



PLANNING COMMISSION

September 20, 2018

A regular Planning Commission meeting was held in the City Hall Community Room, Petoskey, Michigan, on Thursday, September 20, 2018. Roll was called at 7:00 P.M. and the following were:

Present: Gary Greenwell, Planning Commission Chairperson
Dana Andrews
Betony Braddock
Dean Burns
Emily Meyerson
Rick Neumann
Ted Pall
Cynthia Robson
Eric Yetter

Staff: Amy Tweeten, City Planner

Others Present: Abby Badgley, 415 Kalamazoo Ave.
Bea Putnam
Ashley Nguyen
Nigel Allum

Upon motion and support, the minutes of the August 16, 2018 regular meeting were approved, with correction, 9-0.

Public Comment

Chairman Greenwell asked if there was any public comment at this time, which there was not. The Commission discussed whether public comment should be held at the beginning or end of the meeting, with staff explaining that the intent at the beginning is for comment related to matters not on the agenda or for people who cannot wait until an item scheduled later in the meeting is addressed.

Review and discussion of the Zoning Ordinance fence regulations

Staff had provided the Commission with Planning Commission and City Council minutes from the previous lengthy discussions between 2007 and 2009. She noted that the issue of corner lot fencing continues to come up and that the issue of front yard fencing related to gardening was a newer subject.

Commissioners commented that corner-front yard fences should be allowed but with design criteria, height limits not to exceed 42 inches, and should be a percent open; that it is not good policy to have a regulation that frequently receives variance requests; that the existence of fences that received variances or fences that predate the ordinance adds to peoples confusion about front yard fences; that the issue has been discussed at length so making any recommendations for regulation changes should be taken slowly and that front yard fences will likely not be well received;

that the reason for the regulations is to maintain open neighborhoods; that changes to corner-front yard fences should include a setback from the property line; that limiting corner-front yard fences to three feet may not provide visual privacy but does create a sense of security.

Commissioners then discussed the issue of front yard fences for gardening, with questions raised whether gardens are desirable in front yards and that a three-foot fence would not keep out deer.

Abby Badgley commented that she felt the garden she put in her front yard created community, that she met neighbors that she hadn't previously, that her three-foot fence did help with the deer not destroying her garden; that she had not tried deer repellents and that she felt the Ann Arbor ordinance should be considered.

Commissioners discussed whether front yard fences in a portion of the yard could be considered under accessory structure regulations with setbacks. The Commission directed staff to come back with language on corner fences not to exceed 42", partially open, and with a 2-3 foot setback, as well as language for garden fences in the front yard.

Election of Officers

Chairman Greenwell stated that he would be stepping down as Chair after 14 years and nominated Emily Meyerson as Chair and Dana Andrews and Vice Chair/Secretary. Support for the motion was by Neumann and passed on a 9-0 vote.

Housing Needs Discussion

Staff felt that while the Commission had followed through on some of the suggested changes in the RM-2, there were still items the City needed to consider to encourage housing development. The item that has been discussed in many communities recently was of accessory dwelling units, which the Commission had decided against recommending due to concern of vacation rentals. Commissioner Meyerson noted that while ADUs won't solve the housing crisis, it is a tool that communities are encouraged to allow. Staff was directed to bring back language on ADUs and asked also to bring forward language on downtown building heights.

Updates

Staff noted the upcoming training by the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council on Green Infrastructure, October 19.

The meeting then adjourned at 8:55 P.M.

Minutes reviewed by Dana Andrews, Commission Vice Chair/Secretary