



Planning Commission Minutes

Tuesday, January 21, 2025 at 7:00 PM
27400 Southfield Road, Lathrup Village, Michigan 48076

1. **Call to Order** at 7:03pm

2. **Roll Call**

Present: Chair Stansbery, Commissioner Hillman, Commissioner Hammond, Commissioner Nordmoe, Commissioner Dizik

Absent: Commissioner Scussel and Co-Chair Fobbs

Others Present: DDA Director Austin Colson, Planning Consultant Eric Pietsch of Giffels & Webster, Attorney LeAnn Kimberlin, City Clerk Alisa Emanuel

3. **Approval of Agenda**

Motion by Commissioner Hammond, seconded by Commissioner Dizik, to approve the agenda.

Yes: Hillman, Stansbery, Nordmoe, Dizik, Hammond

No: N/A

Motion carried.

4. **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

A. December 2024 - Planning Commission

Motion by Commissioner Hillman, seconded by Commissioner Dizik to approve the minutes from the December 17, 2024 Planning Commission meeting.

Yes: Hillman, Stansbery, Nordmoe, Dizik, Hammond

No: N/A

Motion carried.

5. **Old Business and Tabled Items**

A. 26600 Southfield Road – Site Plan

Eric Pietsch, explained the changes in materials that would be used in the design of the façade

that are in the amended Site Plan for the Auto Parts Store at 26600 Southfield Road.

Commissioner Hillman, Commissioner Hammond, Chair Stansbery, DDA Director Colson, and Giffels and Webster Representative Pietsch had further discussions regarding the colors and materials that would be used in the building.

Motion by Commissioner Nordmoe, seconded by Commissioner Dizik, to approve the site plan for 26600 Southfield Road.

Yes: Hillman, Stansbery, Nordmoe, Dizik, Hammond

No: N/A

Motion carried.

A discussion as to why there was no public comment section on the agenda, until after the vote, began when audience members began to talk loudly at the Planning Commission, and DDA Director Colson, Chair Stansbery and other Commission members discussed the placement of the Public Comments. Chair Stansbery, suggested moving the Public Comments section to allow for Public Comments before the New Business item.

Moved by Commissioner Hammond, seconded by Commissioner Nordmoe, to move the agenda item, Public Comment from item 7 to item 6, swapping it with New Business, which will move from item 6 to item 7.

Yes: Hillman, Stansbery, Nordmoe, Dizik, Hammond

No: N/A

Motion carried.

6. **Public Comment Section**

Bruce Copus, asked if notifications about the Public Hearing were sent to residents near the proposed apartment site at the Annie Lathrup School building, and asked more questions about notifying residents.

DDA Director Colson, said it was published in the Oakland Press. Attorney Kimberlin, confirmed that notification is allowed by a publication circulated within the area.

During Bruce Copus's public comment time, two other residents were speaking out of turn, regarding how residents were notified and asking why it wasn't in the City Newsletter or the Southfield Sun, and DDA Director Colson, answered that it was based on the publication schedule.

Chair Stansbery, in response to several questions being asked by residents, explained that during the public comment section the Commission only listens to the public, they do not respond.

Attorney Kimberlin, asked to clarify and explained that this is a text amendment, not a district amendment, and the notification that goes out is a publication.

Mr. Copus thought that the Commission needed to get the word out, and that the publication in just the Oakland Press wasn't enough for such a big project, that will impact the residents of Lathrup Village.

Bruce, a 40 year resident, said he thought an open forum was an exchange of information back and forth, and he is assuming the Planning Commission has done their due diligence, since they are considering making zoning changes. He wanted to request a copy of the City's infrastructure reports, and wanted to know how it can support an apartment complex, considering the City's current water pressure. He mentioned a prior conversation that gave him concern about Lathrup Village's water pressure and how it can be fixed, as well as the Sewer and Electrical capacities, and if a substation has to be put in for the apartment, will the City have to pay for the upkeep of the substation. He wants information to verify that the Planning Commission has done their due diligence. He stated that If you can rezone for first floor residency, you can rezone it so no one can live there or a combination of that.

Pete Trussa, on Lathrup Blvd., has lived here 12 years, he put a sign in his yard about this subject and residents stopped and asked him about it. He heard things about the School being torn down, middle income housing, and that green space will be taken out, they will go to the sidewalk and it will change what it looks like near Southfield Road. He and people that he talked to did not think it was good and he doesn't want it.

