

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
ESCANABA, MICHIGAN
July 23, 2009**

A regular meeting of the Escanaba Planning Commission was held on Thursday, July 23, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. in Room C101 at City Hall, 410 Ludington Street, Escanaba, MI 49829.

PRESENT: Chairperson Stephen Buckbee, Vice Chairperson Bridgette Jaakola, Jon Liss, Rick Kell, Greg Haslow and Patrick Connor.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Jim O'Toole, Bill Farrell, City Engineer, Roger Good, DDA Director, and Katie Rydquist, Confidential Secretary.

ABSENT: Planning Commissioners Dennis Renken and Jason Gasperich.

Chairperson Stephen Buckbee called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m

Roll Call

Katie Rydquist, Confidential Secretary, conducted the roll call. Planning Commissioners Dennis Renken and Jason Gasperich were unable to be present for the meeting.

Approval/Correction of the June 11, 2009 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes and City Council, Planning Commission, Downtown Development Authority, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and City Administration Special Joint Workshop.

A motion was made by Planning Commissioner Patrick Connor and seconded by Planning Commissioner Greg Haslow to approve the Minutes for the June 11 Planning Commission Meeting and June 11 Joint City Council and Planning Commission Meeting.

Ayes were unanimous.

Approval /Adjustments to the Agenda

None.

Conflict of Interest Declarations

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Alley Improvement – Special Assessment Petition – Alley Between 14th and 15th Street South and 4th and 5th Avenue South.

City Manager Jim O'Toole said the City of Escanaba received a petition to remove and replace a 14-foot wide bituminous paved alley. In the course of the budget hearing process, funding for the project has been approved. A public review of the proposed project will take place before the Planning Commission so that there is an understanding of the project.

Chairperson Stephen Buckbee asked if there were any public comments regarding this project. There were no public comments.

2. Alley Improvement – Special Assessment Petition – Alley Between 13th and 14th Avenue North and 18th and 19th Street North.

City Manager Jim O'Toole stated that the City of Escanaba received a petition to remove and replace a 12-foot wide bituminous paved alley. In the course of the budget hearing process, funding for the project has been approved. A public review of the proposed project will take place before the Planning Commission so that there is an understanding of the project.

Chairperson Stephen Buckbee asked if there were any public comments regarding this project. There were no public comments.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Site Plan Amendment – 1615 – 1617 Ludington Street – Lofts on Ludington Project.

Swanee, Inc., has submitted a request for a site plan amendment for the approved site plan at 1615 Ludington Street, Escanaba, MI. Under the request, Swanee, Inc. is proposing a change in the site plan which will incorporate the building located at 1617 Ludington Street into the project. Since the site plan was approved, Mr. Sviland was successful in obtaining the Auto Value property next door to the building, which would be used for parking.

Matt Sviland said when he first started this project, parking was a problem. With the addition of the above-mentioned property, Mr. Sviland gained 14 interior, full-size parking spaces, and there will be 13 exterior parking spaces on the front of the building. This will eliminate the basement parking. Compared to the last site plan, there is a gain of 15 parking spaces. It makes a very complete project, and it will be a beautiful site coming into Escanaba either from Ludington Street or Stephenson Avenue.

Jim O'Toole said there would be a total of 43 parking spaces. Mr. Sviland said the basement would then be used for storage for the apartments.

Chairperson Stephen Buckbee said he appreciated all the work Mr. Sviland has put into this project. Mr. Sviland said it has been a process, has had a lot of help and has learned a tremendous amount.

Mr. O'Toole said City Administration is recommending approval. This project exceeds the zoning requirements.

A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Bridgette Jaakola and seconded by Planning Commissioner Greg Haslow to approve the Site Plan Amendment – 1615 – 1617 Ludington Street – Lofts on Ludington Project, to include the building located at 1617 Ludington Street into the project.

Ayes were unanimous.

