

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF NORTHVILLE
PLANNING COMMISSION
February 26, 2019**

DATE: February 26, 2019
TIME: 7:00 PM
PLACE: Northville Township Hall
44405 Six Mile Road

APPROVED: March 26, 2019

CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 PM

ROLL CALL:

Present: Timothy Guerriero, Eric Lark (arrived 7:14 pm), George McCarthy, Fred Shadko, Jayne Watson (left 9:20 pm), Tim Zawodny

Excused: Lisa Anderson

Staff: Jennifer Frey, Township Planner

Approval of Minutes:

Planning Commission – January 29, 2019

MOTION by McCarthy, support by Shadko, to approve the January 29, 2019 Planning Commission minutes as published.

Voice vote: Ayes: All
Nays: None

Motion approved unanimously.

Correspondence: None.

Brief Public Comments: None.

New Business: None.

Other Business:

1. Zoning Ordinance Discussion – Building Materials

Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Township Planner Frey led a round-table discussion regarding building materials used in recent Research and Development projects in the Township, as well as buildings from other communities. Ultimately the intent of the discussion was to determine if current ordinance language (170-33.6) warranted any changes.

The Commission listed the following “likes” regarding building materials and design:

- HVAC equipment that is located/shielded so as to be invisible from the entryway.

- Attractive, welcoming pedestrian entrances.
- Attractive landscaping, sufficient greenspace.
- Attractive rear facades, especially when visible from main roads.
- Warm earth tone colors and hues in the materials used, especially brick.
- Classic design (patterning), i.e., classic brick with limestone or limestone-appearing accents/banding, use of columns, etc.
- Different textured/colored bricks providing a vivid, elegant appearance. Use of this design element breaks up long expanses.
- Use of appropriate rhythm across a façade, especially when the façade was long, i.e.: indentations above windows, repeated architectural features such as columns, window spacing and design.
- Using design elements to enhance large glass areas, i.e.: vertical and horizontal lines, arcades, recessed window patterns, awareness of percentage of frontage that is glass, being able to see through the glass to the interior architectural and/or decorative elements.
- Screen walls around cooling towers, etc., being full brick.
- Bursts of color via painted stairwells or other design elements, done well.
- Use of colors in masonry materials to differentiate architectural details.

The Commission listed the following “dislikes” regarding building materials and design:

- Large expanse of beige face-block/cinderblock offering a bland, crude, warehouse appearance.
- Manufacturing ends of buildings constructed of cinderblock.
- Too many materials and looks that do not follow a unifying theme, and that detract from any aesthetic value an attractive entranceway offered.
- Rear façades without architectural interest or sufficient landscaping to mitigate the overall box appearance.
- Rear façades without room for landscaping between the building and a main road.
- Buildings that present rear façades to gateway intersections/areas.
- Electrical boxes without screening, regardless of location.
- Mechanical equipment located right next to the front door.
- Long, expansive facades, without any features that break up the flat appearance.
- Small percentage of brick on front facades, especially facades that include face-block or EIFS.
- Repeated window patterns that result in an austere, institutional look.
- Property that is under-landscaped, or does not provide enough green space. Even when ordinance requirements are met a property may appear under-landscaped.
- Dark gray brick, which presents a “heavy” appearance, not harmonious with surrounding materials.
- Dark gray block facing a main road, such as Beck Road.
- Big box buildings without life or expression.
- Use of lesser materials resulting in buildings that look low-budget.

Comments and Recommendations:

- Sometimes windows are a disadvantage for facilities that deal with confidential intellectual properties.
- Brick needs maintenance, such as regular cleaning.

