**Harris Planning Commission**

**Regular Meeting Minutes**

**April 5, 2021**

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Rossini called to order the regular meeting of the Harris Planning Commission at 7:02 p.m.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

All participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. Roll Call**

City Clerk Teich conducted the roll call. The following Planning Commission members were present: Chair Rossini, Commissioner Peterson, Commissioner Seidow, Commissioner Williams, Commissioner Olson.

The following city council members were present: Mayor Carlson, Councilmember Maack, Councilmember Miller, Councilmember Rossini and Councilmember Sculley.

A quorum was present.

IV. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Olson moved to approve, Commissioner Seidow seconded, all voting Aye, motion passed.

V. **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

VI. **Regular Agenda**

1. Workshop of the Harris City Council and Harris Planning Commission, review of the city of Harris Economic Development Plans.

Attending the workshop are Claire Michelson and Kate Goodman Eiynck, MSA Planners, in their review of the two studies, the following review ensued.

1. The Harris Interchange Area Development Feasibility Study. Cost estimates are based on the 2019 engineering study completed by MSA for an extension to the interchange area of Harris. Considerations include the average daily traffic entering Harris, west bound traffic, and Department of Transportation right of way along the northbound Off ramp. Phase 1 focused on the east side of the interchange, and Phase 2 focused on the North West corner of the 35 Harris interchange. The study considers what North Branch and Rush City, have established in their interchange areas with consideration of the population differences. A summary of services in each of those municipalities will help Developers in their decisions to develop services at the Harris Interchange as a result.

Cost estimates from the 2019 study are included. ( Note the higher cost of development west of the interchange.) Discussion included considering a Planned Unit Development (PUD.) A PUD allows local control, determines what type of development the city wants. City can/should decide what infrastructure, planning, zoning to put in place to be ready for future development.

What steps should the city take to be “shovel ready,” as opportunities come along, i.e. grants, developers, zoning code,etc. Consider amenities such as parks, open space, trails, recreation, affordable lots, what amenities are residents looking for? If wetlands are an issue what mitigation strategies are possible? Has there been a wetlands study completed in the interchange area and what are results? What can realistically be developed? Council discussed variations of development of the future, what does development look like from a macro perspective? Septic may be affordable shared across multiple entities. The study provides a framework for the tools to support and attract business considering the Harris interchange area. Study design considers multiple small businesses in the north west quadrant. Council discussed: What are people leaving the area to acquire? Is the open land large enough to handle light industrial? What groups of business types mesh together? Restaurants, retail, transit hubs?

The feasibility study should be thought of as a toolbox to planning. Helps identify what is needed to make development in Harris attractive, i.e., special taxing, other incentives? Is lack of sewer and water at the interchange a development barrier?

From a macro perspective Harris should be getting ready now in ordinance, budget, grants planning to attract further development essential city services. Knowing that population living and working preferences are changing with pandemic effects considered, if water and septic were west of the Interchange, what are the possibilities beyond the interchange area for development in the city?

The Harris interchange study is a tool to assist the city in future development planning in this area of the city.

1. Harris Downtown Redevelopment Study

Area 1 – Downtown Harris development options. Considering the area of Bid Daddy’s and associated buildings, downtown on Ginger Avenue, forms one city lot. This real space may lend itself to a combination of housing and business in one building, row housing, duplex housing may work. Amenities could include day care, coffee shop, efficiency apartments, starter housing. Not retail space dependent but as an option it enhances this type of downtown housing option. Council discussed their support of businesses situated in an apartment style building as a downtown option.

What does present zoning code support in this area of Harris? Next conversation is how far does the city want to take the results of the study for next steps? Does city want to own this property, or hope a developer engages with the design in the study. Planners identified a Demolition Loan that may be applicable for the city to pursue in this area, to qualify the city must have a purchase agreement for the property. Property under consideration is the area encompassing Big Daddy’s and the Antique store. If these properties are for sale is presently unknown. Big Daddy’s is its own property parcel. Notably when properties change hands the city needs to correct errors in zoning, usage, and boundaries at that time. Two choices exist, city purchase or attract a developer to purchase and develop with the business and joint housing plan.

If city purchased this property, is fire training an option with these buildings. Enhanced regulations for controlled burns curtailed that option.

Second area reviewed may lend itself to single, multi-level housing, row housing. Current zoning may need modification. This area would be considered later in the overall city development plan. Examples of row housing were shown by MSA personnel. Are there nearby towns where this housing model exists and works well? City of Schafer has multiple small lots, but MSA will research where row housing and mixed use housing exists in city like Harris.

What is the city “appetite” for taking on development project? Even with funding assistance the 35 Interchange development is notably costly. The Downtown development recommendations may be closer to being feasible in the near future. Notably the historic performance of the economy curtailed further city of Harris development in years past. Some economic improvement and population preferences to exit metropolitan areas potentially revive the Harris downtown development initiative at this time.

Important that zoning code matches what the city desires. Can stores and housing co-exist in a zone? There are creative ways to build business and housing together in the zoning code. Rules need to be in place ahead of time. Is first floor retail required on new downtown housing/business options? Think it through. Council desires to enhance the appearance of downtown Harris through building, and development modifications that will support co-existence of business/housing/retail and other resident amenities. Noted that some homes have recently appeared for sale in the business district. Council wants the public to have a reason to come to Harris. There is a city lot that could be offered for sale, or possibly swapped for another property.

