

The joint meeting of the Clare City Commission and Clare City Planning Commission was called to order in the City Commission Chambers, at 6:30 p.m. by Mayor Pat Humphrey and Chair Dave Prawdzik who led the Pledge of Allegiance. Present were: Commissioners Darren Acton, Josh Clark, Pat Humphrey, John Kline, Jean McConnell, Carolyn (Gus) Murphy, Dave Prawdzik, Karla Swanson, and Jan Winter. Absent: Bob Bonham, Glenda Carmoney, Elaine Demasi, and Ben Walters. Also present were Jaynie Hoerauf, City Attorney; Ken Hibl, City Manager; and Diane Lyon, City Clerk.

**APPROVAL OF JOINT AGENDA:**

Moved by Commissioner Winter second by Commissioner Acton to approve the agenda. Ayes: All present. Nays: None. Absent: Bob Bonham, Glenda Carmoney, Elaine Demasi, and Ben Walters. *Motion approved.*

**APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 11, 2014 PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES:**

Moved by Commissioner Winter second by Commissioner Demasi to approve the minutes of December 11, 2013. Ayes: Darren Acton, Josh Clark, John Kline, Dave Prawdzik, and Jan Winter. Nays: None. Absent: Glenda Carmoney, Elaine Demasi, and Ben Walters. *Motion approved.*

Commissioner Winter moved to open the public comment period. Ayes: All. Nays: None. *Motion approved.*

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

Commissioner Acton moved to close the public comment period. Ayes: All. Nays: None. *Motion approved.*

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT**

The Planning Commission submits a report to the Clare City Commission on an annual basis outlining the Commission's major accomplishments; highlighting difficulties (if any) encountered; and offering recommendations for meeting the objectives and goals of the City's Master Plan and enforcement of the City's Zoning Codes. If approved, the report will then be submitted to the City Commission by the Chair of the Planning Commission.

Moved by Commissioner Clark second by Commissioner Winter to approve the Planning Commission's annual report by adoption of Resolution 2014-001PC. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: Glenda Carmoney, Elaine Demasi, and Ben Walters. *Motion approved.*

Planning Commission Chair Dave Prawdzik presented the annual report to the City Commission.

**JOINT DISCUSSION**

Commissioner McConnell expressed appreciation to the Planning Commission for their hard work and dedication; sorting out the nuances and details (on projects, ordinances, etc.) that come before them, making it easier for the City Commission to do their job.

In reference to Commission McConnell's comment, Attorney Hoerauf's provided that from her perspective, if the commissions were receiving a lot of use or dimensional variance requests or other similar requests it would indicate that a review of the city's Master Plan or Codes of Ordinance may be necessary to determine why the requests are being generated and revisions or amendments would be required (if they were found to be inadequate). City Manager Hibl noted that the Zoning Board of Appeals has not met since 2010; this is a good sign that the Master Plan and Ordinance Codes in place are effective at this time.

Ken Hibl told commissioners that the list provided in the agenda report is not inclusive so if there are topics that a board member wishes to discuss, they should feel free to do so.

The City Manager requested that the commissioners discuss the topics of commercial development and code enforcement first so that the city attorney can be dismissed once discussion is complete and questions, if any, are answered on those two topics.

- ***Traffic Safety***

Commissioner Clark expressed concerns about the safety of students crossing the street at McEwan Street and Wheaton Avenue because it is a very busy area. A Crossing Guard is

present to halt traffic and assist students crossing in the morning and at the end of the school day at State Street and McEwan when school is in session but there are still concerns for the safety of the students at the Wheaton crossing. McEwan Street is a State of Michigan controlled roadway and therefore MDOT controls the installation of traffic lights, street signs and signals.

- *Planning Commission Seat Vacancy*

Commissioner Acton inquired about the seat vacancy the Planning Commission now has with Commissioner Hofweber's term expiring on the Commission on January 4<sup>th</sup>. C/M Hibel stated that Mayor Humphrey has some potential replacement candidates that he will consider for appointment to fill that position.

- *Commercial Development of the 140-acre parcel north of E. Colonville Road now under the jurisdictional authority of the City. What type of development?? What if Big-Box Store(s) comes knocking?*

Attorney Hoerauf offered that the health, welfare, and safety of the community are first and foremost considerations in developing a Master Plan.

The City of Clare developed standards several years ago to provide guidelines, rules and regulation for larger retail units coming to the community related to parking, light pollution, green space, etc. in anticipation of large commercial development.

