

**CITY OF WIXOM
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL
JOINT PLANNING COMMISSION AND CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2019**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Day of the Planning Commission at 7:30 p.m. at which time allegiance was pledged to the American flag.

PRESENT: Richard Ziegler (Mayor), Patrick Beagle (City Council), Keenan Gottschall (City Council), Tia Gronlund-Fox (City Council), Thomas Rzeznik (City Council), Robert Smiley (City Council), William Day (Planning Commission), Phillip Carter (Planning Commission), Joe Barts, Peter Sharpe and Sandro Grossi

ABSENT: Brent Leder (City Council), Anthony Lawrence (Excused) and Raymond Cousineau (Excused)

OTHERS: Carmine Avantini (CIB Planning), Kelly McIntyre (CIB Planning), Deb Barker (Economic and Community Development Director), Steve Brown (City Manager) and Nancy Fisher (Recording Secretary)

Determination of a Quorum:

A quorum of the Planning Commission was present for this meeting.

Agenda:

No additions or changes were made to the agenda.

Correspondence:

City Manager's Update – August 27, 2019

Call to the Public:

There were no comments made by the public.

Unfinished Business:

There was no unfinished business listed on the agenda for this meeting.

New Business:

1. Discussion of concept entertainment group at rear of former Ford Property

City Manager Brown referred to the memo. He noted that Agenda Item No. 1 is for an entertainment use at the previous Ford Motor Wixom plant. The picture on the reverse side depicts the overall site that they would like to switch to IRO (Industrial Research Office) with a GPUD (Gateway Planned Unit Development) overlay. The site is challenging due to its narrowness and tonight's group may have a use for it. The site is environmentally challenging as well. He wanted to bring this before City Council and the Planning Commission for their feedback. The first agenda item is related to the second item on tonight's agenda.

Mark Dick, 44255 W. Twelve Mile Road, Novi. This is a very unique and exciting project. He worked on this with the previous property owner and is now making good headway with the new owner. He referred to the large-scale schematic of the site on display. This would be mixed use. It is like the M1 Concourse in Pontiac and will have high-end garages, high-end condos and a properly sized track for performance and high-performance street vehicles. There will also be an outdoor go-cart track.

There will be a mix of restaurants, retail and offices. They have had discussions regarding the former landfill. They can probably turn it into event overflow parking. There are challenging soil conditions on the north and west sides of the property. The combination of water features, garages/condos on a racetrack and waterfront properties makes it unique both nationally and internationally. They have an extensive motorsports background. He has participated with a lot of tracks in other places worldwide and he would like to bring this concept here. It would have a unique international aspect. It would be a partially closed private club but also have open general access to the public on certain days or special events; i.e., private rental. It will have a Monaco-type feel where the track is integrated into the building. It should garner a lot of attention. He is seeking the Commissioners' and Council's input, criticism and dialogue. He is very flexible. He views this as a partnership. He is from the area and currently lives in Northville.

Planning Commission Chairman Day asked how long the track is. Mr. Dick said it will be 1,600 feet along the section he highlighted on the large-scale schematic, probably a 2 to 2.5-mile track. Chairman Day asked how many car condos there will be. Mr. Dick said there will be 400 units; however, people will likely buy multiples. Individual owners will vary. He is showing 454. Chairman Day asked whether the retail and restaurant will be open to the public 7 days a week. Mr. Dick said yes. It will have gated private access into the garage condos for security purposes. He highlighted on the diagram which areas would be available to the general public.

Councilman Gottschall noted that there are two bodies of water depicted on the diagram provided to the Councilmembers and Commissioners including two ponds. However, there are other bodies of water which were not depicted. Will those be filled in? Mr. Dick said that he had SME Engineering conduct onsite analyses and that there is some water accumulation as a result of improper water management over the years. There is more water outside the property boundary. Councilman Gottschall asked about the pond sited at the top of the diagram on the west side. He also inquired what types of events/entertainment uses there will be. Mr. Dick said events could include things like Concourse d'Elegance, fundraisers and competitions on the track. He noted that the M1 gets rented out for a myriad of purposes. A number of high-end executives/business owners might bring their staff there for a picnic. As long as it stays within the confines of safety and legality, there is nothing limiting the type of activity/event. The owner agreement outlines how many days it will be open for general rental, open track days and private member days.

