# PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

February 20, 2025
Regular Meeting - 7:00 PM

**1) CALL TO ORDER**

IN A SPECIAL SESSION held on Thursday, February 20, 2025 at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 323 West Michigan Ave, Marshall, MI 49068, the Marshall Planning Commission was called to order by Chair McNiff.

**2) ROLL CALL**

Roll was called:

Present: Chair Lisa McNiff, Carter Bright, Tim Fitzgerald, Aron Hodo, Ian Stewart, Jim Zuck

Also Present: Dierctor Strange and Deputy Clerk Cary

Absent: Tim Banfield, Karl Sievertsen, Ryan Underhill

**3) APPROVAL OF AGENDA** - Items can be deleted from the Agenda by board action.

**Moved** by Aron Hodo, supported by Jim Zuck to amend the agenda to indicate that this is a special meeting and approve the remainder of the agenda. On a voice vote: **Motion Carried**

**4) PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS** Persons addressing the board are required to give their name and address for the record when called upon by the Chair. Members of the public shall be limited to speaking for a maximum of three (3) minutes. Comments should address AGENDA ITEM topics. Public Hearing items should be addressed during the PUBLIC HEARING portion of the meeting agenda. Non-Agenda items should be addressed during the PUBLIC COMMENT-NON-AGENDA ITEMS portion of the meeting agenda.

Emily Emerson Rich at 616 Union Street gave a summary of existing hotel room quantities and expressed concerns about allowing another hotel to be built in the City of Marshall.

**5) PUBLIC HEARINGS & SUBSEQUENT BOARD ACTION**

none

**6) OLD BUSINESS**

none

**7) REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS/NEW BUSINESS**

**A. 1154 WEST MICHIGAN AVE SITE DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

**Moved** by Tim Fitzgerald, supported by Aron Hodo to consider and recommend the site plan 1154 W Michigan Ave.

Director Strange discussed the 1154 W Michigan site plan. She stated that there are some contingency items that we don't have necessarily documented as part of the drawing set that should be considered. The fire department questioned the turning radius to get onto the north side of the building. The recommendation is that we require more thorough coordination with the fire department. There was discussion that, if it was necessary, the small stretch of solar panels would be removed from the project to accommodate the fire department's needs. She discussed the placement of the solar panels along the east side of the property. With that east side being residential, there is a 50-foot setback requirement. The solar panels in the 50-foot setback are being removed to meet requirements. The next recommendation is to allow the panel to extend to face the curb, so that the drip will hit the curb and grass instead of the parking lot. The supports for the panels would still be outside the setback requirements.

Stewart questioned if it was only the island units that would be considered to be removed.

Director Strange explained that the extents of the removed panels are indicated on the last drawing in the packet.

Director Strange discussed some landscape items.

Chair McNiff stated there are a lot of contingencies that she would have preferred to have seen incorporated into the stamped plans.

Jason Raleigh from AR Engineering spoke about the landscape. He stated that there are some labeled shrubs that need new labels, so the shrub will meet the requirements. Some of the trees by the residential area will be replaced with evergreens. The calipers of the trees will be changed as required. The size of the bushes will be changed to give the height at planting, and a final plant count will be given.

Fitzgerald had questions about the solar panels. He questioned the resiliency of the panels. Are they tested for hail and tornado-like hard impacts directly on the top of them? He asked if there are any hazardous materials inside the panels.

Joey Tatar from Solar Mounts stated that there is hail testing that they do in New Mexico. He stated that, normally, when a break happens during the installation process, it doesn't really happen when it's already installed. It would have to be a bowling ball dropped on it from quite high to actually break it. The panels crack through instead of just shattering and falling to the ground.

Chair McNiff questioned the elevations of the solar panels.

Joey Tatar from Solar Mounts discussed that their company builds everything to a 14-foot height minimum. He also discussed snow removal. Since the panels are tilted to the outer edge, there will be no problem with snow removal. The posts are also on the back edges, so there won't be any obstructions to the plow trucks.

Jason Raleigh from AR Engineering stated that a plow company can haul snow off site if needed.

Chair McNiff stated the lighting was an issue discussed at the last meeting, and it looks like you're working on the lighting for those areas where you can't have solar panels.