Karen Miller, lives on Glenwood, and she was on the Planning Commission, for five years, she questions the sincerity of the City, by putting the Public Hearing notice in the Oakland Press, because not everyone gets the Oakland Press. Thinks the Comm is being asked to make decisions on false information she referenced the Master Plan, not being able to find that the ordinance that refers to new buildings being built in the City, having to be built up to the sidewalk, she said it was just a suggestion. She did not like Mr. Surnow's response to questions about drains, grease, and sediment, at a prior meeting, and says those will be on the City. She expressed that the plan does not seem to meet the intent of the Historic District Commission.

Roger Linn, resident for 37 years, expressed that he has no problem with having an apartment building there, but has reservations about the design of it, and that it doesn't seem like it fits Lathrup Village. He mentioned to Council that in Berkley they have have loft apartments whose design fits right in. He thought the designs of the two ends of the proposed apartments doesn't have harmony with our City.

Autumn, writes the Village Voice Newsletter, said she has the site plans there for people to see, and she concurs with Roger, the proposed in not cohesive with Lathrup Village. She mentioned that it was not approved by the Historic District Commission, that the School, which is a Landmark, will not be seen because of the two side structures, and that it will cause a lot of infrastructure demand and change. She said that citizens are entrusting the Planning Commission to protect them, and that there are ordinances to protect them that are supposed to be honored. She mentioned a Town Hall that residents are having, that will occur tomorrow for residents to go through the renderings and examine the apartments, parking, and traffic concerns of the proposed building project.

Kathy Minick, 65 year resident, her Mother lives here too, expressed that there is already a tremendous traffic problem and people cut through the neighborhoods, there are signs regarding the traffic direction and speed limit, but they are not followed, the additional crosswalks are another traffic and safety concern, and she thinks with the added residents from the proposed apartment building, it will only get worse. Consider the infrastructure and implications of this project.

Ms. Martinez, Lathrup Village resident, expressed her concern regarding the water pressure not being enough to put out fires, she said her home will be near this proposed apartment project, and mentioned that a sprinkler installer, had told her in the past that both Southfield and Lathrup Village, have low pressure and he had to install a special pump. She thinks with the added use due to people living in the proposed apartments, the water pressure problem will get worse.

Barb Kenez, resident for 60 plus years, would like us to keep and maintain a Bedroom Community, and they have waited 30 plus years for something to happen at the School, and thinks they have kicked residents out of the plan, and residents will have no access. She expressed, that the School building is the Center point of their community, that none of them can even use, and said she is not a fan of putting up the wings on both sides, the building is lost in that drawing.

Lauren, 25 years, said she was glad to see Surnow finally doing something with the Building, the City can't, because they don't own it, she said that the Surnow Company, has revisited the plans over and over again, and they keep going back and have tweaked the plans to be compliant with the ordinances. She thinks that if the plans do not go through, the other option is to level it.

Lady with glasses, did not give her name, but said Surnow, knows how to renovate an old building, they have done it in Birmingham, they have just held us hostage for 30 years and they are doing it again, and we are falling into their mess.

7. **New Business**

A. **Public Hearing - Zoning Ordinance Amendment First Floor Residential in Village Center**

Eric Pietsh, explained the zoning ordinance amendment, to add for residential use on the ground floor, which currently is only allowed on the second floor and above.

Commissioner Nordmoe, commented on how the changes were presented to him, and other Commission members, explained, how the changes are represented.

Commissioner Hillman, thinks in a vacuum he doesn't mind what he sees, but we are considering it in the context of the site plan, he would prefer not, considering a revision to the rules, because there is a site proposal.

Commissioner Hammond, agreed with Commissioner Hillman, and spoke about the City's Master Plan, and residents' input. His feeling, about the intent of the Master Plan, was to create a district, with retail, and a walkable place where people can hang out, but there has been limited investment, it would have been nice if this came up during one of the Master Plan revisions, instead of for a specific project, and it doesn't sit right with him. He said, if the revision is made, it

will apply to all buildings, not just this project.

Commissioner Dizik, looking at this plan and the requested revisions, doesn't see how first floor residential fits into the City plan, he has seen it in other Cities, and didn't think it was a benefit. He thinks it is important to revisit, the plan and see if restaurants, businesses, that are available to residents can be included.

DDA Director Colson, explained that the proposed intent, is to have places, including rooms that will be rentable to residents, the basketball court, a hall for rent, and there is a commitment from Bamboo to have a workable place.

Commissioner Nordmoe, found he did give input into the Master Plan and this proposed plan helped him understand the language for this district, he was shocked of the possibility of residents living close to Southfield Rd., however he understands the market has changed, and the real shortage is affordable housing not restaurants and he wants it to work. He is not happy about the size and how it interfaces with the school, but wants it to be preserved, and knows the investment in the school has to work for the investor, and he doesn't see how this works without there being residents on the first floor. Commissioner Nordmoe, said this causes us to think about the language in the plan.

