

COUNCIL & PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL SESSION

November 9, 2009

The Planning Commission of the City of Chardon met in Special Session Monday, November 9, 2009 at 6:30 P.M. in the Chardon Municipal Courtroom located at 111 Water Street.

Philip King, Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission and Karen Simpson, President of Council presiding.

The meeting opened with the pledge of allegiance and roll call.

COUNCIL ROLL CALL

Council Members present: Leslie Bednar, Jefferey Campbell, Jr., Robert Cromwell, Philip King, Deborah Reiter, Karen Simpson.

Council Members absent: Mary Bramstedt (6:33 p.m.)

PLANNING COMMISSION ROLL CALL

Planning Commission Members present: Leslie Bednar, Philip King, Nancy McArthur, Bill Niehus, Mary Jo Stark.

Planning Commission Members absent: Andrew Blackley, Ken Miller.

Others present: City Manager David Lelko, Assistant Manager Randy Sharpe, Clerk of Council Amy Day, Planning & Zoning Administrator John Sheehan, City Engineer Doug Courtney, Mariel Rouru, Jerry Petersen, Don Winton, Mitch Hewitt, David Hartt, Monjula Boyina.

Mrs. Bramstedt arrived at 6:33 p.m.

Regarding the Chardon Pedestrian and Bicycle Trail Plan proposed alignments and options, Mrs. Bednar provided a brief history of the draft of the plan that is being presented to Council and Planning Commission and a timeline for its approval.

David Hartt reviewed the recommended primary trail plan which is based on the ideal plan being a cross country plan.

Mr. Hartt stated that based on feedback about the bikepath being constructed close to homes on small lots, they made some adjustments to the plan that still tried to create a cross country plan while minimizing the length of path that is adjacent to small lot residential development.

Mr. Hartt stated that priority improvements have been scaled down to completing sidewalks at least 1 way on 1 side of the street and fill in short gaps to complete where there are small missing pieces.

Mr. Hartt reviewed the Focus Group's reaction to the plan noting that they agreed with the principals of the plan and liked the plan but felt it was too ambitious.

Mr. Hartt stated that the Focus Group's recommended priorities including connecting the Maple Highlands Trailheads and fixing existing sidewalks around the school. Their second priorities were local pedestrian and bike trails as feeders going east and west from the Maple Highlands Trail assuming that it is completed, into the residential areas or extending west into the commercial areas and the completion of additional sidewalks.

Mr. Hartt reviewed the reaction by those who attended the public forum. They supported the plan and their priority included the Maple Highlands Trailhead connection. Comments were also heard regarding safety issues.

Mr. Hartt stated that as a reminder, the plan is long range and

funding is uncertain.

Mr. Hartt distributed a draft cost estimate which includes the cost for connecting the Maple Highlands Trail with the exception of the cost for land, priority sidewalks and three feeder trails that were priorities of the focus group which included Maple Highlands Trail up Water Street, Maple Highlands trail to Park Avenue to Wilson Mills Road, and Maple Highlands Trail up Fifth Avenue to North Street.

Mr. Cromwell asked how many participants of the focus group were pro-biking.

Mrs. Bednar stated that she would estimate 75% were favorable to biking.

Mr. Cromwell expressed concern regarding how a 6 foot-wide dual purpose sidewalk would be implemented.

Mr. Cromwell spoke about the vitality that a trail can bring to the City. He asked if consideration could be given for a non-paved trail and stated that the trail would not have to go specifically to the Square as riders will find the Square if they want to find restaurants.

Mrs. Bednar stated that some groups have requested a designated trail that leads to the Square.

Mrs. Reiter stated that it is easier to build a trail on vacant land. Adding it in to a developed town will be more difficult.

Mrs. Bednar spoke about the vitality and community desirability which the trail can bring. She requested that something about the vitality should be included at the beginning of the document. She felt that reiterating the point in the Comprehensive Plan goals relating to a complete sidewalk and pedestrian system should be included.

Mrs. Bednar stated that she would like to have one additional meeting to allow public input on the plan.

