bringing the awards to them to further the acknowledgement of the city's historic resources.

Ms. Lyons suggested that perhaps there should be a report presented for open comment time of things going on or coming before the HDC. She stated that it promotes communication across the channels and feels more actionable than idyllic.

Vice Chairperson Granthen suggested encouraging the Rochester-Avon Historical Society to keep up with the Commission as well as with the Museum. She stated that perhaps if the Society was aware of the meetings or what was on the agenda, perhaps the Commission would receive more public comment.

Ms. Lyons stated that she believes what makes people upset is when they are uninformed. She concurred with creating an integration plan so that there is a process to ensure projects that are going to move forward and go through the Planning Commission have a sequenced flow of expectations. She noted that this impacts how the HDC is perceived by the rest of government.

Mr. McLeod reviewed items on his list that have been incorporated into the plan, and those that are not technically in the draft as yet but up for discussion.

Vice Chairperson Granthen asked if it would be possible to have an HDC member as a non-voting liaison to the Planning Commission when historic items are appearing on their agenda. She commented that they might be able to answer a lot of questions and explain rationale for their thoughts.

Mr. McLeod suggested also having the minutes available for those items that cross before both Commissions. He stated that he liked the idea of having a representative attend the Planning Commission on those nights when an agenda item was posted, noting that while staff could speak to an item, it might be a bit more meaningful or powerful coming directly from an HDC member.

He commented that increased communication in getting out to the residents was something that the HDC mentioned previously, noting that a potentially fall meeting or open house forum was suggested.

Dr. Stamps asked if a list exists of all of the historic resources.

Mr. McLeod responded that they have the survey from 2002.

Dr. Stamps stated that he wants to know how many structures or buildings are within the city and how many are in the Historic Districts. He commented that

he thinks it will be less than one-tenth of one percent. He stressed that this could communicate to the rest of the community that these are rare and unique pieces and they need to save whatever they can. He added that the Earl Borden Awards recognize the efforts of citizens that are doing this work.

Vice Chairperson Granthen commented relative to the concept of tourism, and said that she wondered if they could get permission of the homeowners, perhaps even as a fundraising event for the Museum, to do a walk of historic locations and charge a ticket fee, recalling that the community used to have a Holly Walk benefiting the library. She commented that people from all over could see what historic buildings and areas that are in the city.

Ms. Lyons asked for more discussion on working with the County.

Mr. McLeod noted that as the County is developing a plan for tourism, one element is the historical resources found throughout the County. He noted that the city has three large historical resources including Meadow Brook, Yates, and the Museum. He explained that the County will be creating programming once their plan is set and he believes that it is a matter that the Commission gets on board to appropriately handle cross-promotion and working in unison to provide support to implement tourism opportunities.

Ms. Lyons questioned terminology on Mr. McLeod's list regarding the HDC reviewing options regarding improving and maintaining the alleyway running parallel to Runyon and East Tienken, and suggested that using the term "develop" (or "development") would be a stronger word. She suggested the HDC could work with whoever they have to work with to have someone fund the alleyway. She commented that reviewing is a passive action and looks like they are not doing anything and some action should come from any review.

Dr. Stamps suggested that the word "review" be changed to "propose" or "determine options for".

Mr. McLeod directed the discussion to the Stony Creek Historic District, and commented that the main issue that comes up is how to address Tienken Road and whether there would be a way to accomplish some sort of pathway or sidewalk. He asked if the Commission felt passionate about this issue; and if so, the second phase would be to figure out a way to do it.

Ms. Lyons suggested a design competition with an application fee, raising funds.

Vice Chairperson Granthen cautioned that the design entries may not be good.

Ms. Lyons suggested that it could be a forum for community feedback. She commented that she would love to propose a solution, but she has been over there and is not certain that she has one.

Mr. McLeod noted that when the Village received the Earl Borden Award two years ago, he was out there taking pictures to be used in the presentation. He stated that he had two different residents come out to speak with him, appearing

to be on the defensive because they thought the road was changing or a pathway was coming into their front yard. He stated that one of the reasons why nothing came of their last walkthrough with Mr. McKay is that he just does not think that there is the desire. He suggested that this is one of the projects that will take time to grow on the residents, and hopefully they will see that the benefits will outweigh the potential negatives. He noted the challenges and commented that it might be a very creative solution with potentially a three-foot sidewalk in some areas. He added that it is not a good situation with people ducking around trees and almost hanging into the road with big trucks going by.

Dr. Stamps commented that as Tienken is a County road, there are some very strict guidelines on pathways. He noted the gaps on Avon at a couple of locations, and mentioned that they tried to come up with some more creative and narrow solutions. He stated that the County was difficult to work with.

Mr. McLeod stated that it will bring many different people together, and commented that as soon as one mentions "creative solution" on a road or pathway project, the price could go up. He noted that the point of the Master Plan is to determine whether this is something that the HDC would want to go after, and then to subsequently figure out the logistics of how to make it happen. He asked what other thoughts the Commissioners had about good things to implement.

Dr. Stamps suggested whether it would be appropriate to address a millage for historic preservation. He commented that if Oakland Township can do it, it might be considered even if it would not have to be that big. He stated that when he approached the subject 14 years ago, it was determined that the economy at the time was not good. He suggested that perhaps next year in the 250th Anniversary of the country, there may be a little more sensitivity toward history and historic resources. He noted the proposal that came out of Detroit to have a millage imposed on Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties to support the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Historical Museum, and the Holocaust Museum. He stated at the time there was quite a bit of kickback that Oakland County should receive a percentage of the millage coming back to the people who were taxed; however, this idea did not make it out of committee discussions.

Mr. McLeod noted that this suggestion may not make the Master Plan, but he would see where the idea will go. He asked Ms. Kidorf which of the ideas on his list she thought should be included.

Ms. Kidorf mentioned that as a local government, there are some survey requirements that should continue that fall under the Historic Districts Commission or Study Committee as a part of the responsibilities under the Certified Local Government program. She commented that she saw the list as fairly proactive, and more proactive than other communities she has seen.

Mr. McLeod stated that he is not saying that this discussion was final and closed in terms of the Master Plan process, and explained that the Planning Commission and City Council will hopefully send out for public comment in the coming month or so. He noted that the Commission could provide additional comments to bring to the Master Plan. He stated that he will formalize this list

and send it out to the Commissioners. In answer to a question on the format, he explained that the Plan will be very different and will not include a PDF paper copy. He stated that it will be completely web-based and GIS-based.

Ms. Lyons asked for an explanation of the "neighborhoods" contained in the plan and asked if a new high school was in the works.

Mr. McLeod responded that the Plan was broken up into five different "neighborhoods" that come together as one big plan. He mentioned that they used the high school boundaries as they are noticeable and visible to the residents, and pointed out that Rochester High School's district is so large, it was split at Rochester Road into East and West.

Ms. Lyons suggested that the HDC list should include headings and sub bullets, such as "Address Resident Issues", and a list underneath. She stated that a shorter list may be more effective. She noted that improving communication is an issue where they need to do better, and everyone will be happier.

Mr. McLeod stated that he likes the specificity of the Master Plan, and commented that if having only general comments nothing will ever get done. He noted that he will formalize his list in the next couple of days and send it out to everyone, and will bring it into the Master Plan discussion at the Planning Commission level as well. He added that he will figure out a timeline for any additional Commissioner comments to be submitted. He noted that one of his missions with the Master Plan is to ensure that a major portion of this community is represented.

Discussed