Councilman Gottschall inquired whether it would require some level of public safety support. Mr. Dick noted that competitive racing events require him to privately hire public safety (ambulance, fire rescue, etc.). Outside of that, there is an assumption of risk and liability. The participants sign a waiver before they get on the track at his Novi facility. Councilman Gottschall asked how often the public safety calls will be required. Mr. Dick said that it will be open to the general public during which private fire and rescue would be present. They would only be reliant upon City fire/rescue during private non-racing events.

Councilman Beagle noted that Mr. Dick is associated with the Novi facility. Will the go-cart track be inside or out? Mr. Dick said both. Councilman Beagle asked whether there will be staging for concerts like the M1 does. Mr. Dick said that there will be a banked area with a Pine Knob-type feel. The restaurants would be there near the fountains where the general public would congregate. Councilman Beagle asked whether concerts would take place during the event and whether he would contract with public safety. Mr. Dick said that concerts and on-track events can be run concurrently or independently. When there is an event, they will comply with what the City requires.

Planning Commission Chairman Day inquired about the capacity of the amphitheatre. Mr. Dick said that is unknown at this point. It will depend upon the final configuration of the track. Chairman Day

inquired about noise levels. Mr. Dick said that modern technology is good and that they expect it to be consistent with the ambient noise coming from I-96. Every participant will be required to muffle their vehicle and it is easy to monitor that with sensors. All competitors understand this requirement.

Planning Commission Chairman Day asked where it is located in relationship to the office buildings. Mr. Dick pointed out the location with respect to General RV and the offices on the diagram.

Councilman Rzeznik asked about emergency vehicles and egress from the west off Wixom Road. Mr. Dick pointed it out on the map. Councilman Rzeznik asked about egress from other points. Mr. Dick said that there could be; he would have to ask ICP.

Councilwoman Gronlund-Fox said that she is concerned about the marketing research. Is there really a demand for this given that there is already a similar facility in Pontiac? Mr. Dick said that people collect old heritage cars and modern performance cars and Michigan is in the top three states for this countrywide. He has not told anyone about this proposal yet except a few close business associates and they have told him that they are interested in putting down deposits. There are people west of here who are owners at M1 but this is closer for them and it is located off the interstate. Councilwoman Gronlund-Fox asked how his proposed track compares with M1's. Mr. Dick said that theirs is shorter. He thinks M1's is pretty competitive although it is relatively narrow and limits some people's desire to race there. They tried something with M1 in the beginning although they had some site challenges. The passing ability is limited at M1.

City Manager Brown asked about the length of M1's track. Mr. Dick said it is about 1.5 miles. It is very short. He will add some grade changes to the track he is proposing for Wixom.

Councilwoman Gronlund-Fox asked what they would use the site for during the winter. Mr. Dick said that the owners still use it in the winter.

Planning Commission Chairman Day asked whether this project would be developed all at once or in stages. Mr. Dick said that it would be staged. Phase 1 will be the condos. He noted that you want to pre-sell a certain number of them, then start construction. Chairman Day asked about the retail. Mr. Dick noted that someone is present from the real estate company tonight. The condos will be simultaneously marketed from Day 1. He will erect a building if he has a tenant.

Councilman Beagle asked about the timeline. Mr. Dick said that there are issues with the soil and consequently there are things he needs to take a deeper look at. However, he wanted to present this informally tonight. The worst case scenario is that he will have to take 20,000 cubic yards in two different spots and replace that with good soil. He has a vested interest to move as quickly as possible.

Councilman Rzeznik asked whether the condos will be owned or leased. Mr. Dick said that they will be owned; they will have parking right in front. The owners will park their car in between with a mezzanine on top.

Planning Commissioner Grossi asked about the square footage devoted to retail. Mr. Dick said that one of them is 20,000 square feet and there will probably be a grand total of 200,000 square feet. He pointed out where the retail would be on the large-scale graphic although he noted that one spot would be harder because there are private condos there. It would be temporary or even banked. Planning Commissioner Chairman Day noted that it could be rooftop. Planning Commissioner Barts asked about the retail. Mr. Dick noted that they are in Fountain Walk now and that about 60-70 percent of the revenue comes from corporate gatherings and meetings.