What is happening with south east side of the 35 Interchange, the Graff property. Hopes for frontage road to be reconfigured and placed on east side, vacating the frontage road. MNDot notes that frontage road is not optimal for proximity to intersection. City should get property swap enacted to get access to other portion of the general business district.

Both Development plans contain data, and data references for future planning, either by the city or other developers interested in working with Harris. Final formatting and Executive Summary forthcoming, for final report and public sharing of the studies. Workshop concluded.

1. Regular Meeting of the City of Harris Planning Commission

II. Zoning Ordinance

Clerk Teich discussed with the Commission the present Zoning Ordinance. The city will realize additional Interim Use Permit requests, most notably in the industry of Mining. Mining is an established industry in the city of Harris. Of note two such requests are anticipated yet this spring. Notably, the ordinance does not have any permitted interim uses in the R – 2, or in the General Business zones at this time. Today, other than cell phone towers, no interim uses are permitted in the different zones of the city ordinance. Additionally, Chapter 155 Mineral extraction while identified as requiring an interim or conditional use permit, is not permitted in any zone of the Harris city ordinance. After consult with city attorney, it would be recommended that the ordinance language accommodate Mining as a permitted Interim Use in the R-2 district. Spot zoning is not recommended by the city attorney, within a district. Additionally, in the ordinance for areas zoned Business, no interim uses are identified in the ordinance.

The clerk recommends that the city ordinance be revised to accommodate Interim Use permitting in R-2 and the Business zones, with language as provided by the city attorney. Understanding that a public hearing will be held on the ordinance changes as discussed, with the timing of such occurring at the next available Planning Commission meeting. Today, there are anticipated additional Interim Use Permit requests coming forth for Mining and Mineral extraction in the zoning ordinance, spring 2021.

Discussion about the use of 420th as a possibility for one of the Interim use Permits coming forward, noted upon review of the February 1, 2021 Planning Commission Minutes. Commission was advised that changes to the ordinance for a given zone applies to the entire district. This is NOT a spot zoning discussion.

Commissioner Kathy Olson motioned to revise the zoning ordinance language to accommodate a permitted Interim Use for Mineral Extraction in the Business District with the clerk working with the city attorney for correct ordinance language. Trevor Williams offered the second, all Commission members voting Aye. Motion passed.

Commissioner Kathy Olson motioned to revise the Zoning ordinance to accommodate Mining as a permitted Interim Use in R-2, and that the clerk shall work with the city attorney to develop the ordinance language. Allen Seidow seconded the motion, all commission members voting aye, motion passed.

Signage policy

Commission members Peterson and Williams shared the results of their recent survey of the city of Harris road signs. Today there are 160 signs in place, with an identifying list made. Noting on border roads the signs on the Harris side of the road were counted. Commission member Petersen advises an agreement on border shared roads is essential. Clarifications requested from Commission member Petersen on the following roads: Stark road lane is located by cemetary, Iris is a dead end road borders Sunrise, Frontage road on Interstate 35, 443 street off frontage road is a private road.

Comments include: 1. Several end of road barricades in place, are expected to need replacement. They are all wood at present. Recommend a red 9 button barricade as replacement. 2. Advance warning for railroad crossings are low traffic. Does city really need those signs, as they are a low volume low speed road area. Children at play signs should be discontinued, as drivers do not see these signs and present a false sense of security to families. State does not put these types of signs up, nor does the county. These things would be written into future city policy on road signs. All roads that were inherited from county, should have junction signs, and arrows removed, there are two or three areas with these excess signs. Commission member Petersen recommends removal of all school bus stop ahead signs, and that the policy should state city will not put up a school bus sign unless requested by the school district. City must assess whether there is a true visibility issue, as measured using road speed. Petersen states the present bus stop signs do not have visibility issues. There is one Yield sign in city near fire hall. Petersen recommends removal of this very old sign. There are several possible missing stop signs, right turn and left turn signage in some areas does not make sense. Customer parking only, signage by liquor store, will city require this type of sign? Does business need to be financially responsible for this type of sign? All signage on right of way should be approved by city, recommends Commissioner Petersen. Commissioner Petersen shared his sign inventory map with the Commission. Some question about who put the signage on Harder? Will city support those signs, most likely put up by Halls Company? A Planning commission drawer has been identified in the city hall office. This drawer is open to all Planning Commission members. It will be populated with the signage policy project materials.

Commissioner Petersen noted a need for brushing around certain signs to make them more visible.

**Old Business**

None identified.

**Commissioner reports**

None identified.

Chair reviewed the May 3, 2021 agenda, which will include public hearings on text amendment to the ordinance, two Interim Use Permits. Clerk reviewed the upcoming Board of Equalization open book session on April 26, 2021. Commission and Council are not required to be present, however city clerk will be staffing this meeting.

Motion to adjourn offered by Commission member Kathy Olson, with Commissioner Williams second. All voting aye, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

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Nancy Teich , Clerk John Rossini

Date approved 5-3-21\_