



PLANNING COMMISSION

March 18, 2021

A regular Planning Commission meeting was conducted virtually from remote locations, with staff at City Hall Council Chambers, Petoskey, Michigan, on Thursday, March 18, 2021. Roll was called at 7:00 P.M. and the following were:

Present: Cynthia Linn Robson, Chairperson
Betony Braddock
Carolyn Dettmer
Rose Fitzgerald
Richard Mooradian
Rick Neumann
Ted Pall
Kent Warner

Absent: Bob Kronberg

Others: Aiden Cleary, Boy Scout Troop 7
Matt Fettig, 906 Michigan Street
Dr. David Finley, North Central Michigan College
Emily Meyerson, 520 Cherry Street
Carlin Smith, 356 Boyer Road
Dr. Thomas Zeidel, North Central Michigan College

Staff: Amy Tweeten, City Planner
Rob Straebel, City Manager
Lisa Denoyer, Administrative Assistant

Upon motion and support, the minutes of the February 18, 2021 regular meeting were approved with corrections.

**Review and Approval of an Extension of the
North Central Michigan College Ring Road**

Staff informed the Commission that completion of the ring road/access drive has been included in College plans for many years and review and approval of a street extension by the Planning Commission is required by the Planning Enabling Act.

Staff then reviewed plans for the final segment of the ring road, access to the natural area and parking lots, noting street width, sidewalks, street trees and that City staff has worked with the College to ensure the proposed design meets City construction standards and recommends approval.

Dr. David Finley, NCMC President, stated that they are pleased to collaborate with the City on this project and it is something they have wanted to do for a number of years. He informed the Commission that the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians has helped with funding for this project and that the project provides safety, a secondary access to the south side of campus,

improved access to the natural area and ball fields, and completes what they intend to call Campus Circle. They feel it is important to tie in the sidewalk with Atkins Road and access to downtown.

Dr. Thomas Zeidel, NCMC Vice President of Finance and Facilities, stated that access and safety are two of the primary attributes of this extension of Howard Street.

Commissioners asked; if future parking would be created to the east of where the ring road ties into Atkins Road, if there would be bicycle access, if the section of walkway from the ball fields to the larger parking area would be abandoned, and if the ADA parking near the ball fields would be removed.

Dr. Finley responded that there are currently no plans for the area east of the ring road and that parking could be a possibility or even an urgent care facility or a learning laboratory for students that would serve the community. The sidewalk would be wide enough to allow pedestrian and bicyclists and they intend to promote bike use on campus. The existing walkway to the ball fields would be replaced with the sidewalk that runs along the road extension and pavers will be placed in the roadway to slow traffic. It is unknown at this time how they will address ADA access to the ballfields and that is part of continued discussion.

At this time, the meeting was opened for public comment.

Emily Meyerson, 520 Cherry Street, asked if the new crosswalk near the baseball fields would be a new access to the natural area and stated that she believes it would be a good idea to have a pedestrian only access and not a parking access as she has safety concerns with pedestrians walking through a large parking area.

Dr. Finley responded that the thought is yes, one could bicycle or walk the path and they are looking at pedestrian access to the natural area on the north side of the retention pond. One thing that may be possible in the future is to have a small three or four car parking lot in that area. As it stands the primary natural area entrance would remain at the southeast corner of the existing parking lot.

Commissioners expressed their approval of the proposed plan and commented that it adds to the functional use of the property, improves circulation and is part of the college's master plan.

At this time, Commissioner Pall made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Warner, to approve the changes to the North Central Michigan College campus, allowing an extension of the internal ring road with changes to the north parking lots and sidewalks per the plans submitted for this March 18, 2021 meeting dated February 27, 2021, and to further state that these changes in terms of location, character and extent are consistent with the master plan. Motion passed 8-0.

Discussion and Direction on a New Zoning District for North Central Michigan College

Staff informed the Commission that the College is currently located in the R-1 Single Family Zoning District that allows colleges as special condition uses and with the ring road construction, there would be a need for additional wayfinding signage.

The College master plan was updated in 2019 and staff believes that a college-specific zoning district based on the long-term master plan would provide predictability to both the community and North Central Michigan College. If the Commission believes this is the correct route, staff would work with the College on draft language for the new zoning district.

Dr. Finley informed the Commission that positive things are happening on campus. He and Dr. Zeidel met with the City Planner and the Director of Public Works, had a facility tour, and had good conversation about the future plans for the college. The City Manager is also in the loop on this discussion and this proposal is something that came from that discussion. He discussed potential plans to tie together the three buildings at the east end of campus, a career and technical building and additional dormitory space on campus. They are currently at capacity for housing and additional space could potentially provide housing for frontline workers and seasonal workforce during the summer months. He then discussed their desire to beautify campus at Howard and Atkins that would include signage.

Dr. Zeidel stated that they cannot do these changes alone and would like to partner with the City of Petoskey to work toward a zoning district that would be a win-win for everyone.

At this time, the meeting was opened for public comment. No public comment was received.

Commissioners commented that they see a need for a college zoning district, are open to changes, and would like to make sure that any changes made are compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

At this time, a motion was made by Commissioner Pall, seconded by Commissioner Fitzgerald, to direct the City Planner to work with North Central Michigan College representatives to draft language for a new college zoning district that would be brought to the Planning Commission for further review and discussion. Motion passed 8-0.