City Manager Brown asked Mr. Dick how improved he wants the overflow parking to be. Would it be paved? Mr. Dick noted that per discussions with Ford Motor, it would be properly marked asphalt with curbing which does not prevent the State or anyone from doing test borings. It will have a nice, high-end ambience.

Planning Commissioner Sharpe asked whether the zoning is for a portion of this property. How will the land be taxed? Is this the next best use? He assumes there is not a lot of demand for the property. This seems like a good fit. Ms. Barker said that she spoke with the County regarding this and this is a new item for them. This is under a master deed so the track in certain areas becomes common space. There will be green space. The condos will be taxed separately. The green space gets spread amongst the condos. The County has not been able to get into M1 which is quite elaborate. M1 has from 600 square feet to 3,000 square feet. She went up to the LaFontaine garage which is spectacular. The price will depend on how it is developed. The M1 Concourse is now in its third phase. They have 187 garages sold.

Planning Commission Chairman Day asked about the site acreage. Mr. Dick said that it is 70 acres but close to 100 acres when you count the Ford Motor land.

Planning Commissioner Sharpe asked about the outline for the GPUD. How is it assessed from a business perspective? Ms. Barker said that you want to look at what other uses you can have. The land is marginal and buildings would be cost prohibitive in certain areas. Commissioner Sharpe asked whether it is comparing this to having nothing there. Mr. Dick said that SME determined that the peat material is highly dense. Putting a track on it is very different than industrial footings. No developer will try to put any type of structure there. They would be building on pylons. It works for Mr. Dick because these are all light-duty buildings. There will be a large excavation project for the track to take soil out and fill it with compacted soil in order to bear the load.

Planning Commission Chairman Day asked whether it will draw or deter the development of the next 110 acres.

Larry Siedell, Gedom Realty & Investment, 44725 Grand River, Novi. Mr. Siedell said the ownership is primarily large-box industrial development. Mr. Dick noted that this will put the City on the map. Councilman Beagle asked whether this proposal would take anything away from Waterford Hills on Dixie Highway. Mr. Dick said that Waterford Hills is very small and limited. It is a completely different demographic. These people will be spending millions.

Councilman Rzeznik noted that a lot of business owners he knows love to race and he thinks that it will attract certain types of businesses. Planning Commissioner Carter asked what the next largest track of this type is and where it is located. Mr. Dick said that would be the Autobahn in Illinois; however, that is just a track. It is not a full multi-purpose site like he is proposing. Commissioner Carter asked whether people will be staying overnight. Mr. Dick noted that depends upon what the City allows although typically it is disallowed. Ms. Barker noted that Ford Motor has a restrictive deed for residential on the property. She noted that some of the garages in Pontiac have a bunk. Mr. Dick noted that it is not a residence.

Mr. Dick asked the Councilmembers and Planning Commissioners if they see any reason that this will not work. Councilman Gottschall asked for clarification regarding public safety. Will there be times when the City will be expected to pick up the remainder of the load? Planning Commission Chairman Day mentioned tax revenue.

Planning Commissioner Grossi mentioned that he was involved with the Belle Isle Grand Prix. Would this be like the FCCA? How much will Mr. Dick's private safety cover? Do they transport to the hospital? Will he have regular EMT's? Mr. Dick said absolutely as well as fire. It is like a planned community without the permanent residents. There are 225 potential units if each owner buys two with an average market value of \$250,000-\$300,000. He does not know that they would be having this safety discussion if the units had a market value of \$150,000 each. Councilman Gottschall noted that the uses are different; people do not race through their subdivisions. Mr. Dick said that they have not seen it become a burden to communities across the country.

City Councilman Beagle asked whether the racers will have to undergo training and do they ensure that the cars meet specifications? He noted that is required at M1. Mr. Dick said all participants must be licensed adult drivers. People are not allowed to drive on their Novi track without first undergoing a briefing.

Planning Commissioner Carter asked about what the typical peak days and hours would be. Mr. Dick said that would be the weekends. Saturday and Sunday afternoon will be for general unplanned/unscheduled use. The owners will have access and can go any time but it does not mean the track will be open all the time. It will not be lit for night driving and is for day time use only.

