



MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

Monday, February 03, 2025

6:30 PM

Village Hall – 21 East Church Street, Lake Orion, MI 48362

(248) 693-8391 ext. 102

1. Call to Order

The Monday, February 3, 2025 Regular Meeting of the Lake Orion Planning Commission was called to order by Secretary Lorant at 6:35 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum

PRESENT

Secretary Hank Lorant

Commissioner Larry Dunn

Commissioner James Barry

Village Council President Teresa Rutt

Village Council Member Michael Lamb

Commissioner/Administrative Official Darwin McClary

ABSENT

Chairperson James Zsenyuk

Vice Chairperson Edward Sabol

STAFF PRESENT

Planning and Zoning Coordinator Gage Belko

Deputy Clerk/Treasurer Lynsey Blough

4. Approval of Agenda

MOTION made by Village Council President Rutt, Seconded by Village Council Member Lamb, to approve the agenda for the February 3, 2025 Planning Commission Regular Meeting, as presented.

VOTING YEA: Lorant, Dunn, Barry, Rutt, Lamb, McClary

VOTING NAY: None

ABSENT: Zsenyuk, Sabol

5. Approval of Minutes

A. Approval of January 6, 2025 Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes

MOTION made by Commissioner/Administrative Official McClary, Seconded by Village Council President Rutt, to approve the January 6, 2025 Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented.

VOTING YEA: Lorant, Dunn, Barry, Rutt, Lamb, McClary

VOTING NAY: None

ABSENT: Zsenyuk, Sabol

6. Public Comments on Non-Agenda Items Only

None.

7. Public Hearing

None.

8. Old Business

A. Master Plan Amendment - Strategic Action Plan Update and Draft Review

Planning and Zoning Coordinator Belko began by presenting a spreadsheet (included in the Agenda Packet) that comprised of recommendations and feedback for Phase II of the Master Plan from the public, commissioners, and other boards. He thanked everyone for their detailed contributions and welcomed Commissioner Barry. Mr. Belko explained that all feedback was noted in **red** font on the spreadsheet and then began reviewing each point.

The first goal is to provide great **NEIGHBORHOODS**.

Regarding Objective 1-A, Council Member Lamb voiced his opposition to permitting Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in single-family residential areas. He requested that the Commission vote on removing this item from the Master Plan.

Secretary Lorant suggested Lamb write down his concerns, as there were many items to cover, and Belko assured that he would take notes on the request.

Secretary Lorant interjected and asked Council Member Lamb to jot down what he would like to consider since they have a lot to go through. Planning and Zoning Coordinator Belko told the Commission that he would be taking notes as well.

Secretary Lorant also asked Mr. Belko if he had incorporated his expertise and recommendations regarding the priority level and timeline for each objective. Belko responded that he was gathering feedback first, and would provide his professional recommendations later.

Council Member Lamb continued to express concerns that the inclusion of ADUs in *Objective 1-A* would change the character of the Village. President Rutt disagreed, stating that increasing housing diversity is a vital community value and does not necessarily require a drastic change in character. She highlighted that many seniors wish to age in place, while young families are interested in moving to the Village. She also expressed support for ADUs if they could accommodate family care, such as allowing a parent to live on the property. Mr. Belko added that the Master Plan is not a law or regulation and would not take effect immediately, with its implementation potentially taking several years.

Council Member Lamb, however, remained opposed, citing concerns about limited housing availability and negative effects on property values from ADUs. He suggested turning the Lumberyard project for low-income housing instead.

Mr. Belko moved on to discuss *Objective 1-B:2*, where Council Member Lamb emphasized that it should be a high priority due to the redevelopment nature of the community.

Under *Objective 1-D:3*, Secretary Lorant inquired about the improvements in the Village's Code Enforcement, to which Mr. Belko confirmed that it has become more effective with the introduction of GOGov, a system that tracks enforcement activities. Mr. Belko also mentioned that with the help of Police Chief Amundson, the plan is to reorganize the Code Enforcement division under the Police Department for more focused efforts. Village Manager McClary added that the GOGov system also allows for follow-up reminders and generate reports. Secretary Lorant acknowledged this as a significant improvement.

