

MINUTES
City of Alpena Planning Commission
Regular Meeting (Council Chambers and Virtual)
May 10, 2022
Alpena, Michigan

CALL TO ORDER:

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Paul Sabourin, Planning Commission Chairman.

ROLL CALL: PLANNING COMMISSION

PRESENT: Boboltz , Vanwagoner, Kostelic, Sabourin, Bauer (appeared virtually), Gilmore

ABSENT: Wojda, Peterson

STAFF: Montiel Birmingham (Planning, Development, and Zoning Director), Kathleen Sauve (Recording Secretary)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Agenda were approved as printed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting April 12, 2022, minutes were approved as printed.

PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMISSION ACTION: None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: Red Brick Food Truck Park, 115-119 River Street – Birmingham explained that when there are two or more food trucks on any private lot, it is considered a food truck park. The Planning Commission is authorized to review the plot plan and issue approval, approval with conditions, or disapproval. The applicant submitted plot plan drawings for the entire space; modifications to the entire space will not be complete right away. Planned start date is Memorial Day weekend. No concerns by PDZ Staff have been identified with the plot plan. Note that an Electrical Permit will be pulled by Thunder Bay Electric to run electricity to the Food Trucks; building permits will be pulled for future construction of the pergola and service

counter area. The service counter, approach slab and port-a-jon will be ADA compliant. No setbacks from the property line are required in the CBD/DOD.

Two Food Trucks will be located on the site; 808 Bowlz (owned and operated by Red Brick) and Sherwood Pita Wagon (owned and operated by Jessie Fischer and her husband). Service provided will be for lunch and dinner hours.

Corey Canute, owner of the subject property, added that Phase 1 of the food park transformation will include an outdoor walk-up bar/access window for Red Brick to service patrons in the park, to take advantage of the social district.

Sabourin asked if the park's liquor license is part of the Red Brick or separate. Canute explained that he worked with the liquor commission and had the license extended out to the park area, since both properties are contiguous.

Kostelic ***motioned*** to approve the food truck park.

Gilmore ***seconded*** the motion.

Motion ***approved*** by unanimous vote.

Birmingham explained that the next step is to issue them a permit for the park, and then each individual food truck will also be issued a permit.

Becoming an EV Ready Community - Electrical Vehicle Charging Presentation – Birmingham and Bauer each presented information about becoming an EV ready community. Chris Lawrence, owner of Eagle Supply and early adopter of electric vehicles for personal use, gave his experience as an owner of an electric vehicle and the need for charging access within the City. He said that if Alpena had EV chargers, it would put us on the network for travelers to come through; currently Alpena is not on that charging access map.

Jason Repke, Director of Engineering at Alpena Power Company, explained that per regulations by the Michigan Public Service Commission, the power company cannot own the charging infrastructure. Currently they offer two programs, residential and general service plug in EV rate, which gives a 2.4 cents per kilowatt hour reduction, or 17% for off-peak usage which is 9:00 pm through 9:00 am Monday through Friday and all weekends and holidays. He said that with the last rate case settlement, the Alpena Power Company proposed a pilot program for EV charging stations. The case has been filed with the MPSC but has not been finalized. It would be one-third funded by the owner, one-third funded by the utility company (which would be capped at \$70,000), and one-third funded by an EGLE grant. It would gain the owner access to the general service rate for five years, not pushing them up into the higher service rate. He went on further to explain that their system is a fairly robust, looped system, and it is over built capacity wise to accommodate growth.

Sabourin inquired about the cost of the chargers. Lawrence said he doesn't use the same type of charger at his home as what would be used in the City, but paid \$600.00 for his charging unit with cable, and around \$200.00 for Omega electric to install it. Rather than paying thousands of dollars and trenching for each of the bigger chargers (which down the road would make sense), he suggested that you could have a smaller charger on a light post at every motel in town by next weekend for less than \$1,000.00 per piece. Repke said that downtown, anywhere there is a transformer, there will also be a service that is relatively close. Birmingham inquired about the payment of the electricity itself. Repke stated that each owner of a charger is metered, and it would be their responsibility; whether they charge someone for plugging in is up to them. Lawrence stated most businesses do not charge to plug into their chargers and making it free makes the most sense.

Sabourin questioned whether the Alpena Power infrastructure is large enough to support many more electric vehicles in the distant future. Repke stated that any additional investment and necessary upgrades required would come from their engineering studies.

Bauer described incentives for EV installation and how it can be used to help economic development and identified specific parties who may be interested in partnership for installation.

Anne Gentry, DDA, described how some other municipalities in Michigan own and operate their charging systems. She felt that downtown locations make the most sense.