Councilman Smiley said it sounds great and would really put Wixom on the map. He is excited about the idea. Planning Commission Chairman Day said that he would not have expected to endorse this proposal and be excited about it; however, it is probably a good use for the property. Mr. Dick noted that they have a lot of homework for compliance.

Planning Commissioner Barts asked whether this is ICP's overall vision. Mr. Dick said that ICP is receptive to him acquiring that portion of property and using it as outlined tonight. They think it will add overall value.

City Councilman Beagle asked whether someone would be brought in to do driver training. Mr. Dick said they would and that can be tied into NASCAR and other local motorsports events.

2. Discussion of 29311 S. Wixom Road potential IRO rezoning with GPUD overlay

Mr. Avantini noted that some of the questions posed are directly applicable to the zoning issue. It is currently zoned M-2 which is the last M-2 parcel left in the City. M-2 is intended for heavy industry which was appropriate for Ford Motor. Now there will be different uses. One of his bigger concerns with this property is allowing uses which would attract excess tractor trailer traffic; i.e., a distribution base, without adding a lot of employment which would negatively effect the tax base. Traffic projections were run. It will have an impact on Wixom Road regardless of what goes there.

He has been working on making changes to M-1 and IRO at the request of area businesses to make those zoning districts more relevant. They want the property to be zoned GPUD in order to give developers more flexibility and assure that it would meet the City's quality standards. He noted that there have been previous discussions about rezoning it to GPUD with underlying IRO zoning. He referred to the full-page table on page 2 of his report. He is particularly concerned about warehouses, distribution or wholesale, commercial, TV and radio towers, mini storage and warehouse facilities which are allowed by right. That is not what he wants to see. There are some heavy industrial uses that the City would be concerned with. Truck stops, commercial composting facilities and garbage refuse transfer stations are permitted which he does not want either.

There is more flexibility in the IRO district and also flexibility for the developer. It would allow for a wider variety of uses and allow the developer to meet market demand. When you look at the property, the proposed use is probably the least flexible part of the entire property due to the existing wetlands. There probably are not a lot of uses which could be sited there. Will the noise make an impact? The remainder of the property is where the key developability is. He is still concerned about whether they have the necessary infrastructure and the traffic on Wixom Road. This is a policy issue. They are at a point where they need to put together the framework for the redevelopment of the remainder of the property. Are they on track with this concept?

Planning Commission Chairman Day noted that it looks like it will be the maximum use that you can get out of the property especially with the water features. Is the GPUD tied to a specific project? Mr. Avantini said that Menards came in with a preliminary GPUD plan which was adopted. As each building came in, there may have been minor variations but in general it fit within the approved plan. They have denied uses they did not want; i.e., drive-throughs. They would need a preliminary plan. If it is City generated rezoning, the City would come up with the preliminary plan showing the road network. Chairman Day asked if it is GPUD with underlying IRO and baked into the project but it is later discovered that it is not feasible, where does that leave the City? Mr. Avantini said that he does not think that it will come to that. The developer could propose an unanticipated use; however, the Planning Commission would make a determination. If it is drastically different, City Council would look at it. Chairman Day asked what if they determined it was economically unfeasible and they sold the property. Mr. Avantini said it would not have an impact one way or the other. Chairman Day asked whether the GPUD binds a future property owner. Would they have to come in and do an amendment? Mr. Avantini said that it would bind them. There is a mechanism built into the Ordinance which allows for different uses. He cited the example of General RV with their retail component. He thinks it gives the City more flexibility, not less.

Councilman Rzeznik said that he recalls the initial discussions 10 years ago regarding the southern part of this property and making it IRO and GPUD. They were trying to attract large manufacturing facilities from India and China at the time.

Mr. Avantini said that his big concern is that they will want to sell the property for as much as they can; however, the resulting impact on the provision of services falls entirely on the City. There may be a clash of goals and interests since they could propose uses which do not serve the City and in fact cost the City money.

Planning Commission Chairman Day said that he agrees it should be zoned IRO.