Council Member Lamb asked if a civilian-style vehicle would be used for Code Enforcement, and Village Manager McClary confirmed that it was part of Chief Amundson's plan. Council Member Lamb also inquired about the possibility of a full-time staff for Code Enforcement, to which Village Manager McClary explained that staffing recommendations would be discussed during the Council's budget work sessions.

Moving on to *Objective 1-D:4*, Council Member Lamb asked for clarification on the Orion Township inspections. Mr. Belko explained that these inspections are related to multifamily developments. Village Manager McClary noted that while the Village has older apartment complexes, there is currently no rental inspection program, though it remains a concept in the Master Plan. He stressed that if such a program were to be implemented, it would need to be fair, uniform, and consistent across all rental properties. Village Manager McClary pointed out the challenges landlords might have with such a program but emphasized the importance of planning ahead for future multifamily rental developments. Council Member Lamb agreed that this should now be a high priority. Village Manager McClary concluded by highlighting the importance of ensuring new developments are well-maintained, safe, sanitary, and compatible with surrounding neighborhoods.

Mr. Belko noted that there was no positive feedback on *Objective 1-D:5*, with one suggestion to remove it entirely. Village Manager McClary commented that while this objective was necessary in the 2002 Master Plan, it is no longer relevant today.

The second goal is for **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**.

Council Member Lamb emphasized that Objective 2-B:3 requires Code Enforcement to implement the Village's policies. Mr. Belko responded that both Code Enforcement and Zoning Administration are collaborating on these efforts.

Moving to Objective 2-B:4, the Commission discussed the need to improve pedestrian safety along M-24.

Council Member Lamb asked if the M-24 Corridor was fully developed under Objective 2-D:1, to which Mr. Belko confirmed it was, but noted that there is potential for future redevelopment. Council Member Lamb also asked for clarification on the term "trade area population." Mr. Belko explained it refers to the population within a 10-15 minute driving radius of the M-24 Corridor. Council Member Lamb requested that the wording be adjusted for clarity, and President Rutt suggested using "access to the community area population" instead.

Moving to Objective 2-E:1, Secretary Lorant pointed out that the DDA's maps need updating, as some businesses are no longer present. Mr. Belko responded that he would work with the DDA staff to evaluate and update the maps.

Regarding Objective 2-E:3, Secretary Lorant inquired about the streetlights. President Rutt clarified that the focus was on LED lights illuminating doorways, not streetlights. Lorant suggested ensuring the lighting, whether LED or not, blends with existing Downtown lighting. Council Member Lamb noted that the issue was more about nighttime ambiance, which he felt shouldn't be a high priority. President Rutt and Secretary Lorant agreed, emphasizing it should be a low priority. Mr. Belko added that he will change the wording to reflect that the lighting be "Village compatible lighting".

Council Member Lamb recommended removing Objective 2-F:1 from the plan entirely, citing the absence of any Brownfield sites.

Regarding Objective 2-F:2, Council Member Lamb presented several economic reasons for why a farmers market should not be a high priority. Secretary Lorant shared insights into why previous attempts at a farmers market had not been successful. President Rutt proposed rewording the objective to "Create, design, and establish a venue for year-round activity for the community," which would allow for a broader range of potential uses, including a farmers market. He also expressed interest in having mixed-use development on the property that could generate income-producing revenue tax. The Commission agreed to adjust the objective to a low priority and consolidate the three actions of Objective 2-F into one.

The third goal is for the **ENVIRONMENT**.

Council Member Lamb asked Village Manager McClary whether the Village has a tree ordinance for municipal trees and if there's a policy for the maintenance, operation, and diversity of tree species. Village Manager McClary responded that the only policy he is aware of is related to the Sidewalk Improvement Program, which dictates a specific distance for planting trees from sidewalks. He was unaware of any tree protection ordinance. Council Member Lamb asked if

the Village needs a street tree ordinance, pointing out that some communities have street tree replacement programs and required species groupings, and suggested the Village consider such a program. Village Manager McClary agreed but believed it would be better handled through a Council policy rather than an ordinance. He also noted that climate change is pushing for urban forestry initiatives due to increased heat in urban areas. The Commission decided to reword Objective 3-A:2 to focus on promoting urban forestry, rather than regulating trees on private property. President Rutt expressed interest in how other communities handle mature trees and new plantings.

