OXFORD PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 9, 2012
7:30 p.m.

Call to Order

Those members present: David Prytherch, Richard Keebler, Ted Wong, Marvin Hurston, Kate Rousmaniere, and Robert Benson.

Those members excused: Richard Daniels.

Staff members present: Jung-Han Chen, and Stephen McHugh.

Staff members excused: None.

Approval of Minutes of the September 11, 2012 Planning Commission Meeting

Mr. Benson made motion to approve the September 11, 2012 minutes as written. Mr. Hurston seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Public Comments Related to Items Not on the Agenda

There were none.

Reports from Commissions, Boards, Committees & Staff

Ms. Rousmaniere reported that the Environmental Commission have been studying different model ordinances related to storm water management, permeable surfaces, and runoff reduction, and were in the process of developing recommendations for presentation to the Planning Commission for consideration in making changes to current regulations. There will be more to come from the Environmental Commission on these topics.

Ms. Rousmaniere inquired if Planning Commission would prefer the Commission bring all ordinances at one time or piece-meal. Mr. Prytherch inquired if they were best practices or proposed amendments to our zoning code. Ms. Rousmaniere stated a little bit of both.

Mr. Chen referred to a handout from the Chamber of Commerce dealing with signage issues for the Planning Commission's information.

Mr. Prytherch requested a Nonconforming Subcommittee update. Mr. Chen stated that they continued to meet and would be meeting again to continue their discussions. Mr. Chen stated the Subcommittee would be coming before the Planning Commission in the next few months.

Mr. Prytherch referred to Planning Commission's work session held earlier in the evening regarding GB District regulations.

Mr. Benson announced that the Historic & Architectural Preservation Commission Historic Marker Ceremony took place and was very successful.

Communications - Administrative Approvals

There were none.

Items Related to Platting

There were none.

Items Related to Zoning

PC-11-2012 Proposed Change to A Planned Development to approve the installation of an internally illuminated monument sign located on Spring Street for a new hotel located at Stewart Square, Scott Webb, Applicant, Agent

Mr. Prytherch announced that even though the case before them had been assigned a Planning Commission case number, this discussion was actually a procedural conversation with the Planning Commission to determine whether this was a major or minor amendment to an approved planned development.

Mr. Perry provided a history of the Stewart Square development.

Mr. Perry stated that the Applicant was requesting a determination from the Planning Commission for a proposed new freestanding sign for a nearly completed hotel. Mr. Perry provided an aerial photo and discussed the design of Stewart Square and the sign location. Mr. Perry reviewed the traffic pattern of the Stewart Square development. Mr. Perry described the hotel traffic pattern, vehicular entrances coming in from Spring Street and S. College Avenue. Mr. Perry described the hotel sign design and expressed that Staff felt the sign did not need to be that large to serve its directional purpose. Mr. Perry stated that the new sign measured six feet in height with a sign area of approximately 20 square feet. The sign would orient people to the driveway on Spring Street which would lead back to the hotel. The sign would be internally illuminated. Mr. Perry described the existing wall signs and lighting at Stewart Square. Mr. Perry stated he was not concerned about the internal illumination.

Mr. Perry reviewed the Minor Change criteria, specifically Criteria's 2, 5, and 6. Criteria 2 asks if the change would be of a magnitude that it would substantially alter the appearance of the development from off the site; Criteria 5 asks if the change was of a scope, or scale, or character to cause a negative impact on adjoining properties and the neighborhood; Criteria 6 asks if the sign would, contrary to or in any way would diminish the intent of the originally approved plan.

Staff recommended, in order to be considered a minor amendment, the sign be cut approximately 50% of the requested measurement, thus measuring approximately 4' in height and 10 square feet in size.

The Applicant, Mr. Webb, addressed the Planning Commission. Mr. Webb provided a history of the Stewart Square development, including those cases where he had came before the Planning Commission asking for and receiving Minor Amendment approval. Mr. Webb stated that the submitted sign location would be less visible than the allowed location, as the sign could have been pushed nearer to the road. Mr. Webb stated the sign was pushed back 16' not 6' (as the zoning code allows) from the street. Mr. Webb questioned the sign being cut by 50%. Mr. Prytherch inquired the Planning Commission if the staff requested size was unreasonable. Mr. Webb suggested that his client could install the sign closer to the street should the sign size be cut in half.

Ms. Rousmaniere inquired about the 4' sign height. Mr. Perry stated because directional signs in the zoning code were limited to 4' in height. Ms. Rousmaniere agreed that a directional sign was needed, but inquired what would be the balance to maintain the character of the neighborhood and provide safe signage.

Mr. Keebler stated this was clearly a minor amendment. Mr. Keebler stated this was a "way-finding" issue that was needed in order to guide people back to the hotel with signage visible on Spring Street and S. College Avenue. Mr. Keebler felt that the Staff recommendation would make the sign too small. Mr. Keebler felt that the Hampton Inn logo was another advertising sign. Mr. Keebler felt the signs should read Hampton Inn with a directional arrow.

Mr. Hurston stated that this was a minor amendment.

