

**CITY OF BENTON HARBOR
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
LULA LEE COMMISSION CHAMBERS, 200 E. WALL STRET
May 3, 2022**

Present: Commissioners Henry, Hensel, McGee, City Manager Mitchell (left at 2:12pm), Chairman Reed
Absent: Commissioners Ferguson, Marshall (excused), Mayor Muhammad, Commissioner Yarbrough
City Staff Present: Chief Code Compliance Officer Bruce, Community & Economic Development Director Little, and City Clerk Moore.

The meeting was called to order at 1:01p.m. by Chairman Reed.

AGENDA

With no changes or modifications to the agenda, a motion was made by Manager Mitchell and supported by Commissioner Hensel to approve the agenda as presented. Motion approved on the following roll call vote. Yeas: Commissioners Henry, McGee, Hensel, Manager Mitchell, Chairman Reed. Nays: None. Members Absent: Commissioners Ferguson, Yarbrough, Mayor Muhammad, Commissioner Marshall.

MEETING MINUTES

With no changes, additions, or deletions to the Meeting Minutes of April 5, 2022, a motion was made by Commissioner McGee and supported by Commissioner Henry to approve the minutes as presented. Motion approved on the following roll call vote. Yeas: Manager Mitchell, Commissioners Henry, McGee, Chairman Reed. Nays: None. Abstain: Commissioner Hensel (absent at April 5, 2022 meeting) Absent: Commissioners Marshall, Ferguson, Mayor Muhammad, Commissioner Yarbrough.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Peter Colovis of Prairie Real Estate Group, 301 12th St spoke about the substation at 300 W Main St. He reviewed the rendering and drawings recently submitted by AEP in regards to the building and site plan, he thinks the plan is shaping up nicely. In relative to the lighting plan and landscape plan, it seems to be in his perspective acceptable. There is an issue on 10th street where there is squatting by Wolf on the street itself, he stated there is a locked gate and an enormous amount of debris on the street and it is a safety concern. He is in favor of cleaning up the mess and making sure that there is access.

Commissioner Henry asked that Mr. Colovis give more details to the City Manager's Office.

Commissioner Adams was hoping to see something visual from AEP, she is looking forward to seeing that when we get the technology needed. She stated it is time to do something about the area Colovis was talking about.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS

MONTHLY ABSENCE REPORT OF MEMBERS

Chairman Reed stated that Commissioner Marshall is excused, all others are absent without cause.

UPDATE – 300 W MAIN AEP POWER SUBSTATION

An update was given on the contingencies of the Site Plan.

A sidewalk is being added along 10th St, it will extend from Main St sidewalk to Wall St. The fence is in the right of way about 5” from the fence to the sidewalk. There will be plenty of room for parking.

Commissioner Henry asked if the 5 foot and the distance between the curb and fence was ok with the inspection department. Officer Bruce stated he will have to look into that.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hensel and supported by Commissioner McGee to remove the contingency on the sidewalk as long as the representatives work with the inspection department to make sure it meets building and zoning regulation. Motion carried on the following roll call vote: Yeas: Commissioner McGee, Manager Mitchell, Commissioners Hensel, Henry, Chairman Reed. Nays: None. Absent: Commissioners Ferguson, Marshall, Yarbrough, Mayor Muhammad.

Color swatches for the color of the building and brick were provided.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hensel and supported by Manager Mitchell to remove the contingency on the building and agree to the selection of materials and colors presented. Motion carried on the following roll call vote: Yeas: Commissioners Hensel, Henry, Manager Mitchell, Commissioner McGee, Chairman Reed. Nays: None. Absent: Mayor Muhammad, Commissioners Marshall, Ferguson, Yarbrough.

A portion of the proposed fencing was presented. The material is a composite/plastic mix and is very resilient and shouldn’t fade. The fencing will be a mix of fence and brick as they are planning underground exits. A landscaping design will be presented in July/August and landscaping around the fence can be incorporated.

A motion was made by Commissioner Henry and supported by Commissioner Hensel to remove the contingency on the fence, with the condition that landscaping is incorporated in the landscape plan. Motion carried on the following roll call vote: Yeas: Manager Mitchell, Commissioners Henry, McGee, Hensel, Chairman Reed. Nays: None. Absent: Commissioners Ferguson, Marshall, Mayor Muhammad, Commissioner Yarbrough.

Aep’s standards are a 10ft fence for protection and security, so a variance will be need to be obtained.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hensel and supported by Commissioner McGee to make the recommendation a variance to the City Commission for a fence height of 10 ft to prevent danger in the substation. Motion carried on the following roll call vote: Yeas: Commissioners Henry, Hensel, Manager Mitchell, Commissioner McGee, Chairman Reed. Nays: None. Absent: Commissioner Marshall, Mayor Muhammad, Commissioners Yarbrough, Ferguson.

The engineering process will begin and will take through August 26, the landscaping plan will be presented July/August. A lighting plan can be expected in July/August.

170 RIVERVIEW DRIVE APARTMENT COMPLEX

A representative was not able to attend but provided an update via email.

MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Paul Lippens with McKenna provided an update on the Best Benton Harbor Planning Week, which will be the first large scale public event, June 6-10. A preliminary draft schedule was presented. The task is to develop a city-wide vision. The Planning Commission’s role is to be the initiator and guiding body for developing the Master Plan and presenting to the City Commission.

Chairman Reed stated he is not seeing a lot of participation from the neighborhoods and from the young people.

Commissioner Henry suggested small kitchen/background conversations in small groups and if technology can be used to document it.

Lippens stated that maybe during planning week some of those conversations could be facilitated in specific neighborhoods. A website is in the process of being launch that will provide information on the planning process and have documents available as the process goes on, as well as having all the information available once the Master Plan is complete. The website will belong to the City once the process is completed.

COMMISSION / STAFF COMMENTS

None

MOTION TO ADJOURN

A motion was made by Chairman Reed and seconded by Commissioner Hensel to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried on the following roll call vote. Yeas: Commissioners Henry, Hensel, McGee, Manager Mitchell, Chairman Reed. Nays: None. Absent: Commissioners Ferguson, Marshall, Mayor Muhammad, Commissioner Yarbrough.

With no further comments, the meeting adjourned at 2:13 p.m.

Tiffany Moore, City Clerk

Lee Reed, Chairman