Council Member Lamb expressed opposition to solar panels in the Village, citing Michigan's geographic location and their lack of economic viability. However, he stated he is not opposed to vegetable gardens in Village parks. Planning and Zoning Coordinator Belko clarified that the mention of solar panels was only to address the absence of any renewable energy regulations under Objective 3-B:1.

Regarding Objective 3-B:4, Council Member Lamb opposed additional waste management responsibilities for the Department of Public Works, such as composting and recycling. Village Manager McClary explained that the Village already has a single waste hauler for rubbish, curb-side recycling and yard waste. Mr. Belko suggested rewording the objective to focus on "Encouraging public education" instead.

The Commission agreed to combine Objective 3-B:5 with Objective 3-A:2.

Secretary Lorant noted that the Lake Orion Lake Association (LOLA) already conducts periodic tests to identify potential degradation in the lake and determine remedial actions. Commissioner Barry pointed out that LOLA does not test for E. coli. Village Manager McClary shared that the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) conducts water testing at the beach. More details can be found on the Green's Park webpage on the Village's website. This discussion took place under Objective 3-C:1.

The Commission agreed to move Objective 3-C:2 to a high priority, following Planning and Zoning Coordinator Belko's recommendation to adopt zoning ordinance standards for the maximum impervious surface area on residential lots in the RL (Lake) District. This is considered a short-term task and is already being incorporated into the Village's Engineering Design Standards.

Regarding Objective 3-C:3, Village Manager McClary mentioned that the Village is already working with the Clinton Watershed Council as part of the Stormwater Management Plan. The Village's MS4 permit requires stormwater management. The Commission agreed to reword the objective to say, "Collaborate with Clinton Watershed Council on Stormwater Management Plan."

Council Member Lamb highlighted that the lake is divided between the Village of Lake Orion and Orion Township, and emphasized that issues may not be resolved without a joint committee between the two communities. Commissioner Barry, a member of LOLA, admitted to providing additional comments under Objective 3-C. Council Member Lamb suggested that Commissioner Barry could serve as the representative to help foster collaboration between the

two communities. Mr. Belko stated he would reword the comments to reflect “More interlocal coordination” on these issues.

The fourth goal is **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**.

Council Member Lamb asked Village Manager McClary about the priority of public facilities improvements under the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Village Manager McClary considered it a medium to low priority. Mr. Belko suggested keeping the language as is and recognizing the CIP under Objective 4-A:1.

Mr. Belko stated that Objective 4-A:3 would be removed, as it had already been addressed during an earlier discussion.

Regarding Objective 4-A:4, Council Member Lamb expressed the opinion that beautifying municipal buildings should not be a high priority and suggested changing it to a medium priority.

The discussion under Objective 4-A:5 involved rewording the objective to say, “Coordinating furniture replacement and other streetscape elements with the CIP projects,”, lowering the objective to a medium priority, and changing the time frame to ongoing from 0-2 years.

Council Member Lamb does not think that Objective 4-A:6 should be a high priority stating that it is the DDA's responsibility to implement the TIF plan. Secretary Lorant commented on removing the item and taking it elsewhere. Mr. Belko responded that these recommendations were sourced from multiple plans to consolidate everything and ensure it is reflected in the Master Plan.

The discussion under Objective 4-A:7 involved Council Member Lamb asking Village Manager McClary if the Village budgeted for art or if it was handled through the DDA's TIF plan. Village Manager McClary responded that the Village does not fund art, as the Orion Art Center is a private organization. While the Village owns the land the center is on, the Art Center itself is privately owned and financially independent. Secretary Lorant mentioned that the property where the Art Center is located is partly owned by the Village and partly by the Township. Village Manager McClary clarified that it may be the parking lot in question. Council Member Lamb added that the parking lot is in the Village, even though it's owned by the Township. Regarding the objective, President Rutt suggested rewording it to say “Continue supporting public art opportunities,” without specifically naming the Orion Art Center.