Mr. Wong felt this to be borderline in character/out of character; being illuminated spoke more loudly as a commercial district. Mr. Wong inquired if we could get the same affect if not illuminated and if that kind of design would be more in character with the neighborhood.

Ms. Rousmaniere referred to the Chamber letter asking for consistency across all districts; if our common practice is to have 4' high signs, 6' directional signs are not consistent across districts. No other concerns were expressed by the Planning Commission in regards to illumination.

Mr. Chen added that the sign was directional, that there was no limit on directional signs, but was much more restrictive. Mr. Keebler felt this sign was kind of in between a directional and monument sign. Mr. Prytherch stated that in past Planning Commission decisions that we have trusted the Applicant. Mr. Prytherch felt that Mr. Perry presented a very reasonable approach. Mr. Prytherch felt that a straw poll concluded this was not a major amendment. Mr. Keebler suggested two non-advertising 4' in height signs at the Spring Street and S. College Avenue locations, rectangular in design, in blue and white colors, to include the hotel name with a directional arrow.

Discussion followed regarding location, the sign base and sign height.

Mr. Chen felt that the general consensus was that the signage itself was a minor amendment; however, the issue was the size of the sign. Mr. Chen noted that Staff recommended the sign be smaller. Mr. Chen asked the Commission to look at a smaller sign with a directional design. Mr. Benson inquired about using the Hampton Hotel typeface.

After the Public Hearing, the Commission felt the proposed signage could be considered as a minor modification to the approved PUD. However, the Commission felt that the signage should be smaller, since they would be directing traffic onto the site where the hotel is located. The Commission was also in agreement that one additional directional sign would be acceptable on S. College Avenue. The franchise sign should be smaller with an arrow indicating the hotel location. The Commission voted 6-0-0 to consider this modification as a minor amendment to an approved PUD and the approval of such signage shall follow the procedure prescribed in the Oxford Zoning Code.

New Business

Consider the acceptance of "Shifting Gears - A Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for Oxford, Ohio" by Anna Dragovich, as reference material, and Consider the proposed Oxford Bicycle and Pedestrian Concept Plan encompassing goals and objectives and the Corridor Safety Improvement for Bicyclists and Pedestrians

Mr. Prytherch reminded everyone that the Bike and Pedestrian Plan had been discussed at last month's Planning Commission meeting.

Staff provided a review. Mr. Chen stated that the report compiled by Anna Dragovich was helpful in identifying bicycle and pedestrian issues in Oxford. However, Ms. Dragovich's report did not include the technical analysis to support her recommendations, and that the Planning Commission needed to look at the corridor-level not just specific locations. Mr. Chen continued by saying that, therefore, staff utilized Ms. Dragovich's report and developed a conceptual study for the Planning Commission to review. Additionally, Staff also developed some goals and objectives to provide some general direction to guide the concept plan to the next phase. Mr. Chen stated that this would help the Planning Commission build support in the development of a detailed analysis and implementation mechanism.

Mr. Chen referenced maps which showed safety improvement on a corridor-basis, and that also broke down improvements in a broad phasing term. The rationale behind this was to allow flexibility and direction from City Council on how and when the improvements could be implemented.

The Planning Commission felt Ms. Dragovich's report captured the direction of the Commission and recommended approval of this report to City Council for consideration. Staff added that there may be a need for a work session to share with City Council the report by Anna Dragovich and staff recommendations to ask for direction from City Council for staff to continue to work on this matter.

The recommendations were:

1. To accept “Shifting Gears- A Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for Oxford, Ohio" as a reference document for future implementation strategies.
2. To approve the proposed Plan encompassing goals and objectives of the Corridor Safety Improvement for Bicycle and Pedestrians.
3. To forward the approved document (item #2) to City Council for acceptance of these documents as planning documents.
4. To request City Council to direct Service, Police and Community Development Staff to undergo technical analysis of possible safety improvements in the identified Priority Corridor including, but not limited to the recommendations outlined in “Shifting Gears” and to provide the analysis of relative costs of different implement strategies to the Planning Commission in a timely manner. Analysis of near term corridor improvements to be no later than April, 2013 and Mid-term corridor improvements to be no later than September, 2013.

Mr. Benson made motion that the Planning Commission recommends the acceptance of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the City of Oxford. Ms. Rousmaniere seconded the motion. The motion passed with the following roll call:

AYE: David Prytherch, Richard Keebler, Ted Wong, Kate Rousmaniere, Robert Benson (5)
NAY: Marvin Hurston (1)
ABSTAIN: None (0)

Other Business

There was none.

Items Under Consideration for Future Discussion - Short Term: * Nonconforming Section Related to Redevelopment Improvements * GB Commercial District Site Development, Supplementary Regulations and Different Types of Commercial Districts * MU Alternate Transportation Master Plan and Its Implementation in Relation to City’s Thoroughfare Plan * Delineation of Flood Plain Overlay District

Adjournment

Mr. Prytherch announced that the next meeting was scheduled for November 13, 2012; however, since there were no pending cases for review, a work session was being tentatively planned to begin at 6 pm. Notifications to members will go out sometime in the near future.

Ms. Rousmaniere made motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:39 p.m. Mr. Benson seconded the motion. All were in favor.