

CITY OF ITHACA
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, July 18, 2017
7:00 PM

The regular meeting of the Ithaca Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Wilson at 7:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

Present: Commissioners John Wilson, Dale Sherman, Doug Wright, Jim Gruesbeck, Jerry Timmons and Vice Mayor Alice Schafer (representing Mayor Tim Palmer who was absent)

Staff Present: City Manager Chris Yonker and Deputy Clerk Cathy Cameron

Absent: Mayor Tim Palmer

Audience Present: Alice Schleder, Kirk and Leigh Olson and Dave Nelson

Motion by Gruesbeck, second by Sherman to approve the minutes of the regular meeting held June 13, 2017; motion carried.

Public Comments

Chair Wilson asked to receive public comments; none were given.

Oath of Office

Deputy Clerk Cameron swore in Commissioners Doug Wright and Jerry Timmons for another three-year term on the Planning Commission.

Public Hearing

Moved by Wright, second by Timmons to open the public hearing for variance requests on a new accessory building at 218 East North Street; motion carried. Chair Wilson opened the public hearing at 7:07 p.m.

Manager Yonker presented the variance requests submitted by Kirk Olson for construction of a new accessory building on his property located at 218 East North Street. A variance is required for both the total square footage of the building and the lot coverage. The building is 864 square feet exceeding the maximum by four feet. The full lot coverage with the new accessory building and the existing dwelling will be 18.6%, which exceeds the 15% maximum by 3.6%. Manager Yonker recommended approval of the two required variances. Neighbors Alice Schleder and Dave Nelson expressed their support for the Olson's request.

Chair Wilson asked for any additional comments; none were offered.

Moved by Timmons, second by Sherman to close the public hearing; motion carried. Chair Wilson closed the public hearing at 7:14 p.m.

Motion by Sherman, second by Timmons to approve both variance requests for the size of the accessory building and the lot coverage; motion carried.

Consideration of Amending Planning Commission (PC) Ordinance

Manager Yonker informed the Commissioners that he has discussed with City Council the possible reduction of members on the Planning Commission. He presented the Commissioners with a detailed memo regarding the options under the City Charter and information from the Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 as reference points. In an effort to provide a regular quorum for monthly meetings, his suggestion is to reduce the members from 9 down to 5 or 7, in addition to creating a Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) with three members. Discussion was held, with the consensus that a smaller PC membership would improve the probability for reaching a meeting quorum on a regular basis. The Commissioners recommended changing to a total of five PC members and three ZBA members.

Motion by Gruesbeck, second by Wright to recommend to Council the reduction of PC members to five and the creation of a ZBA with three regular members and two alternates; motion carried.

Countywide Master Plan Update

The City Manager informed Commissioners that the final draft is complete and the PC will need to recommend sending the Plan to the City Council for distribution to the appropriate parties for review prior to the holding of a public hearing on its adoption. Mr. Yonker also noted that a meeting was held with MDOT on tree removal on Center Street due to clear vision issues at two intersections, and announced MDOT's approval of the sidewalk project under US-127 connecting to the new bike trail.

Transmittals

Manager Yonker presented the City Manager activity reports for June 18 and July 7, 2017.

Public Comments

Chair Wilson asked for any additional public comments, none were given.

Motion by Barrows, second by Sherman to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.; motion carried.

Dale Sherman, Commission Secretary

Cathy Cameron, Recording Secretary