Comprehensive Plan Goals – Birmingham had asked all of the members to choose three action items from the Comprehensive Plan that they as a group can focus on going forward. Birmingham would like to focus on housing specifically, as it would be good timing now that there has been a Housing Task Force put together with the County of Alpena.

Sabourin stated that he felt Community Character and Quality of Life in reference to the EV situation is important, as it is looming largely in the future.

Kostelic selected to focus on the expansion of the fiber optic and wi-fi in the City. She agreed with Birmingham that housing is important. She also chose to focus on encouraging mixed-use development downtown and extending the pedestrian pathways to connect downtown with surrounding areas.

Gilmore would like to focus on updating the Comprehensive Plan annually rather than every five years and inviting students from our school system to participate.

Birmingham added that she agreed that they should be updating and revisiting the Comprehensive Plan annually, but also the Zoning Ordinance is old and they added money into the CIP to re-do that. She said she would like to place focus on that as well because it has been ten years since it was reviewed in its entirety.

Bauer echoed everything that everyone had already said but thought the focus should be on the participation plan and looking at different ways to get participation and feedback, particularly around housing.

Birmingham agreed that the participation plan needs to be improved to get community feedback.

Boboltz said that there should be focus on the objective of developing Standard Operating Procedures for the timely exchange of information between City, Township and County Planning Commissions, as well as cross representation on the other boards and committees. He stated he agreed with the Zoning Ordinance update.

Kostelic agreed with the Zoning Ordinance update.

Boboltz also suggested they focus on creating a public education campaign concerning waterfront vegetative buffers and evaluate the feasibility of regulatory approaches. He said it should not be a difficult process to do, to try to help teach people how to better manage their waterfront properties. Birmingham stated that she has a meeting coming up in the future with Huron Pines in which they will be looking at some infrastructure options, and that Huron Pines is listed as a partner on some of the goals in the Comprehensive Plan.

COMMUNICATIONS OR REPORTS: None.

CONTINUING EDUCATION: Birmingham provided links to two educational opportunities for the commission through the MSU Extension as follows: Making Defensible Decisions: Discretionary Standards, Conditions, and Procedural Due Process on May 19th, and Planning and Zoning for Solar Energy Systems on May 12th or June 1st. Another was the MAP Planning and Zoning Essentials Workshop, in Oscoda, Michigan on June 22nd, of which she provided the informational flyer. Birmingham also recommended the Citizen Planner training through the MSU Extension, which is available all the time and geared toward commissioners and council members who are new, but also a great refresher opportunity for those who are not new.

Sabourin discussed possibly making it mandatory to attend an essentials workshop within the first year of being on the commission. He also suggested that the Council should interview the commission's potential candidates. Bauer agreed that training should be mandatory, but in order to mandate training for the commission, it would have to be added to the by-laws.

Boboltz agreed that the planning and essentials workshop is a critical one for new commissioners. Birmingham said that an orientation packet has been created for new members. Sabourin said that training is essential because they are advisors to the City Council, and it is not something to take lightly.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Matt Leavesley, local resident speaking on behalf of himself and many other local residents who attended the previous two meetings, told the Commission he appreciated the fact that they all took the time to hear the residents out, giving each person five minutes to speak and doing their research to make sure that the decisions being made were as accurate and faithful to the law and their responsibilities to the community as possible. He stated that regardless of how each person voted, he was thankful for the time and effort they all took to listen to everybody and allow interaction, and that made it a nice part of the experience. He said that the minutes were well written and everybody did their best to put everything together and make sure that it was good for everybody involved.

MEMBERS' COMMENTS: Boboltz inquired if people are asking where the chargers are while they are in town. He said he does feel that the City should go forward with installing the chargers, whether it be in hotel parking lots or other strategic places downtown. Gentry stated that business owners around town are excited that the City recognizes the need for EV charging stations.

Sabourin announced that the month of May is when they are supposed to have their election of officers, or until their successors are selected and assume offices. His term on the Planning Commission ends in December. He stated that it has been a 40-year ride for him, and he has enjoyed his stay here, but at this point in his life, he would like to step down as the Chairman and have other people take other officer roles. Typically, the Vice-Chairman would step in as Chairman, which would be Randy Boboltz; then Steve Gilmore would step up from Secretary into the Vice-Chairman seat. Sabourin said he spoke with Matt Wojda a few days ago and he said he would be interested in the Secretarial position. He said it was a good time to make a change. Boboltz said he preferred to wait until the next meeting to make those changes in hopes that more commissioners would be in attendance. Everyone agreed, and Sabourin asked for the election of officers to be put on the June agenda.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m., by Sabourin, Planning Commission Chairman.

Steve Gilmore, Secretary