Commissioner Hammond, said one thing about turning the first floor into retail, is that there is already empty retail space, so it doesn't make sense if there is no demand.

Commissioner Dizik, when it is walled off, he struggles with the idea of it being walled off, he mentioned atriums, up on pedestals,

Commissioner Hillman, thought some of the proposed public places, could inhabit along Southfield Road, he thinks Surnow has been creative, but could compromise, to include them elsewhere and be in compliance with what the City already has in place.

Commissioner Nordmoe, said, that we have a responsibility to not get into design, but respond to their thinking with regard to rules that are already in place, we can't say build us club space for the building. The building plan has to support it, make the plan work, maybe take off the top floor, that would be less dwarfing of the school. He said they need to consider the livability and the rentability of that first floor space, because this is not downtown Birmingham, where people walk right next to the buildings.

Commissioner Hammond, expressed the intention to invest in the School Building and to make part of the School a public space, and that it has to make sense to the Developer, by giving them enough rent money to make it work.

Commissioner Hillman, stated that we haven't approved a site plan or a change to an ordinance yet, and asked the audience to be considerate, despite their strong feelings.

Public Hearing:

Pete Trussa, mentioned that transparency is important to the residents and wants to know what is going on, because he thought that it is not transparent, and said whether we agree or disagree, do we want to keep it looking like Lathrup Village, or something that we are not proud of?

Barb Kenez, we are all here, because we did hear about it, not by the City, and not from the Oakland Press, and would appreciate it if more would be in the Newsletter from the City, please communicate better with the residents, we are upset because we are hearing about things at the 11th hour.

Karen Miller, agrees with Commissioner Hillman, and thinks we should be reactive instead of proactive, and says it seems that this zoning amendment was written for Surnow, and it is taking away the power of the Historic District Commission, who only has three buildings, there are steps that have been missed, before they are going through an appeal. Please consider impact on the whole community not just on this one building.

Bruce Copus, is a former Planning Commission member, who contributed to the City's Master Plan the first two times, and said, no where in the Master Plan does it say, we need large apartment buildings to make Lathrup Village great. He said property values, traffic, and infrastructure are all impacted by this development, you can't tear it down, it is protected, because it is a Federal Historic building, we do not need additional residents in Lathrup Village, we are a Bedroom Community, and happy with that. Mr. Copus, expressed concern about the wait at traffic lights, he can only imagine the traffic, and he thinks we don't need an apartment complex. He said their plans went from 250 to 132 units, they are flexible they want to develop, this ordinance change would not be good for residents.

Autumn, spoke about the threat of the developer demolishing the School, saying she doesn't think they can, because of the Federal Asbestos Remediation laws, and stated, that it is a serious toxic hazard, if they do any kind of work on that building. She said they are not talking about protecting us, and they have left it vacant for ten years, she thinks, as a tax right off. Autumn, said now there is federal money available, and wants to know what they mean, when they say that they want Lathrup Village to contribute? She asked where in the ordinance does it say, new buildings have to be at the street and mentioned that Panera is a new build that is not to the street. She asked where exactly, is it in the ordinances, because they haven't found it, she said it is a recommendation, not a rule. She also commented on safe walking conditions.

Public Hearing closed at 8:27pm, and was put it to a vote:

Commissioner Dizik, moved, seconded by Commissioner Nordmoe, to table this zoning ordinance amendment, until further revisions are done by the Surnow Company.

Yes: Nordmoe, Dizik, Stansbery

No: Hillman, Hammond

Motion carried.

Chair Stansbery, reminded the Commission members, that they were to vote yes or no on the ordinance amendment and that this vote was not about the site plan, only about first floor, residential living in Lathrup Village. Planning Commission members continued to discuss site plan issues, and then discussed what they wanted, Giffels and Webster to come back to the next meeting with, regarding the ordinance, and mentioned proposing a percentage of ground floor residential units.

The next steps were discussed by Chair Stansbery and DDA Director Colson, of having this on the agenda for the Planning Commission meeting on February 18, 2025, with a public notice in a local newspaper. Commissioner Nordmoe asked for it to be put in the newsletter and Commissioner Hammond asked for it to be on the City's app.

8. General Communication

City Attorney Kimberlin, addressed a prior question about when a Planning Commission member can abstain, from voting, and read information regarding this issue, that basically stated that members must vote unless there is a conflict of interest.

A. Development Projects Update

DDA Director Colson, gave updates on the status of the projects, that are currently in the PZE process.

Commissioner Nordmoe and Commissioner Hammond, discussed the resident led Town Hall tomorrow in the Community Room at City Hall.

9. Adjourn

Motioned by Commissioner Dizik, seconded by Commissioner Hammond, to adjourn the meeting at 8:57pm.