



MASTER PLAN AND ZONING COMMITTEE
City of Novi Planning Commission
August 25, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.
Novi Civic Center – City Council Conference Room
45175 W. Ten Mile, Novi, MI 48375
(248) 347-0475
MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Member Avdoulos, Member Dismondy, Member Verma

Not Present: None

Staff Present: Barb McBeth, Lindsay Bell, Christian Carroll, Ben Peacock, Tom Schultz

1. Approval of Agenda

Member Avdoulos made a motion to approve the agenda. Member Dismondy seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

2. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

The Master Plan and Zoning Committee unanimously selected Member Avdoulos and Member Dismondy to be Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee respectively.

3. Approval of December 11, 2019 Master Plan and Zoning Committee meeting minutes

Member Dismondy made a motion to approve the December 11, 2019 Minutes. Member Avdoulos seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

4. Audience Participation and Correspondence

Mike Duchesneau mentioned that he supports the PRO request from I-1 (Light Industrial) to I-2 (General Industrial). He believes that it should have minimal impact on traffic in the city or the surrounding neighborhoods. He said that Caterpillar, or MI-CAT, has been in the area since 1965, before the City of Novi was established. He sees nothing but good coming out of this rezoning, and that is why he came to support the request.

5. Discussion Items

A. Rezoning request from I-1 (Light Industrial) to I-2 (General Industrial) with a Planned Rezoning Overlay (PRO)

Review and provide comments on the rezoning request for a 5.29 acre portion of a 32.39 acre property located on the east side of Novi Road and north of Catherine Industrial Drive (Section 23).

Planner Carroll overviewed the rezoning request and its implications:

- Applicant states that the rezoning request is necessary to develop the vacant site as an outdoor storage area, which is only permitted in the I-2 Zoning District as a principle permitted use. The proposed site will be used as outdoor storage for construction equipment related to Michigan CAT's shore and pump operations
- Equipment is less than eight feet tall and will be stored year-round. The trucks carrying this equipment are projected to increase traffic to the site by ten trucks per day from December to March and by twenty trucks per day from April to November
- The site will continue to be accessed off Novi Road and will have a gate off Catherine Industrial Drive for emergency access only
- Proposed outdoor storage area to be leveled with asphalt millings and will be screened to meet the City's landscape standards at a minimum; the site will also be fenced along the south and west property lines by an eight-foot-tall opaque fence for security and storage purposes
- The applicant estimates site construction will take 28 days

Planner Carroll continued to elaborate that the future land use for the site is industrial research development technology, with heavy industrial to the east and to the south. There is an auto shop near the area, but it cannot be seen from the property. This minimizes impact for shoring and pump operating equipment. It is essentially just an expansion of the existing site. The site won't be accessed via Catherine Industrial Access Drive, other than for emergency purposes. The emergency access will have breakaway gate that will meet correct width requirement, according to Novi Fire Marshal Kevin Pierce. Some public benefit items include proposed vegetation along Novi Road and increased landscape screening along the south and west property lines.

Dan German, Granger Construction, who is the Project Manager for the project, directed the Committee to the documents provided regarding the benefits to the community and the larger green-scape. Steve Deak, Deak Planning Design, who is the Landscape Architect for the project, indicated that MI-CAT will be including a double row of evergreens along the south and west property lines that would meet the eight-foot height requirement and that the natural detention area located on the eastern portion of the site will be maintained. He mentioned that they had also been working with Landscape Architect Rick Meader to swap some of the vegetation species as well as adding a buffer.

MI-CAT said they are looking to include decorative landscaping since the current condition of the property does not have much public presence. The buffer would be located at the north end of Catherine Drive.

City Planner McBeth asked: where would the shrubs go along Novi Road, and what is there now?

Steve Deak explained that there is nothing at the site currently since it is being developed from an empty lot. As is, the site is not in an acceptable condition. It needs to be regraded to create the storage area. The draining and vegetative swale to the storm pond to the east must also be addressed. There is no concrete work, and there is only a small area of currently usable space for storage.

Mr. Deak continued that lot will not have parking or lighting; it is basically just an expansion of MI-CAT's storage yard.

City Planner McBeth said that the Fire Marshal will want the emergency access area to be bit wider.

Chair Avdoulos commented that the extension of the current activities is positive. Novi's residents have indicated that these are our legacy neighbors, and we know what they do. They are a high-profile organization that has contributed to the city on many occasions. He mentioned that he had been on the Master Planning and Zoning Committee for several years on-and-off, and generally project representatives will come just to gather ideas. However, it seems the staff has gone through this project, and the applicant will have time to tweak the plans before it goes to the Planning Commission.

City Planner McBeth said we will continue to work with the applicants. Should we get a recommendation to send this to the Planning Commission?

Chair Avdoulos requested that for the Planning Commission the applicants provide a diagram that makes the project clearer, perhaps with color to show the details.

MI-CAT responded by explaining they have asked for another review before going to the Planning Commission, and they have already submitted the plans for that.

Chair Avdoulos asked Planner McBeth if those had been placed in the que for plan review.

Planner McBeth replied that the Plan Review Center had received the plans, and the staff will return it to the applicant before it is brought before the Planning Commission.

Chair Avdoulos suggested the applicants provide clearer signage and language, as could be beneficial for the Commission meeting.

City Planner McBeth brought up Motor City Markers.

Senior Planner Bell mentioned she thought the program was over, but the city could fashion one like it. There was one done recently at Lakeview Pavilion Shore Park, and there are a few scattered across the city.

