

MINUTES

City of Alpena Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
August 9, 2016
Alpena, Michigan

CALL TO ORDER:

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Paul Sabourin, Planning Commission Chairman.

ROLL CALL: PLANNING COMMISSION

Present: Hunter, Gilmore, VanWagoner, Boboltz, Lewis, Mitchell, Sabourin, Heraghty and Brian Dort

Absent: None

Staff: Adam Poll, Director of Planning & Development and Lesslee Dort, DDA Director

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

The August 9, 2016, agenda was approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: June 14, 2016

The June 14, 2016 minutes were approved as presented.

PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMISSION ACTION:

None.

BUSINESS:

Proposed conversion of Second Avenue from Chisholm Street to Water Street to a two-way traffic pattern.

Poll noted the DDA would be requesting to convert Second Avenue to a two way traffic pattern from Chisholm Street to Water Street in September, and that he wanted the Planning Commission to review the concept. Poll noted that typically street changes like this are not brought before the Planning Commission for review, but due to the impact of this proposed change, it would be beneficial for review by the Planning Commission. Poll noted that the DDA had approved the conversion at their last meeting and noted that Lesslee Dort, DDA Director was available to answer any questions. Poll noted that Engineering was still finishing up the proposed design and it would not be ready until the City Council meeting. Poll noted that the design and comments included in the packet were provided by LSL Planning and their contracted planners as part of the Downtown Plan and Marketing study. Poll noted that half of

that studies' funding was provided with Technical Assistance funds from the Redevelopment Ready Community Program that the City is involved with. The attached maps showing where parking could be added was a draft they provided, and some of the areas designated for parking would more than likely not be feasible as the widths of the roads or parking spaces were not adequate. Poll noted that if the conversion was made on Second Avenue there would be a loss of on street parking, and the hope is that additional on street parking could be added nearby. Poll noted that part of the proposal was to add reverse angle parking on River Street. He noted that this type of parking was proven to be safer than standard angle parking as it increased visibility when exiting the parking space and this type was preferred by the City Engineer. Poll noted that this would probably be one of the aspects of the proposed changes that would take some time to get used too, and if it proved to be too challenging, it could be easily replaced with standard angle parking. Poll noted that DDA had been working with MDOT to try to convert all of Second and Third Avenue to a two way pattern as well, but these sections had additional challenges as they are MDOT trunk lines. Poll noted that the DDA is still working with MDOT but wants to pursue the sections under local control at this time.

Boboltz questioned how much parking would be lost. Poll indicated it was not certain at this time, but noted that he expected to lose parking on one side of Second Avenue, but some of the lost parking could be compensated by installing reverse angle parking on River Street.

Sabourin noted that the street trees in the downtown are beginning to get tall enough where they are blocking signage, and may have to be replaced soon and questioned if narrowing the sidewalks would be an option to preserve on street parking. Poll noted that with the pedestrian traffic and outdoor dining options, that narrowing the sidewalks is not ideal.

Lesslee Dort noted that only 3% of truck traffic turns in the downtown area and the DDA believes that MDOT will eventually be able to convert the rest of Second Avenue to a two way pattern.

Hunter questioned the impact of the Chisholm and Second Ave intersection and noted there was the possibility that it could back up. Poll noted that MDOT had reviewed the intersection and approved the changes. Poll also noted that River Street would have a traffic signal. He also indicated that hopefully by converting Second Ave to two way, it would alleviate the backups that occur on the section of Third Avenue that was converted to a two way pattern last year.

Lesslee Dort indicated that the proposed changes should be better for visitor as well, and indicated that 4 of the 5 entrances into the downtown have "Do Not Enter" signs. Dort noted that mid-block pedestrian crossings could be a possibility eventually as well.

Mitchell noted that if trucks are an issue in the downtown, they should be routed down First Avenue to Water Street and around Second Avenue between Chisholm and Water Street.

Brian Dort indicated that the Bi-Path crosses Second Avenue at Water Street and wanted to make sure that the crossing received any additional work that would make it as safe as possible for pedestrians.

Boboltz asked if the Engineering Department was considering installing a four way stop at the intersection of River Street and Second Ave. Poll indicated he did not know. Boboltz asked if he could share that suggestion with the Engineering Office and Poll indicated that he would.

VanWagner questioned if speed would be an issue with the conversion to a two way pattern. Poll noted that the studies indicate that two way traffic is generally slower than a one way pattern.

Sabourin questioned if a vote was expected on this issue. Poll indicated it was not, and this was a review by the Planning Commission and that he would bring any concerns so he could relay them to City Staff and City Council.

Hunter indicated that although they are not voting on the proposal he could not say he supports the conversion or opposes the conversion as he has not had enough time to analyze the information.

Boboltz noted that the conversion would appear to be beneficial to the existing back up issues on Third Avenue.

COMMUNICATIONS:

None.

REPORTS:

Development Updates

Poll indicated that the former Alpena Power Office building demolition project is complete.

Poll noted that other grant projects were moving forward, The Owl is open, and Alpena Furniture would be starting work soon.

CALL TO PUBLIC:

None.

MEMBERS' COMMENTS:

Poll noted that Vickie Roznowski, had taken a medical retirement and encouraged Planning Commission members to thank her for her service when they see her. Poll noted that the City was in the process of filling the position.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:49 p.m. by Chair Sabourin.

Wayne Lewis, Secretary