Jason Raleigh stated that they provided a photometric plan. We have been working with the city and city attorney to navigate through some of those setbacks that go between the solar section and the accessory building section. Where solar panels are being eliminated, the ordinance for minimizing and maintaining the downward directional lighting and minimal throw will be met.

Chair McNiff asked if a contingent plan would be needed?

Director Strange recommended making it a staff review to require their approach be similar to the front. We want a similar type of lighting across the property to have a consistent look and feel throughout.

Chair McNiff agreed.

Director Strange discussed the storm water plan. She stated that one of the questions that came up at the meeting was that the water at the south end of the lot was making its way all the way to the back retention area. The fall of the piping from the front to the back gets back to the retention area.

Jason Raleigh spoke about storm water management. He stated that they have been working with the city and Spicer Group on how to maintain and design that system. He stated that all the piping is going around from front to the back, and everything is going to be a little bit deeper. The system back there is going to act as a storage area, and then as that system fills up it will start to slowly release.
Spicer Group review should be completed next week and there will need to be some contingencies on this bigger project. We'll make sure there aren't any loose ends from zoning, setbacks, building, and those items. The final details will be completed after Planning Commission approval, otherwise a huge amount of money would be spent redesigning if there were changes.

Stewart wants to make sure Marguerite feels good with the plan. The maintenance of the system has been clear.

Jason Raleigh stated that an agreement with the City would be confirmed with Marguerite for maintenance requirements. Accessible maintenance will make cleaning any sediment from the Isolator row easier. Good soils are on site. We did soil and geotechnical work to verify it.

Chair McNiff commented that the design seems appropriate, but we have no control over MDOT.

Savindor Singh commented that there has been communication with MDOT, a traffic impact assessment was completed and made an initial submittal probably 45 days ago. They came back with some minor comments that are being reviewed.

Jason Raleigh stated that one of the items is the width of the drives. So, the required width will also take care of the Fire Department concerns at the entry. The fire hydrant will be removed from the drawings.

Director Strange stated that the Fire Department doesn't like yard hydrants on private property and both the Fire Department and Water Department confirmed that they prefer to use the hydrants in the right of way. The existing hydrants will work with hose lengths. This was sorted out by the two departments in the last two days, after the packet was completed for consideration.

The Fire Department Connection on the building fitting must meet the City's requirements.

Chair McNiff commented that the Fire Department coordination with the solar panels will need to be a contingency item, and the connection at the FDC will need to be a contingency item.

Jason Raleigh stated that lot coverage meets requirements for all the solar panels. If any are eliminated for fire department coordination, it will just make the lot coverage numbers better for zoning.

Director Strange stated that the utilities coordination contingency should include electrical utility coordination. Just like we are requiring a revised site plan for us to review prior to moving into Construction Documents or submitting for building permits, we would request that they come to us to discuss the electrical utility coordination to confirm we don't have any long lead-time items that the City would need to purchase early in the process.

Jason Raleigh stated that the engineers are working through panel sizing, and they will feed info to Kevin so whatever transformer is needed is available and can be ordered. From a construction standpoint, I think we have time because we don't need electricity on day one.

Director Strange commented that we could call it a desktop review for electrical. They are already doing it on wastewater and water utilities, which are more important to get done for the Planning Commission. We just want to communicate with the design team prior to them getting Construction Documents completed.

Stewart commented that he appreciated that the City is looking at it from this perspective. There are no footcandles noted on the photometric on the west side of the building where there are exits. We need this side of the building to be safe.

Christopher Miller from CPM Construction stated that emergency safety lighting will be pronounced at the doors and will meet minimum light requirements.

Stewart commented that he wasn't sure what the best practice was, but there is no sidewalk connecting the sidewalk along the street to the building. So, guests at the hotel wanting to go to Applebee's or McDonald's have to walk in the driveway, then onto the sidewalk. Or to go get ice cream. Maybe try to stay out of the driveways and connect along the west line in the west parking lot.

Jason Raleigh commented that he didn't see an issue with adding that from a walkability perspective, it's great.