The Commission agreed to explore funding opportunities for grants to accomplish Objective 4-B:1, ensuring barrier-free accessibility to all existing parks, recreation areas, and trail systems, including paths, transfer points, resilient surfacing, picnic tables, play equipment, curb cuts, parking, and more.

Under Objective 4-B:2, the Commission agreed to support the goals and objectives of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Council Member Lamb suggested removing Objective 4-B:3 from the parks section and combining it with Objective 4-C:2. President Rutt agreed and recommended updating Objective 4-C:2 to say, “Develop a safe pedestrian and non-motorized linkage across M-24 between the lake and downtown.”

Under Objective 4-B:4, the Commission agreed to change it to a low priority due to the challenges posed by the Polly Ann – Pain Creek Link, as it requires coordination with other governmental units like MDOT (state), Orion Township, and Oxford Township.

Council Member Lamb asked what eco-tourism meant. Mr. Belko responded that it’s effectively marking the Village’s blue and green spaces as an attraction to come to the Village and enjoy its natural resources. During the discussion of Objective 4-B:6, Council Member Lamb expressed doubts about the importance of focusing on water facilities open to the public, questioning the extent to which people visit the park for such activities. However, President Rutt countered by sharing that there is a consistent number of families, even from outside the village, who regularly visit the park, highlighting the value of these amenities. Council Member Lamb then inquired about the Village’s efforts in applying for grants related to these facilities. Village Manager McClary acknowledged that there are several potential grants but emphasized the need for a more proactive approach in applying for them. Council Member Lamb suggested that grant opportunities be added to a "master grant application list" for easier tracking, to which Village Manager McClary agreed that referencing such opportunities in the Master Plan strengthens grant applications. Council Member Lamb advocated raising the priority of this item to high to ensure greater focus on applying for available funds.

Under Objective 4-C:3, President Rutt suggested rewording the language to “Promote or increase the public transportation services that are available in the community.” She emphasized the need for more people to be aware that the North Oakland County Transportation Authority (NOTA) serves more than just seniors. Council Member Lamb recommended including this information in the newsletter. Village Manager McClary mentioned that there is already a section on the Village’s website dedicated to transportation.

Council Member Lamb voiced strong support for cross-access easements and have Objective 4-C:5 remain a high priority.

Planning and Zoning Coordinator Belko will revise Objective 4-C:6, as Council Member Lamb believes it is irrelevant, and Secretary Lorant supported this view.

The Commission agreed to consolidate Objective 4-C:7 with another item in the Master Plan.

Under Objective 4-C:8, the discussion focused on pedestrian crosswalks, sidewalks, and other infrastructure in the DDA district. Council Member Lamb raised concerns about the maintenance of brick paver streets, which require yearly sanding and upkeep, and suggested using colored stamped concrete as an alternative to achieve the same aesthetic without the maintenance issues. Planning and Zoning Coordinator Belko agreed to include this suggestion for future considerations. Secretary Lorant pointed out that the downtown's brick updates cost \$10 million, but it was agreed that any new projects should avoid using brick pavers, focusing instead on more practical alternatives.

The Commission agreed under Objective 4-C:9 to continue supporting NOTA.

The discussion under Objective 4-D:1 involved Council Member Lamb raising concerns about stormwater management and drainage, particularly after experiencing flooding in his driveway. He suggested updating the verbiage to "Monitor and maintain the storm drainage system for problem areas." Village Manager McClary humorously referenced Lamb's property as being built on "Gilligan's Island," which contributed to the drainage issues. The Commission members responded with lighthearted jokes, with Secretary Lorant even asking to include the "Gilligan's Island" remark in the notes. Mr. Belko mentioned that this item could be consolidated with Objective 3-C, which focuses on protecting lake and water quality.

The Commission agreed under Objective 4-D:2 to consolidate it with another item of the Master Plan.

Secretary Lorant reiterated the importance of keeping the priority of snow removal in the downtown high under Objective 4-D:4.