Discussion and Direction on Possible Zoning Ordinance Changes to Address Housing Needs

Staff reminded the Commission that the master plan recommends review of the zoning ordinance to address housing needs.

Staff had previously provided some possible ordinance changes that would not create housing by themselves, but may help to make new housing construction more viable. These include:

1. Allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in all single-family districts by right – staff approval through a zoning permit.
2. Allow 2-family dwellings by right in all zoning districts – staff approval through a zoning permit.
3. Increase the height allowance in any zoning district that allows three stories to 3 stories, 40 feet. This is currently the height limit of the Central Business District, while other districts allow 3 stories, 33 feet, which is difficult to meet with current building codes.
4. Consider incentive zoning in the Central Business District that could allow four stories if a certain percent of units are restricted to 80-120% AMI.
5. Consider allowing the back half of downtown storefronts to be converted to residential use if located on an alley (require a minimum amount of first floor, street fronting commercial space).
6. Change how flat roof building heights are measured. Change the 40 foot height limit to the surface of the roof (vs. top of parapet), with an allowance of no more than 3 feet for a parapet.
7. Change or eliminate density restrictions on new construction in multiple family, business and industrial districts. Rely on the lot coverage, setbacks and parking requirements to determine building size and number of units.
8. Amend private street standards in the Subdivision Ordinance (must meet DPS needs).
9. Reduce parking requirements in all residential districts and/or create parking maximums in place of parking minimums.

Many of the changes have been previously discussed by the Commission, with changes made such as allowing two-family dwellings as special condition uses.

At this time, the meeting was opened for public comment.

Matt Fettig, 906 Michigan Street, stated that he is very passionate about this subject and is ready to create an ADU in the 300 square foot attic space of his detached garage. He strongly encouraged the Commission to reduce the parking requirements to one car per unit and reduce the minimum lot width as the original design of the City required 50-foot lot widths, not 60 to 70 foot wide lots as currently required. He stated that he understands the concerns with vacation rentals, however, he believes that most issues would not exist with owner occupied rentals versus rentals that are purchased solely for the purpose as a vacation rental.

Carlin Smith, 356 Boyer Road, stated that he is on the board for Little Traverse Housing Partnership and the Housing North Organization and they are all happy that the Planning Commission is having this discussion. Housing is a crisis in our region, as it is in many others, and this is an opportunity to address it and make zoning ordinance changes that could improve housing issues. He asked the Commission to give thoughtful consideration and decide what works best for Petoskey.

Emily Meyerson, 520 Cherry Street, stated that she also works with the Little Traverse Housing Partnership and the Housing North Organization and she believes these are all good changes to consider. She would like to see the Commission work toward all of these zoning changes and agrees with Mr. Fettig that reducing parking is important. A decrease to one parking space per unit onsite and an increase in the percentage of allowed on-street parking from 20% to 50% would help. She asked the Commission to look at the historic form and consider allowing four to eight unit buildings as options in single-family districts as they existed historically.

Commissioners discussed prioritizing the proposed ordinance changes and working on the simple items first. They also discussed the need for an inventory of historic form, missing middle housing, short-term rental requirements and enforcement, the declining population of city residents, and the need for workforce housing.

Commissioners expressed concerns with enforcement of ordinance changes that allow for more uses, safety concerns for ADUs above garages, and the added load on City utilities.

Staff suggested pairing like items together and reminded Commissioners that any changes of use would require that the building comply with the current building code.

Ms. Meyerson commented that she likes the idea of working on the simple items first to help generate momentum. She added that historically there have been fewer residents within the City and that allowing apartment buildings and duplexes would bring the City back to the way it once was. She stated that there are more multiple family houses in town than most people are aware of and suggested looking at the number of mailboxes at each home as an indicator as to how many units are within what appears to be a single family home.

At this time, Commissioners directed staff to break down the list of possible ordinance changes, compile similar items, list pros and cons and provide a walking map that would identify multiple family housing that blends with single-family housing.

Public Comment

The meeting was opened for public comment. No public comment was received.

Updates

Staff informed the Commission that the official public comment period for the Livable Petoskey Master Plan ends April 12, 2021. Staff plans to have all public comments to the Commission prior to the April 14, 2021 regular meeting so that they can start discussion on these comments, as well as comments received by City Council, to work towards a final document. Once a final document is achieved, the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing before approval of the plan and will then send it to City Council for final approval. Whether a joint Commission-Council meeting is beneficial can be decided at the April 14 meeting.

Staff informed the Commission that the Sign Committee has been working on changes to dynamic display and temporary signs and due to some concerns raised by the City Attorney, the Committee has been working on changes. Staff anticipated the proposed language to come before the Commission for discussion at their April meeting.

Staff asked for a show of hands as to which Planning Commissioners had attended the Planning and Zoning Essentials Training in early March and if they felt the training was beneficial. Commissioners responded that they felt it was very informative and a great overview.

Chairperson Robson informed the Commission that the City Manager, at the March 1st City Council meeting, commended the Planning Commission on their due diligence and attention to detail in the review process that created a much more attractive building and overall better site plan than was originally submitted for the medical marijuana provisioning center on Charlevoix Avenue.

The meeting was then adjourned at 8:38 P.M.

Minutes reviewed by Ted Pall, Vice Chairperson/Secretary