- Metal panels can fade when the metals oxidize. If a greater percentage of metal were to be allowed, there should be a commitment to use high-quality materials.
- Some developers claim that metal is more expensive and higher quality than brick. There is a range of quality and cost regarding metal panels.
- Did the Township need to provide more flexibility in terms of materials such as metal, so that it could be used throughout all façades of a building? Because of percentage limitations, currently metal use was often only used in the front or entryway façade.
- Some Commissioners felt that the percentage of metal currently allowed should not change. The emphasis on masonry should also be unchanged.
- Building design needs to stand the test of time, and not be “trendy.”
- Examples of buildings from other communities showed:
 - Buildings that stood the test of time.
 - Buildings that did not use red brick as primary materials, but did have an emphasis on creative use of materials, colors, and design elements.
 - Parking as an important design element of the overall site.
 - Use of existing green growth (trees, etc.) as well as natural topography to enhance building placement.
- Visibility is not so important for some tech companies as is the ability to provide an upscale, creative environment for employees.
- Not all communities have strict guidelines regarding materials, but rather depend on the character of the community to drive new construction (Auburn Hills).
- Some communities do not allow EIFS, which over time presents a worn-down, shabby appearance.
- It is important to encourage developers to avoid the simplest, lowest-cost, clear-cutting approach. The Township should not be afraid to say “no.”
- Northville Township could be proud of what it had done so far. Did the Ordinance need to be tweaked?
 - It would be helpful to identify if there were newer or different materials that might be permitted, such as reflective glass or metal panels.
 - The ordinance did need to be clarified as to what “primary materials” meant: *“The primary building material shall be brick. A minimum 80% of all building facades, excluding the roof and windows, shall consist of masonry products, such as brick, cut stone, integral colored split face block, native field stone, cast stone, limestone, granite or equivalent, as determined by the Planning Commission.”* (170-33.6.(6))
 - Should color be called out in the ordinance, in order to discourage gray or darker-toned masonry?
 - Should the submission process include a conceptual architectural overview that would be reviewed by the Planning Commission?
- Northville Township's tech space is intermingled with residential areas, and the building materials need to reflect and connect with the greater community. Perhaps the best way to do that is to continue to require brick as the primary material. This did not mean that all construction had to be traditional in character. However, brick is timeless and cohesive, especially in regards to the greater community. This is particularly important at the places where people are welcomed into the community. Gateway areas set the tone for the entire community.

- Perhaps there is a way to strongly support brick as the primary material, without requiring a percentage of a structure to be brick. That would give developers some flexibility of design, but would also communicate that they should not come in with buildings that were mostly split-face, block, or burnished block.
- Reference was made to Auburn Hills' *Design Policy*, which was a document separate from their Zoning Ordinance.
- One complication to the planning process was the unknown of how Plymouth would develop the area south of 5 Mile Road.

A summary of items to be looked at were:

- Should specific percentages of material be included?
- It was important to preserve Commission discretion regarding enforcing community standards, which was a subjective determination.
- Did the Commission want to eliminate EIFS or split-faced block? The consensus was to eliminate EIFS except, perhaps, as an accent material.
- Some communities limited, by percentage, the amount of decorative block that could be used. Currently the ordinance included what seemed to be accent material in the 80% category.

Township Planner Frey suggested that the Commission first determine what "primary material" meant, and make sure the ordinance was not confusing in that regard. If the consensus was that "primary material" was brick, that needed to be clear in the ordinance language.

Secondly, the ordinance needed to be clear about what was acceptable regarding accessory or complimentary materials. The Commission should determine if new materials should be introduced into the ordinance, or if any materials should be removed.

Township Planner Frey suggested that any design guidelines be directly included in the Ordinance, rather than having a separate design guideline document, especially since the ordinance was going to be reviewed and changed anyway, and because the ordinance already had design standards in it.

Township Planner Frey said that based on tonight's discussion, she would bring draft language back to the Commission for further review.

2. Zoning Ordinance Discussion – Sidewalk Sales

Township Planner Frey said that at the June 2018 ZBA meeting the ZBA approved a request from Kroger to permit a sidewalk sale for June – October, where the ordinance allowed a total of 60 days within a calendar year. As part of the motion, the ZBA requested the Planning Commission and Township Board review the temporary use standards for outdoor sales and events (AKA Sidewalk Sales) to determine if changes should be considered for the following year (2019).

The Township's ordinance officer was also asking for consideration to eliminate the 60-day requirement.