Councilman Gottschall said that he saw a newspaper article quoting an ICP representative about building six buildings including a glass-fronted building along with light industrial. Now it is a few giant buildings. Is this them thinking about it and not discussing it with ICP? That is different from where they started. Mr. Avantini said that they tried to contact ICP. The original goal for the property has not changed but they do not want to see a handful of big buildings with trucks coming in and out. The City does not have the level of protection they would like. Councilman Gottschall said that GPUD and IRO will give them what they initially talked about. They have rezoned around other land owners but it can create issues. They need to have a discussion with ICP. Chairman Day noted they are talking about GPUD for this specific piece.

City Manager Brown noted that the City tried to initiate contact with ICP who said they were willing to have further discussions; however, that has not happened. The City is concerned about what could go there. They talked with ICP about not wanting a distribution center and ICP knew that. They were upfront about potential rezoning since M-2 has unattractive zoning uses. They can initiate

a greater degree of interest in having that discussion with ICP. They have been sidelined with environmental remediation. They have established a brownfield plan and they have been very cooperative. Mr. Avantini said that the IRO gives ICP a lot more flexibility and allows the City to work cooperatively with them. The City wants to prevent bad uses from going in.

Councilman Beagle asked for an estimate on the number of employees involved in Mr. Dick's proposal. Mr. Dick said that he does not know at this point. He noted there would be unrelated employees due to the retail space. The race track itself would not have a lot of employees.

Mr. Avantini stated that under current zoning if they came in under M-2, he is not sure it fits and there would be a more rigid process for this project. If it is zoned GPUD/IRO, the decision on the use would be made by the Planning Commission and they would have to follow the standards. There would also be a plan for the overall conceptual development. Planning Commissioner Chairman Day noted that since there is no involvement with ICP at this point, couldn't this section be rezoned from IRO to GPUD like they did with Menards? It might be better to do the whole thing at once; however, it could delay the early development of this property. Mr. Avantini said that this is the City's only form of leverage. They gave it all up to Ford including the brownfield. If they do not want to rezone it down the road, they can put whatever they want there.

Planning Commissioner Barts noted that the benefit is self-initiated to go ahead and move forward. It is not antagonistic to the property owner. Mr. Avantini noted that ICP could always object and that he would rather work with them. The City has been very upfront with them. Commissioner Barts asked whether the M-2 zoning is just left over from the Ford Motor property from 50 years ago. Chairman Day said that he would like to have the owner's cooperation. City Manager Brown said that they need to get ICP interested in talking to the City. Councilman Smiley said that he thinks they might like this. Mr. Avantini said that he hopes so. Councilman Smiley said that there are advantages to the rezoning to which they might be receptive. Chairman Day noted that it is the GPUD aspect which should really make it attractive. Mr. Avantini noted that the IRO zoning opens up a whole realm of opportunities. There may be IRO uses that the City does not want to see on Wixom Road.

Councilwoman Gronlund-Fox asked whether this would be put into place when it is rezoned with the exception of certain uses. Mr. Avantini said that he would want to speak to the City Attorney. They do not have other projects coming in so it makes it difficult to tell what is appropriate. What do they want the remaining property to look like?

City Manager Brown stated that IRO with a GPUD overlay is right in line with their discussions with ICP. This is a way to codify that. He is hopeful that they will still be in line. Mayor Ziegler said that it seems that they want to bring this to a head and he thinks that makes sense.

Planning Commissioner Carter asked what the property just to the north is zoned. It was indicated that it is zoned M-1. Commissioner Carter asked whether this would not have a negative impact. He likes the idea being discussed of filling from the back out. Mr. Avantini noted that when Ford Motor first talked about selling the property, he developed at least five variations of the whole site layout. The Planning Commission and City Council decided to allow some commercial at the corner to get the project going. They have done the first part and it has turned out quite well. Do they want more commercial/restaurants?

Call to the Public:

There were no comments made by the public.

Staff Comments:

Mr. Avantini thanked the Planning Commissioners and City Council for their support. He has been worried about the future development of the Ford Motor property. He wants to make sure that the City is protected. He also introduced Ms. McIntyre who will be working closely with him.

APPROVED 10.28.19

Commission/City Council Comments:

There were no comments made by the Planning Commissioners or City Councilmembers.

ADJOURNMENT:

This meeting of the Planning Commission was motioned and adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Nancy Fisher
Recording Secretary

APPROVED 10.28.19