City Planner McBeth said that is a good idea, and the staff should address that at the Commission meeting.

After MI-CAT explained that they were able to extend their lease, Chair Avdoulos closed the Committee's comments and asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak.

Chair Avdoulos closed the audience participation seeing no one wished to speak.

B. Master Plan Update

Review information and provide comments on any special topics of concern

City Planner McBeth began by emphasizing the fact that this was not a literal update to the Master Plan, but rather a memo to explain the process of updating the Master Plan. The memo includes the things that Committee members might need to know and links to the Master Plan itself.

City Planner McBeth continued, stating that the last adoption of a Master Plan was in 2016, and it was adopted by 2017. The state law is involved with the updating process. The city must review what is proposed, get feedback from other communities, and several other steps that are part of a schedule enforced by the state. This is essentially all the normal items included on a Master Plan update. Staff will reach out to those who would be needed when they're needed.

In addition, City Planner McBeth highlighted the Master Plan will include updated census numbers for the City of Novi. Over the last decade, Novi's population has increased from around 55,000 to about 66,000.

Finally, City Planner McBeth spoke about the staff's process for reviewing existent maps in addition to both current and future land uses. It was noted that the City typically hires an outside consultant to assist with the process, particularly with the transportation plan. Staff also will record key areas of interest in Novi that many developers have expressed some level of interest in.

City Planner McBeth offered two examples of key areas of interest:

- The lot at Meadowbrook and 12 Mile Road that had been owned by Trinity Health for a long time. The land will no longer be used for a hospital, and now it is being resold.
- Commercial/industrial corridors along M-5, 12 Mile Road, and 13 Mile Road

Vice Chair Dismondy mentioned that the last item mentioned by City Planner McBeth was similar to a City Council goal from a few years prior. The Council looked at shopping centers, land usage for success into the future, and multiple family developments that could possibly rezoned into multi-family living.

The Committee members then addressed the thoroughfare section of the Master Plan with City Planner McBeth and Senior Planner Bell. The two planners essentially informed the Committee that the plan must record all known road projects occurring in the city and whether the water sewer system has the capacity to be successful.

City Planner McBeth continued by saying that overall, the staff would like the Committee's suggestions as to if there should be special attention given to certain areas. The staff did not expect any substantial ideas this evening, but they wanted to let them know in advance.

The Committee Members mentioned malls as a particular issue as businesses begin to close. They stated that repurposing of unused commercial spaces should likely be included in the Master Plan.

Vice-Chair Dismondy asked whether the City has been receiving updates from surrounding communities about their Master Plan process, particularly Lyon Township, since there could be some overlap between jurisdictions during the Master Plan process.

Vice-Chair Dismondy mentioned the Hindu temple being built in Lyon Township on the west side of Napier Road as an example of the need for communication. Since Napier serves as the border between the two municipalities, Lyon Township has approved a land use that directly impacts residential neighborhoods of Novi. The Hindu temple, expected to be one of the largest in Michigan, will be directly adjacent to many of Novi's residential neighborhoods. This use would likely not be allowed if the area were completely in one jurisdiction.

Chair Avdoulos furthered this assertion by addressing the abnormal shape of Napier Road near 9 Mile Road. While he was not opposed to the project, he was concerned about traffic impacting Novi residents.

City Planner McBeth stated that lot in Lyon Township was likely zoned residential, but it may have a special land use permit. However, it was also mentioned that county planners will eventually be involved in locating perimeters and perimeter communities that could be affected by Master Plan updates toward the end of the process.

Chair Avdoulos said that he appreciates comments from residents, but he has not heard much from residents in the northern portion of the City.

City Planner McBeth responded by confirming that consultants assist staff with community outreach as well. They use cutting edge techniques to involve the community, and they have been very successful at doing so.

Chair Avdoulos suggested updating standards to account for zoning between jurisdictions in border areas. Even if one community's zoning code says a particular use is allowed, there is no way to tell what the residents will think about it from the adjacent community. The Committee Chair thought that if the zoning code somehow fails to reject an incompatible use, then perhaps setbacks from property lines could be adjusted in the standards to appease residents.

Vice-Chair Dismondy stated that transitioning from commercial to residential use should be addressed as it will likely cause an upset in certain pockets of the community. Since there are not many large undeveloped parcels remaining in Novi, many unoccupied commercial areas may need to be rezoned to adjust for the growing residential population in coming years. The Vice-Chair also mentioned that with a growing residential population, many residents have become annoyed with the restriction on restaurants being located next to a neighborhood. Therefore, in both scenarios, attentiveness should be given to the thoughts and considerations of the residents.

Chair Avdoulos mentioned that in terms of redeveloping and transitioning uses, he likes to examine other cities like Novi to get a better idea for which types of projects work in those spaces.

Vice-Chair Dismondy asked if the City should do a market assessment since Novi has a great deal of retail space that continues to go unused due to the rise of online shopping.

Senior Planner Bell said that some businesses on 10 Mile Road and Beck wanted to do something similar, but the City said no because there were too many vacancies.

Chair Avdoulos said that it may still be a bit hard to know what the end result would be on commercial properties, even with a market assessment, but it would still be nice to have.

Seeing that none of the Committee Members had anything else to add, Chair Avdoulos asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak during the final opportunity for public comment.

Chair Avdoulos closed the audience participation seeing no one wished to speak.

6. Adjourn

Chair Avdoulos made a motion to adjourn. Vice-Chair Dismondy seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 6:48 PM.