The applicable ordinance section was Article 37.3. Draft language had been provided this evening showing proposed changes.

Suggested changes included:

1. Eliminate the 60-day limitation to allow longer sale period for seasonal items or extend to 120 days (although this will likely still be difficult to enforce).
2. Limit the amount of store frontage the sidewalk sale can occupy (ex: cannot fill the entire length of the storefront).
3. Remove the requirement that sale merchandise must be brought inside overnight.
4. If sidewalk sales take place under a covered walkway or canopy, the covered walkway or canopy must have fire suppression.
5. Require an annual permit, conditions will be clearly defined.
6. Do not permit pallets to be used as displays.

Round table discussion included the following:

- The Township needed to consistently enforce whatever the ordinance required.
- There might need to be a percentage of outside storefront space permitted for outdoor sales. The draft presented this evening showed 75%, but that percentage might be too high.
- Outdoor sales should not negatively impact public safety. In addition to requiring that canopies be fire suppressed, there needed to be space for pedestrians to walk in front of and into stores. The annual permit would define conditions such as these.
- Perhaps a more lenient outdoor sales ordinance would be more business-friendly.
- Was there some way to require outdoor sales to be neat? How would that be enforced? Could there be an aesthetic standard? The consensus of the Commission was that something should be included that addressed some aesthetic standard for display.
- Paragraph K. might help with aesthetic determinations: *All structures associated with the outdoor display shall be temporary, yet have a finished appearance that is consistent with the image of the building such as carts. Pallets shall not be used for displays.*
- Was it possible to ask businesses to bring in outdoor product each night, excluding some items such as flowers and Christmas trees? The community was impacted by whether leaving product outside at night attracted vandalism and theft.
- Was this type of ordinance so difficult to enforce that it should be eliminated altogether? The consensus of the Commission was that standards were needed, especially regarding health, safety and welfare issues.
- Stacks of pallets constituted outside storage. Sidewalk sales did not equate to outside storage.
- When applying for a yearly permit, the business would need to submit a sketch showing exactly where the outdoor sales would be held.
- Discussion was held regarding outside propane sales. Should propane sales be allowed everywhere? The Fire Department might have special regulations concerning propane sales.
- Some businesses really pushed the envelope in terms of meeting the requirement of selling merchandise that was also sold within their stories (Par. D). This requirement also might affect propane and ice sales.

- Should the sales be labeled “outdoor sales,” rather than “sidewalk sales”?
- Should pumpkin sales be restricted to retail stores only?
- Should calendar-day limits for outdoor sales be eliminated entirely?

There was discussion regarding Section 37.5 Grand openings. Was the language limiting the time period (10 days) too restrictive, as well as requiring the event be held within 30 days of opening? Township Planner Frey said no complaints had been received about the time restrictions, and the restrictions did keep businesses from engaging in inappropriately long grand opening sales.

Township Planner Frey said she would bring revised draft language back to the Commission for discussion. After that meeting, a public hearing would be scheduled, and a recommendation made to City Council, who would make the final decision as to whether or not to approve the amended language.

Department Reports:

Eric Lark, Zoning Board of Appeals

- There was no ZBA meeting in February and none scheduled for March.

Fred Shadko, Board of Trustees

- Progress was being made at the hospital site. The big building and 3 of the 4 small buildings were demolished.
- Village at Northville: the hotel had purchased the property from M/I Homes.
- Landfill issues: the odor problems had become worse; MDEQ was enforcing.

Township Planner Frey

- Going forward, there would be no more receiving and filing of Board of Trustee and ZBA minutes as part of the Planning Commission agenda, as those documents were available on the website.
- Senior Housing at Ward Church continued to be under administrative review.
- Mill Ridge's site plan would be coming before the Planning Commission.
- Chick Fil A was locating in front of Kohls; this had been approved by the Board of Trustees as a consent judgment amendment. The Planning Commission would review the site plan under the direction of the BOT. Wayne County was looking at new signalization at that area of Haggerty Road, as there were also new projects on the Livonia side.

Extended Public Comments: None.

Adjournment: 9:30 p.m.