2. Presentation – Richter Brewery Historic District – Preliminary Study

Roger Good, Director, DDA, said this is Step 6 in a 9 Step process of creating a historic district for the Richter Brewery Building. A Study Committee was formed, and has created a report. In Step 6, has transmitted this to the local planning group as well as the State Historic Preservation Office and the Michigan Historic Commission. This is an opportunity for these agencies to look at the report and offer comments and suggestions to make the report better and an effort to strengthen the report. In creating a Historic District, there might be several blocks of downtown in the historic area. Mr. Good said this is a report for the Richter Brewery Building.

Vice Chairperson Bridgette Jaakola asked how Mr. Good found the process for doing the report. Roger Good said they worked with the State Historic Preservation Office via their website page. The contact at this site is Amy Arnold who works with historic districts, and they have worked with Nan Taylor from the State Historic Preservation Network which is a private group. Mr. Good said they all helped with a model report and ordinances, etc. The report was sent on June 12, 2009, and Mr. Good said there is a 60-day waiting period. At the end of 60 days, there will be another public hearing for the public to comment on this. Mr. Good said they then hear back from the State Historic Preservation Office on whether the report is approved or not. At the next meeting of the Study Group, they will be talking more of the local ordinance that needs to pass. That will then come before the Planning Commission and on to the City Council for approval. Mr. Good said the Richter Building has a lot of rich history with the design, and this has all been outlined in the report.

Chairperson Stephen Buckbee likes the idea, and asked when the building is put altogether, where will the information be presented. Roger Good said they would like to put together a Power Point presentation at the public hearing to outline some of the history.

Matt Sviland said the lobby of the Richter Building will have the historic artifacts housed there. It will be in the center of the building and open to the public. Mr. Sviland said there are a lot of things about this process that are unique.

Peter Strom talked about the significant historical facts about the building in addition to the architecture. The history of the Richter Building gives us a great sense of the community. It was organized in 1900 when the Richter Brewing came about, and the initial shareholders were all local people. A general discussion ensued regarding the history of the building. By April 23, 1906, the brewery went into production and started a couple of brews. They were planning to brew about 12 to 15 thousand barrels a year and planned to expand the brewery to serve other regional markets outside of Escanaba. By 1906, there was a keg cleaning and repair house, ice house, bottling

plant, a stable, delivery wagon, and these buildings were all removed in 1929. Offices were added in 1914. The Richter Brewery Company continued until Prohibition, and then Michigan had its own Prohibition in 1916, and that is when the Richter Building went into the business of doing more soft drinks, sodas, etc. It went back into the brewery business in 1933. The brewery continued until 1940 when it went out of business. It was then used as a technical school, beauty school and karate School.

Chairperson Stephen Buckbee stated that this project would help pave the way for future projects. Peter Strom said this will generate more and more interest in the community.

Jim O'Toole said the public presentation would be made on August 18, and would be advertised in the newspaper, etc.

3. Sale of City Property – 3rd Avenue North and North 21st Street – Escanaba Well #5

Jim O'Toole said the Great Lakes First Federal Credit Union has submitted an offer to purchase the City-owned property located on the corner of 3rd Avenue North and North 21st Street. Under the offer, the credit union would purchase the property and incorporate it into their remodeling and renovation plans with the installation of a geothermal heating system. Mr. O'Toole said this is a former City well that we no longer have a desire to own. The property is only good to the adjacent parcel, which is Great Lakes First Federal Credit Union. They have been working with MDEQ on getting the permitting begun. The City Assessor has assessed the value of the property at \$1,000. In accordance with the City's land sale policy, this is before the Planning Commission for review and recommendation to the City Council.

Planning Commissioner Patrick Connor asked if this cost the City anything to abandon. Mr. O'Toole said it did not. By doing the geothermal, it transfers totally, and the City's risk is taken off the table. Mr. O'Toole said a request was made that if the brick building is removed, right above the door is Well No. 5 and that would go to the Historical Society as well as any bricks that are salvaged.

Planning Commissioner Rick Kell asked if they are going to do a closed or open-looped system. City Engineer Bill Farrell said there were issues with the open system.