The City of Clare has had big box stores knock on the door in the past and continues to receive calls now and again about the possibility of development but most of the time nothing has come of it. There is always a possibility that a big box could decide to build in the community. If that occurs, a staff site plan will take place and both commissions will be made aware of the request. The Planning Commission would then conduct a site plan review as they are responsible for reviewing and either approving or disapproving the site plan. Big box stores cannot be treated differently than any other commercial business.

Commissioner Swanson stated that there was public opposition to Walgreen's setting up shop in Clare but the company was in compliance with the regulations in place. As long as a corporation is in compliance with the rules and regulations they cannot be turned away.

Attorney Hoerauf noted that there are no grounds for a referendum on a site plan. A referendum has to be specifically permitted by state law.

Sentiment appears to have changed in favor of big box stores according to Commissioner Winter but there is still a contingency out there that would oppose development. While big box stores may sell many of the same products as some of the small businesses they often don't repair products or offer the same level of customer service.

- *Code Enforcement – what can be done to enforce current ordinances with limited budget constraints?*

The city had a full-time Code Enforcement Officer in place but once that full-time position was eliminated, code violations blossomed overnight. A part-time Code Enforcement Officer was employed and it was discovered that because the job is so time consuming a part-time position is ineffective in keeping codes enforced. Mowing, blight and signage make up the majority of ordinance code violations. A full-time Code Enforcement Officer is needed and it takes the right person to do the job of making the initial personal contact and then following-up on the violations to ensure that issue(s) is resolved.

- *Designation of downtown Clare as Federal Historical District.*

Resident Ken Lingaur is a student at Eastern Michigan University and is working on obtaining a master's degree in historical preservation. He has been conducting research and is completing an application for the city to submit for the DDA's Federal Historic Designation as part of his master's degree thesis. . There are specific criteria in order for buildings to qualify so that determined what area would be submitted for historic designation. The project has taken about two years and at a minimal cost to the city. Designation would put us on the national map and provide an opportunity for downtown business owners to receive state and federal tax credits when they do renovations, etc. The DDA (a number of them are downtown business owners) supports this application. Once we receive that designation we must have a historic preservation committee in place to take on the onerous task enforcing those guidelines. The application will be available for review the second weekend in February here at Clare City Hall in the City Clerk's office.

- *Move & Rehabilitation of the Clare RR Depot.*

The depot will be moving in April 2014.

- *Desired Future Use of Downtown Consumers Energy Site.*  
Consumer's Energy intends to build a new facility in the new industrial park and move from their downtown location on 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Several ideas for repurposing the downtown site have been offered to city staff; a community center, another ClareCastle (senior living center), condominiums, and a youth center have all been proposed and we welcome hearing additional ideas from the community. The site is contaminated but if a Phase I & II environmental assessment and background can be completed there are some uses that would be allowed at the site provided the soil is not disturbed. There are residents who would prefer the city not take ownership so that the facility remains on the tax rolls.
- *Street Improvements.*  
The city contracted with Mt. Pleasant's engineering department to conduct a street survey. They will provide a street improvement priority report in the next month or two, which will help us, determine a priority list for street improvements. The city receives ¾ mil in taxes for street improvements, which generates approximately \$65-70,000 annually; one block of street costs about \$120,000 to improve. So our intent is to present a list of streets to both commissions for approval to place on the ballot as a special assessment and borrow money to complete those specific street improvements; water & sewer would be completed at the same time & would come out of the water and sewer fund. It would be a general city-wide assessment. The ¾ mil would be used to keep up with maintenance.
- *Filling of Empty Storefronts/Attract Businesses to Clare.*  
There is no formal process for recruiting businesses to Clare, but a volunteer group of city ambassadors would be beneficial to the community. We wouldn't want them to take business away from another community but rather woo them to open up another business in Clare.
- *Continuance of Rail-Trail through downtown Clare.*  
The DNR is trying to negotiate a deal with the railroad for a property trade. They are at an impasse so it's possible that we will have to complete the PM rail-trail through Clare ourselves. There is an initiative to connect the Pere Marquette to the Fred Meyer trail down in Ithaca. All the communities along 127 are in favor of it. It will run in MDOT right-of-way from Ithaca to Alma and along Old 27 from Mt. Pleasant to Clare. There is interest from another trail group to take it down to Ionia.

Commissioners agreed that a joint meeting should be held once or twice annually.

**ADJOURNMENT** - Moved by Commissioner Acton and seconded by Commissioner Swanson to adjourn. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Absent: Bob Bonham, Glenda Carmoney, Elaine Demasi, and Ben Walters. *Motion approved.* Meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

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Diane Lyon, City Clerk