Mrs. Reiter stated that she would like more language emphasizing the protection of property rights in the plan.

Mrs. Bednar stated that she would like the City to be aggressive on receiving outside funding for paths.

Mariel Rouru, Irma Dr., expressed concern regarding children on bikepaths.

Mrs. Bednar stated that mothers of the focus group spoke loudly about completing sidewalks for the safety of their children.

Mr. Cromwell stated that parents will still have to make individual choices regarding their family's use of the trails and sidewalks.

Mr. Cromwell expressed that backyards trails will be a property rights issue.

Mrs. McArthur stated that residents of Woods of Burlington and Fox Pointe feel isolated without sidewalk connections.

Mariel Rouru, Irma Dr., expressed concern regarding sexual predators on the bike trail.

Mrs. Bednar stated that they are not advocating anyone ride alone, Council is discussing providing a pathway plan.

Mr. King asked if funding is available for a 6 foot multi-use path.

Mr. Hartt stated that funding would not be available for a 6 foot path. The general rule is that it should be 10 feet in order to receive funding.

Mr. Hartt addressed the suggestion regarding a gravel trail. If

it is the Maple Highlands Trail, it would be more acceptable to have gravel there rather than the side trails in the urban areas.

Mr. Campbell asked if connection could be added in the plan to connect Michael Ibold Park.

Mrs. Bednar stated that she would like to see a new document which includes priorities with costs and a timeline.

Members of Council expressed their interest in completing sidewalks before connecting the trailheads.

Ms. Stark asked how the funding for the project would progress and asked if the City would be responsible for the connection of the Maple Highlands Trail through the City.

Mrs. Bednar stated that she did not know how welcoming the Geauga Park District would be to help with funding since they had approached the City in years past and were rejected; however, time has past and reaction may be different.

Mr. King stated that the plan will help Council begin discussions again with the Park District. Council knows that it is important to connect the north and south trails and the document lets the public know that it is important to connect the trails as well as connecting sidewalks.

Mr. Hartt stated that they have not done evaluation for signage yet. He noted that they could designate second and third phases beyond what has been designated for the first phase but he does not think this can be done by the end of the year.

Mr. Hartt stated that they would incorporate the softening of language and protecting and respecting property owners' rights into the plan.

Mrs. Reiter asked that possible funding sources be included.

Mr. Cromwell asked how much the City is willing to fund.

Mrs. Bednar stated that she felt the City's pursuit of external funding should be included in the plan.

Mr. Niehus stated that the City will have to convince many people to support the plan because the sidewalk program has been non-existent. He added that residents want to see results.

Mrs. Bednar stated that the cost that the City would have to commit is not known because it is not known what outside funding sources can provide.

Mr. Hartt stated that they would incorporate language about funding into the plan but does not want to include specific costs.

Jerry Petersen, 401 South Street, spoke to express that the most important sidewalk connection in his opinion is connecting the Woods of Burlington.

Mr. Campbell noted that one additional change is an access point to Michael Ibold Park.

Council and Planning Commission members concurred.

Mr. Hartt asked how the priorities should be listed.

Mrs. Bednar stated that closing gaps of sidewalks Citywide would be first on the priority list.

PLANNING COMMISSION EXECUTIVE SESSION - none.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE PLANNING COMMISSION

Mayor Simpson stated that Planning Commission Chairman Ken Miller has requested that the joint Council and Planning Commission meeting to discuss the zoning code revisions be rescheduled after the first of the year.

Mrs. Reiter stated that she is disappointed that the zoning code revisions will not be done sooner.

A special Planning Commission meeting was scheduled for November 16, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. to hear public comment regarding the bike and pedestrian trail plan.

PLANNING COMMISSION ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. McArthur moved and Mr. Niehus seconded to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

COUNCIL EXECUTIVE SESSION - none.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE COUNCIL - none.

ADJOURN

Mr. King moved and Mrs. Bramstedt seconded to adjourn. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 P.M.

KAREN S. SIMPSON, Mayor
President of Council

Attest:

AMY DAY
Clerk of Council