The discussion under Objective 4-E:1 focused on developing an efficient parking system. Council Member Lamb disagreed with appointing someone specifically to oversee the parking system, suggesting instead that the Village Manager is responsible for overseeing it. There was a conversation about parking meters and the need for a community-based parking plan. Council Member Lamb emphasized the importance of parking management for business turnover and community needs. Secretary Lorant mentioned that the Lumberyard Redevelopment could help improve parking availability. President Rutt suggested that developing a parking plan could consolidate some existing items, including wayfinding signage across the downtown (Objective 4-E:8) and a parking fee and fine schedule (Objective 4-E:10). The Commission agreed to add a goal of developing a village-wide parking plan. Planning and Zoning Coordinator Belko will work on consolidating and removing some of the related items.

Under Objective 4-E:11, the discussion focused on whether to include a sinking fund for parking lot maintenance. Council Member Lamb questioned the need for a sinking fund, as the Village does not currently have a maintenance fund for this purpose. Village Manager McClary clarified that while the Village has a parking fund, it is for enforcement, not maintenance. It was also noted that a sinking fund might be considered if metered parking were implemented in the future. Ultimately, the Commission agreed to remove this item from the Master Plan, as it is not something currently being pursued.

Under Objective 4-E:3, the discussion focused on collaborating with private lot owners to allow public shared use of parking areas. However, the Commission agreed to consolidate this with the overall parking plan, as it was seen as part of a broader discussion. There was also a suggestion to remove all related items under Objective 4-E, including the development of a parking deck, as the Lumberyard Project was seen as the solution for this need. The Commission agreed to integrate these items into a unified parking plan.

The fifth goal is **GENERAL PLANNING EFFORTS**.

The Commission agreed to remove Objective 5-A:4 from the Master Plan.

Under Objective 5-B:1, the discussion focused on building trust and relationships with the business community through personal outreach and education. It was noted that the DDA primarily handles this, but collaboration could occur through community roundtables or annual business meetings, if they aren't already taking place. Secretary Lorant emphasized a potential opportunity for stronger cooperation between the DDA and the Village, which was acknowledged as a high priority.

Under Objective 5-B:2, the discussion centered around maintaining relationships with the Library Board and supporting projects that align with the goals of the Orion Township Library. There was another light-hearted exchange about the library, with Council Member Lamb sharing his experience and President Rutt noting her substantial use of library resources. The group agreed that including the objective is beneficial.

The next steps involve a final review of the revisions by the Planning Commission at the upcoming meeting on March 3rd. After that, the Commission will consider sending the revised Master Plan to the Village Council for distribution. Additionally, a public opinion survey has been drafted and will be posted online, with requests for assistance in spreading the word. The survey will focus on gathering community priorities related to the goals and objectives, rather than specific action items already being addressed

MOTION made by Commissioner/Administrative Official McClary, Seconded by Village Council President Rutt, to direct the Village Planning Consultant to incorporate feedback received at this February 3, 2025 regular meeting of the Planning Commission into a revised draft of the Master Plan Strategic Action Plan and to place the revised draft on the agenda of the next regular meeting of the Planning Commission.

VOTING YEA: Lorant, Dunn, Barry, Rutt, Lamb, McClary

VOTING NAY: None

ABSENT: Zsenyuk, Sabol

9. New Business

A. Draft FY 2024-2030 Capital Improvement Plan for Planning Commission to Review and Comment

Village Manager McClary provided an overview of the Capital Improvement Plan to the Planning Commission. During the discussion, Council Member Lamb inquired whether Village Manager McClary was aware of any community-wide special assessments for street maintenance and replacement. Village Manager McClary explained that many communities use special assessments to allocate the cost of street improvements, relying on MDOT street classifications to gauge the community benefit. He noted that major streets tend to bear a greater financial burden compared to local streets. He also mentioned that many communities levy a road millage instead of using special assessments due to insufficient funds from general taxes under Act 51.

Village Manager McClary expressed his preference against using a millage for this purpose. Council Member Lamb countered, suggesting that if the village uses general revenue for road improvements, it will essentially function like a millage. Village Manager McClary affirmed this

but explained that due to the Headlee Rollback, which limits the Village's financial flexibility, relying on general funds for streets isn't viable. He emphasized that a special assessment district is a fairer way to charge property owners based on the benefit they receive from the improvements, rather than using a millage based on property value. He warned that a millage could create inequities, as wealthier property owners would pay more regardless of the direct benefit to them. In addition, a millage could be problematic if future councils were unable to guarantee ongoing funding. Therefore, Village Manager McClary argued that special assessments are the most equitable and sustainable option for funding street improvements.