Chair McNiff proposed a friendly amendment to include a contingency for:

- The landscape items including the evergreen trees in lieu of deciduous
- Revise the caliper of the trees from two feet to two-and-a-half feet.
- Review and comply with the zoning ordinance as it relates to the shrub sizes at time of planting

- Work with the Architectural team to provide necessary lighting in the area along the east parking lot where the solar panel system was removed adjacent to the apartment building.
- The lighting in the (removed solar panel) location will comply with the requirements that are laid out in the zoning ordinance.
- There will be final coordination and approval of the water and wastewater utility connection plans with the city and the Spicer Group.
- Approval of the final storm as well as the sanitary services final connection details.
- Final coordination between the Fire Department truck requirements and the solar panels locations.
- Final approval by the fire department regarding the fire hydrant location.
- A desktop review with the City regarding the electrical utility coordination.
- Approval is subject to MDOT approval for the revisions to the access drive.
- Confirmation of the column locations for the solar panels is required to stay beyond the setback. Panels can be in the setback but not beyond the back of the associated curb.
- Revised drawings shall be submitted to staff and a review shall confirm the resolution of the contingency items.

**Moved** by Tim Fitzgerald, supported by Aron Hodo to amend the motion and approve the site plan for 1154 W Michigan Ave contingent upon:

- The landscape items including the evergreen trees in lieu of deciduous
- Revise the caliper of the trees from two feet to two-and-a-half feet.
- Review and comply with the zoning ordinance as it relates to the shrub sizes at time of planting
- Work with the Architectural team to provide necessary lighting in the area along the east parking lot where the solar panel system was removed adjacent to the apartment building.
- The lighting in the (removed solar panel) location will comply with the requirements that are laid out in the zoning ordinance.
- There will be final coordination and approval of the water and wastewater utility connection plans with the city and the Spicer Group.
- Approval of the final storm as well as the sanitary services final connection details.
- Final coordination between the Fire Department truck requirements and the solar panels locations.
- Final approval by the fire department regarding the fire hydrant location.
- A desktop review with the City regarding the electrical utility coordination.
- Approval is subject to MDOT approval for the revisions to the access drive.
- Confirmation of the column locations for the solar panels is required to stay beyond the setback. Panels can be in the setback but not beyond the back of the associated curb.
- Revised drawings shall be submitted to staff and a review shall confirm the resolution of the contingency items.

On a voice vote: **Motion Carried**

**8) PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS** Persons addressing the board are required to give their name and address for the record when called upon by the Chair. Members of the public shall be limited to speaking for a maximum of three (3) minutes. Comments should address NON-AGENDA ITEM topics. Public Hearing items should be addressed during the PUBLIC HEARING portion of the meeting agenda. Agenda items should be addressed during the PUBLIC COMMENT-AGENDA ITEMS portion of the meeting agenda.

none

**9) BOARD REPORTS**

Director Strange requested member availability for a joint work session with the City Council in the next two months. The meeting would be held on a Monday prior to a regularly scheduled City Council meeting.

Ian Stewart commented that there is a MACC meeting next Wednesday at the Public Services Building. Time is 6:30, to be confirmed. Tree planting is scheduled for Saturday, April 26th. Excited to be working with the City, MACC and others to enhance our tree canopy. There will be a second tree planting in the fall as well as Canoe the Kazoo and Crazy for the Kazoo.

Fitzgerald stated there are accidents where people are trying to exit the ball fields and cross 4 lanes of traffic to turn left.

Director Strange stated this driving condition is on our radar. Chief Lankard presented an assessment of intersections in town based on incidents and their perspective of hazards. There were a couple of uncontrolled intersections, like a T intersection, where there was nothing to give direction. I know they specifically talked about that turn coming out of the ball field as trying to make that right turn only. I know the sign is not up yet. Maybe they are waiting for spring. But I know that it is on the radar.

McNiff addressed the public: Comments are appreciated, but the scope of our work is limited to looking at a site plan to determine if the use is compliant with the zoning district it's in. That all the building, code regulations, the setbacks, the landscaping, all of that is in accordance with our ordinance. We don't have any control over what is being built other than to make sure it conforms to the ordinance. That's our scope. We are not allowed to exceed it.

Director Strange recommended adjourning.

McNiff stated that additional questions could be fielded after the meeting and called for adjournment.

**10) ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Brandie Cary
Deputy Clerk