



**PLANNING COMMISSION
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

February 8, 2016

A special joint meeting of the City of Petoskey Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission was held in the City Hall Lobby, Petoskey, Michigan, on Monday, February 8, 2016. Roll was called at 7:00 P.M. and the following were:

Present: Gary Greenwell, Chairperson, Planning Commission
Dana Andrews, Planning Commission
Betony Braddock, Planning Commission
Dean D. Burns, Planning Commission
Jim Daunter, Parks and Recreation Commission
James Holmes, Planning Commission
Amy McMullen, Parks and Recreation Commission
Emily Meyerson, Planning Commission
Michael Morey, Parks and Recreation Commission
Rick Neumann, Planning Commission
Cynthia Linn Robson, Planning Commission
Ken Turk, Parks and Recreation Commission
Eric Yetter, Planning Commission

Absent: William Hansen, Jr., Parks and Recreation Commission
Roy Pulaski, Parks and Recreation Commission

Staff: Rob Straebel, City Manager
Amy Tweeten, City Planner
Al Hansen, Director of Parks and Recreation

Others Present: Becky Goodman
Tim Knutson
Noah Marshall-Rashid
Larry Rochon
Reg Smith

The City Manager opened the meeting and Al Hansen reviewed the master plan timeline and gave an overview of proposed changes based on input from the workshops held, the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council as noted in the meeting agenda memo.

Commissioner Meyerson asked why the trail didn't extend beyond Emmet Street; why the plaza extends beyond the railroad tracks; raised safety concerns with the trail/ rail crossings shown at an angle which is known to be a hazard for bicycles; and the use of the southern end of the greenway for a large parking lot. There was also concern that the parking lot as shown could be a short-cut for traffic.

Staff responded that the plan is for the former railroad property but that the extension of the trail is indicated in the Non-Motorized Facilities Plan; that the plaza would be one of three loading locations for the trolley (Arlington Park, Pennsylvania Park and the Darling Lot); and that the parking lot was

for use of downtown employees and visitors to either take the trolley or use the trail as well as trailhead parking. The details of actual trail construction are not yet engineered, specific design concerns can be worked out during the engineering phase of the project.

Commissioner Burns stated that the input from the workshops was to keep the tracks so he did not understand why they are being removed at Grove Street; it is short sighted to remove the tracks and that if they are going to be discontinued at Emmet Street they should be entirely removed. He saw no need for a parking lot along the corridor. He also stated that what was needed was a deck on the Michigan Streets lots to eliminate the surface lots at the north and south ends of the corridor.

Staff responded that the information received to date is that to operate the trolley potentially cost effectively, the tracks have to be severed. Mr. Hansen also noted the issue of having the tracks in the middle of a parking lot would increase the cost to maintain them and explained the cost of upgrading the tracks for full train use was cost prohibitive.

Commissioner Robson asked why this would be trailhead parking and expressed a concern that there is too much pavement in the greenway corridor.

Staff reiterated the timeline and that approval of the master plan only moves us forward to apply for grant funding for the non-motorized trail section from E. Mitchell to Emmet Street. Mr. Hansen noted the expense of the tracks and wondered if the money were better spent on a road trolley as he did not believe the train trolley would be cost effective.

After further rail discussion, Commissioner Holmes asked about the costs and viability of the trolley and what would be done with the tracks if the trolley turns out not to be viable.

Commissioner Neumann believed that the parking lot did not have to be completed with the next phase and emphasized the historical importance of the rail and tracks as place-making tools and that it was too early to make a decision to remove the tracks.

Commissioner Yetter stated that he appreciated the discussion of costs and the discussion was changing his feeling on the tracks and that holding out for high speed rail may not be a reason to keep the tracks, that walking and biking should be promoted and that more time was needed to review the plan. The public desire to keep the tracks was related to a full train coming into town, not just a trolley.

Commissioner Greenwell commented that he did not believe it was economically feasible to bring the rail to Petoskey; that the City has had the trolley for 20 years and didn't understand why the issues with running the trolley weren't explored before now, that the plan should be designed with the City's future in mind, and he felt the tracks should be removed.

Noah Marshall-Rashid, 414 Grove Street, then commented that he came to discuss bike parking at Pennsylvania Park and that he wants bikes brought into town.

Larry Rochon, DMB Chairman, asked what would happen to the bike route and whether it feasible to bring a 10' trail through Pennsylvania Park.

Staff responded that there is not enough space for a 10' trail from Bay Street to E. Lake Street which is what is needed to be an official non-motorized facility and that there are more options if the tracks were removed.

Commissioner Robson commented that the trolley is an expensive place making tool and would rather have the plan be bike friendly that keep the tracks but felt that getting the trail connection to Emmet Street was important. She believes more information on costs is needed before moving forward.

The City Manager commented that it is premature to take out the tracks and that the DMB is considering its interest in operating the trolley.

Commissioner Neumann commented that he believed it was premature to pull the tracks out and that the Downtown Management Board needs to decide if they want the trolley. He believes the plan is bike-able and that the place-making of the trolley is important.

Commissioner Meyerson commented that she was not comfortable approving the plan with so many unknowns, because if the tracks are removed then there could be a better plan created.

Commissioner Yetter commented that he felt that the Commission needed more time with the plan and that they should look forward and promote walking and biking.

Commissioner Andrews commented that the Commission doesn't usually plan parks and that he envisions the rail ending before downtown.

Commissioner Braddock as a new member appreciated the discussion but had no comment.

Commissioner Holmes commented that he would like more information on the trolley, that more public information is needed and that a timeline of six months could be established.

Mr. Hansen said they have an idea of the operational costs of the trolley but there remain several unknown issues regarding what rules the trolley must operate under and which state or federal agency will regulate the trolley including crossings of the city roads.

Parks Commissioner McMullen commented that she felt the input from previous workshops and the Parks Commission was included in the plan, that the dialog has been good and would like more discussion.

Commissioner Morey believed the plan was detailed enough that it should be moved forward to apply for the grant. He likes the aesthetics of the corridor and the connection to Emmet Street and that he would like to move forward.

Al Hansen commented on possible changes for a grant application if the trail portion is not considered.

Commissioner Meyerson asked if there could be a decision on the trolley by August so that any grant application could be modified.

Tim Knutson, Beckett and Raeder, stated the discussion was going in circles.

Reg Smith stated that more data is needed.

Commissioner Turk believed that implementation of the plan was ultimately feasible, that the meeting raised more questions than answers but that he felt it was important to move the plan forward.

Commissioner McMullen asked about the grant deadline, to which staff responded April 1st. She said she could not support the plan without the answers to the questions raised.

At this time, Planning Commissioner Burns made a motion, with support from Commissioner Robson, to postpone recommendation on the plan pending further information. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 P.M.

Side note: The Parks and Recreation Commission, at its February 8, 2016 meeting, following the joint meeting, agreed to postpone its decision on the Downtown Greenway Corridor until the Downtown Management Board met and commented on the plan.

Minutes reviewed by Emily Meyerson, Secretary

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