Council Member Lamb used the Sanitary Sewer Pump Station Project as an example to illustrate his point about spreading costs across the entire village. He noted that 60% of the village population doesn't directly benefit from the project. In response, Village Manager McClary argued that all residents have an interest in the pump stations. He explained that if the pump stations fail and result in pollution in the lake, property values across the village would decline, affecting everyone. Village Manager McClary emphasized that the project operates like a business enterprise system, similar to utilities like DTE and Consumers Energy, rather than a public service like streets or sidewalks. It is funded differently, with customers—those who benefit from the system—being responsible for its costs and maintenance.

Council Member Lamb asked additional questions about the cost of street paving, to which Village Manager McClary explained that if property owners are specially assessed, they would be charged based on the front footage of their property. Village Manager McClary clarified that the CIP outlines the projects identified in the Pavement Asset Management Plan, which was developed by the Village Engineers. This plan includes street projects for the next three years, which are listed in the major and local street sections of the CIP.

Village Manager McClary also used the Park Avenue Retaining Wall Project as an example, explaining that the property owners funded the project themselves. Under the current policy for dead-end street paving, the property owners would primarily bear the cost of improvements on that street since they directly benefit from it.

Council Member Lamb interjected, noting that the overall Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) addresses the key issues. Commissioner Barry, with his financial background, recommended having contingency plans in place as part of the CIP, which was well-received by Council Member Lamb, who praised Commissioner Barry's financial insights. Commissioner Barry acknowledged the progress the Village Council had made in their discussions around the CIP.

Village Manager McClary emphasized that the CIP covers the current fiscal year and extends for five years, with regular reviews and evaluations by the Village Council and Administration. He reminded everyone that the CIP is a plan, not a firm commitment.

President Rutt echoed Village Manager McClary's sentiment, noting how far the Village Council had come since two years ago when there was no formal plan in place. She expressed her willingness to be transparent about the costs of the plan, highlighting the identification of \$28 million in CIP projects. She mentioned that the Village would do its best to secure funding, whether through grants or other resources, and that the plan could be adjusted based on priorities and available funding.

B. Monthly Planning and Zoning Report – January 2025

MOTION made by Village Council Member Lamb, Seconded by Village Council President Rutt, to receive and file the January 2025 Monthly Planning and Zoning Report.

VOTING YEA: Lorant, Dunn, Barry, Rutt, Lamb, McClary

VOTING NAY: None

ABSENT: Zsenyuk, Sabol

10. Commissioners' Comments Regarding Planning and Zoning Matters

Council Member Lamb welcomed Commissioner Barry and thanked him for his great insight and understanding of numbers. He also thanked Planning and Zoning Coordinator Gage Belko for getting through all of the objectives of the Master Plan tonight.

President Rutt also welcomed Commissioner Barry.

Commissioner Dunn also welcomed Commissioner Barry. Gave kudos to Planning and Zoning Coordinator Belko. He really liked the emphasis on Code Enforcement.

Commissioner Barry was glad to be part of the Planning Commission and offered his expertise in the financial sector if needed.

Village Manager McClary also welcomed Commissioner Barry and updated him with the Sidewalk Improvement Program.

Secretary Lorant welcomed Commissioner Barry and appreciated the great discussion the Commission had tonight.

11. Next Regular Meeting - March 3, 2025

12. Adjournment

MOTION made by Village Council President Rutt, Seconded by Village Council Member Lamb, to adjourn the February 3, 2025 Planning Commission Regular Meeting.

VOTING YEA: Secretary Lorant, Commissioner Dunn, Commissioner Barry, Village Council President Rutt, Village Council Member Lamb, Commissioner/Administrative Official McClary

The February 3, 2025 Planning Commission Regular Meeting adjourned at 9:31 PM.

Henry Lorant
Secretary

Lynsey Blough
Deputy Clerk/Treasurer

Sonja Stout
Clerk/Treasurer

Date approved: as presented on March 3, 2025