

CITY OF FREMONT
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR FREMONT PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday, April 12, 2011
Fremont City Hall

Call to Order: A regular meeting of the Fremont Planning Commission was held in the Council Chambers at the Fremont City Hall on Tuesday, April 12, 2011. The meeting was called to order at 4:01 p.m. by Planning Commission Chair Don Henry.

Fremont Planning Commission Members Present: Chair Don Henry and Commissioners Jack Butterick, Dennis Caplis, Jane Drake, Marcia Eib, Jim Krouse, Peg May, Lon Vredevelde, and Jim Sloan

Fremont Planning Commission Members Absent: None

City Staff Present: Phil Deur, Fremont Police Chief
Michele Ribant, Fremont Zoning Administrator

Review and Approval of Meeting Agenda

A motion was made by Peg May, seconded by Marcia Eib and carried to approve the agenda as presented for the April 12, 2011 Regular Planning Commission meeting.

Approval of the Fremont Planning Commission Minutes

A motion was made by Marcia Eib, seconded by Jane Drake and carried to approve the minutes as presented from the March 8, 2011 Regular Fremont Planning Commission meeting.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Newaygo County Agricultural Fair Association – New Entryway Plan (817 S. Stewart)

Don Henry welcomed Matt Kempf, the president of the Newaygo County Agricultural Fair Association. Don Henry explained that the proposed amendments to the Fremont Zoning Ordinance that would allow the Fair Association to build their new entryway were outlined in the agenda packet. Matt Kempf said he read the proposed language and that the language, if approved, would satisfy the Fair Association's desires with regard to the proposed new entryway plan.

A motion was made by Jane Drake, seconded by Marcia Eib and carried to set a public hearing to receive comment on the proposed amendments to the Fremont Zoning Code that would allow for the entryway plan proposed by the Fair Association; this would include amendments to Article 2, Definitions; Article 5, Institutional District – Signs and Fencing; Article 6, Signs; and a new section under Article 6, Archways.

Discussion on How Fremont will Comply with the Michigan Medical Marihuana Act

Michele Ribant gave a power-point presentation entitled, “Information on Local Regulation of Medical Marihuana.” After the presentation, the Commission discussed various approaches to the issue that communities may adopt, some of which included:

- Do Nothing Approach
- Prohibition Approach
- Regulatory Approach

Phil Deur, the Fremont Police Chief, was present and answered questions from a law enforcement perspective. After much discussion, it was decided that Michele Ribant should provide the Commission with more information about various approaches (e.g., home occupations) to the issue. The Commission indicated that they understood that they needed to comply with the Michigan Medical Marihuana Act, but before they make a recommendation, they wanted more information on the subject.

Discussion on Proposed Amendments to the Fremont Zoning Ordinance – Outdoor Display Areas/Outdoor Seating/Serving of Liquor (Downtown Main District and West Main District)

The Commission reviewed the proposed language concerning outdoor display areas, outdoor seating and the serving of liquor in the Downtown Main District and in the West Main District. The only change proposed was that the height of the outdoor storage area in the West Main District should not be 3 feet; but rather, outdoor storage should be allowed up to the height of the front façade of the principal building. There will be a public hearing on the proposed text amendments at the next Planning Commission meeting.

Discussion on Proposed Amendments to the Fremont Zoning Ordinance – To allow Gazebos and Decks (Neighborhood District and Estate District)

It was explained that in the Neighborhood and Estate Districts a property owner may have one garage, which can be attached or detached, and one additional accessory structure that is not to exceed 144 sq. ft. Michele Ribant said she has received requests from residents who would like to construct additional recreational structures (gazebos, outdoor living spaces, etc.). After some discussion, the Commission by consensus said that they would favor amending the Fremont Zoning Ordinance to allow for recreational structures. It was expressed that the intent of the provision on accessory uses in residential districts was to preclude property owners from building large pole barns, etc. in residential city neighborhoods. A public hearing will be held on the subject at a future Planning Commission meeting.

Discussion on Proposed Amendments to the Fremont Zoning Ordinance – Enforcement Issues

Michele Ribant indicated that she attended a zoning administrator training class recently and that as a result of that training she would like to propose changes to the enforcement procedures outlined in the Fremont Zoning Ordinance. The Commission was receptive to making changes that would make the enforcement process more equitable and that would help ensure that the Fremont Zoning Code would be enforced properly.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

New business included the following:

- The Commission expressed by consensus that they would be in favor of allowing property owners in the Neighborhood and Estate Districts to have their front yard fences located up to the front property line as long as there was no issue with snow removal, etc. Michele Ribant said she would look into the concern.
- The Commission was asked to give direction as whether they would like to allow trailers etc. to be stored in Commercial Districts and in the Industrial District. There appeared to be consensus that the trailers should not be allowed to be stored in the Industrial Districts. There were some mixed comments on whether they should be prohibited for storage in the commercial areas, especially in the Downtown Main District. It was suggested that trailers that are used in conjunction with a business may be stored in private space owned by a business owner as long as the trailer, etc. is moved at least every 48 hours. The idea was that the owner should be actively using the trailer, etc. as part of his/her business and not just storing the trailer, etc. in the commercial area.
- The Commission was asked if they would like to allow land to be farmed within the City. The Commission gave the direction that they would be open to allowing crop farming – but no farming that would involve animals. Michele Ribant will look into the best way to amend the zoning ordinance to allow for crop farming in the City. She indicated that perhaps a Special Use permit would be appropriate because conditions could be imposed.

Public hearings will have to be set for all these issues in order to amend the Fremont Zoning Ordinance. After the public hearing, the Planning Commission is to make a recommendation to the Fremont City Council.

Commissioners' Discussion

There was no Commissioners' discussion.

Next Regular Planning Commission Meeting

May 10, 2011
4:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers
Fremont City Hall

Adjournment

There being no further business of the Fremont Planning Commission, the meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.