Don Shirley, Drain Commissioner, checked with the health department. There are DEQ issues with open geothermal wells. With a closed system, the water goes into the existing aquifer. Planning Commissioner Rick Kell said if the grouting is done properly, there shouldn't be any exposure to the aquifer.

Chairperson Stephen Buckbee asked if there were any further public comments.

A motion was made by Planning Commissioner Patrick Connor and seconded by Planning Commissioner Jon Liss to approve a recommendation to City Council for the sale of City Property – 3rd Avenue North and North 21st Street – Escanaba Well #5 to the Great Lakes First Federal Credit Union.

Ayes were unanimous.

4. Project Updates

a. Zoning Board of Appeals Hearings/Decisions

Jim O'Toole said a Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting was held on July 14 regarding an issue with a retaining wall that was constructed without a permit at 924 Washington Avenue. The retaining wall abutted up against the sidewalk. This came before the Planning Commission for review back in 2006. The ZBA upheld the rule that it had to have the 2-foot offset.

b. Delta County Planning Commission Update

Jim O'Toole said the City's representative, Planning Commissioner Jason Gasperich, on the Delta County Planning Commission has not been attending these meetings.

City Manager Jim O'Toole said that out of the past 12 meetings held by the Escanaba Planning Commission, Planning Commissioner Jason Gasperich has missed 7 meetings, and the City has not been able to contact Mr. Gasperich. Mr. Gasperich has missed 3 consecutive meetings, he was here in March and prior to that, he missed 3 meetings. In accordance with the Planning Commission Rules of Procedure Section 8, Paragraph 4, which states, Attendance. "Should a Commissioner fail to attend regular meetings of the Planning Commission, three (3) unexcused absences in a calendar year, that office may be declared vacant and a new Commissioner will be appointed by City Council to fill the position." This shall be grounds for the Commission to remove any Member from the Planning Commission. Mr. O'Toole is asking for a recommendation to the City Council to remove Planning Commissioner Jason Gasperich from the Planning Commission.

A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Bridgette Jaakola and seconded by Planning Commissioner Patrick Connor in support of removing Jason Gasperich from the Planning Commission in accordance with the adopted City Planning Commission Rules of Procedure.

Ayes were unanimous.

Chairperson Stephen Buckbee thanked Jason Gasperich for serving on the Planning Commission.

c. Various Developments/Updates

Jim O'Toole said that in spite of the bad economy, 36 Zoning Permits were issued with a construction value of \$3,061,424.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim O'Toole said due to the lateness of this meeting in July, asked that the August Planning Commission Meeting be cancelled.

A motion was made by Chairperson Stephen Buckbee and seconded by Planning Commissioner Patrick Connor to cancel the August Planning Commission Meeting due to the lateness of the July Planning Commission Meeting held on July 23.

Ayes were unanimous.

Planning Commissioner Patrick Connor asked that the City look into purchasing a beachcomber for the public bathing area (beach) at Ludington Park to keep the beach area clean of debris.

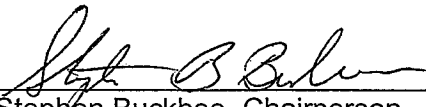
Planning Commissioner Patrick Connor asked that the City look into removing the graffiti using a pressure washer at Dickinson Field, at baseball dugouts, etc., primarily on the south side of Escanaba. Bill Farrell will look at this issue.

Planning Commissioner Jon Liss thanked all of the people working with Matt Sviland regarding the historical aspects, etc., in creating a historic district.

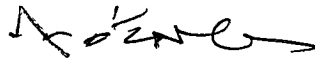
Adjournment

A motion was made by Chairperson Stephen Buckbee and seconded by Vice Chairperson Bridgette Jaakola. The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Ayes were unanimous.



Stephen Buckbee, Chairperson
Escanaba Planning Commission



James V. O'Toole, City Manager
City of Escanaba



Rick Kell, Secretary
Escanaba Planning Commission