

Present: Chairperson Jensen; Vice-Chair Ostrowski; Members: Abboud, Borowski, Freedman, Wayne and Westerlund

Absent: Stempien

Also Present: Village Manager, Wilson
Planning consultant, Brad Strader
Council Liaison, Oen

Chairperson Jensen called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Village of Beverly Hills municipal building at 18500 W. Thirteen Mile Road.

APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Borowski, second by Westerlund, to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion passed (7 – 0).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

APPROVE MINUTES OF A REGULAR PLANNING BOARD MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 27, 2010

Motion by Westerlund, second by Ostrowski, that the minutes of a regular Planning Board meeting held on October 27, 2010 be approved as submitted.

Motion passed (7 – 0).

REVIEW AND DISCUSS THE SOUTHFIELD ROAD CORRIDOR

Jensen reviewed that the Planning Board was working on a visual preference on which to base design ideas for the Southfield Road corridor. At the October meeting, Stempien displayed images of commercial and residential design schemes that he thought might incorporate the character of Beverly Hills. Jensen said that former member Doug Prew suggested that Board members take a look at a new building on Woodward Avenue and Long Lake Road. Jensen displayed a few pictures he took of the building located on the former Fox & Hounds property.

Board members commented on the residential aspects of the building, the scale, quality of materials, and parking. It is a two story building with retail on the first floor and offices on the second floor. It was suggested that this structure makes sense for Bloomfield Hills but it was not what the Board envisioned for Beverly Hills. Jensen thought that the Beverly Hills building design should be more forward thinking; he referred to the friendly architecture of the Village of Rochester Hills shopping center. Jensen related that urban planner Bob Gibbs is ready to do more on the corridor plan once the Planning Board provides him with image references.

Strader interjected that this is where the Planning Board can influence redevelopment. When businesses hit their maturity, there can be redevelopment even in a poor economy. It would help developers if the Village had clear design elements in writing that illustrate what they are looking for on the Southfield Road corridor. With regard to parking, the Gibbs plan assumes

some shared parking agreements to maximize efficiency. This is not easy to accomplish. The Village may need to get involved to assure that agreements are negotiated and that they are solid.

Westerlund said that the Village needs to decide what type of design it wants to promote for the redevelopment of the Southfield Road corridor. He did an online search of images depicting urban developments that he liked and disliked. Westerlund presented a slide show consisting of pictures of a number of architectural design ideas. Members commented on various architectural design elements and discussed what aspects they thought were interesting and relevant for the Village. There were several development design ideas that particularly appealed to Board members.

Viewing the developments led to a discussion of traffic and parking. One of the difficulties with the Southfield Road corridor is that it is a one-sided development with a major road in front of it. Westerlund will send members a link to a Natural Resources Defense Council website on smart growth concepts that presents schemes to show how an area can change through development over a period of time.

Strader presented a portion of an LSL PowerPoint presentation on Complete Streets. He talked about what Complete Streets are, what Beverly Hills can do, and how the concept could apply to the Southfield Road corridor. Complete Streets are roadways designed to operate to enable safe, attractive and comfortable access and travel for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and public transport users. It also encompasses safe roadway crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists. Beverly Hills has an interconnected system of roadways. There has been controversy about a complete sidewalk and pathway system, but there is good sidewalk connectivity in parts of the Village.

Act 51 now has a mandate for Complete Streets. If a community has a Complete Streets ordinance or policy, MDOT has to work with a community to look at different modes of travel. Federal and State funding will encourage communities to consider pedestrians and bicyclists. There are also Act 33 Planning revisions that will require communities to incorporate Complete Streets non-motorized elements as part of their master plans.

After viewing images of the type of architectural design that interests the Board, planning consultant Brad Strader said he would come back at a future meeting with a preview of what can be done on a one-sided commercial area. If an agreement is reached on design, the Board can look at massing models and work out the street plan and parking lot placement; a three dimensional plan can be prepared to show property owners and developers. The idea is to pull the elements of the corridor together so that there is a plan in place if a developer wants to redevelop property.

Jensen said that this might be a good time to visualize the area in terms of massing. Strader suggested that, while the Planning Board focuses on design elements, LSL could start working on the massing model and present a couple of alternatives at an upcoming meeting.

Freedman stated that she is a proponent of the Southfield Corridor plan, but she is not a proponent of Complete Streets. Beverly Hills has experienced a lot of dissent on the sidewalk

issue. She thought that pairing the Complete Streets idea with the Southfield Road corridor development would generate mistrust and discourage support. Jensen concurred that the Planning Board should maintain its focus on a redevelopment plan without veering off on a track that would result in unwanted controversy. Strader agreed that accommodating bikes is something that can be done in a less controversial way. Ostrowski remarked that the element of walkability is common in all of the examples of urban centers that were exhibited.

Westerlund drew a sketch on the board of a possible roadway plan. He proposed reducing the five lanes on Southfield Road down to three lanes of travel with a curbed island to separate the bike lane, which then goes up onto the sidewalk. There would be only one or two entrances into the development.

There followed discussion on the vehicle count for that portion of Southfield Road in Beverly Hills. Strader suggested that three lanes would work if there were 20,000 vehicles per day or less. Wilson was concerned about the County standpoint because their intent for Southfield Road is through traffic. Taking the volume on Southfield Road down to three lanes would probably result in traffic congestion. He questioned the possibility of setting up a slip road akin to Woodward splitting into Old Woodward so people can take the cutoff at that point. Ostrowski suggested that reducing the number of lanes has a likelihood of reducing the volume because motorists may seek an alternate route.

Westerlund related that the traffic count in 2006 was 23,000 at 13 and Southfield Roads. Traffic on northbound and southbound Southfield Road between 13 and 14 Mile Roads was 14,000-15,000 in a 24 hour count. Motorists who reach 14 Mile Road have to make a decision to continue to Birmingham on a two-lane road or turn right on a three-lane road towards Woodward. People also make a destination decision on 13 Mile Road. Westerlund commented that the section of Southfield Road in Beverly Hills is a connector road. He thought that Oakland County may be open to discussion if Beverly Hills presented ideas or a solution and asked for input.

Westerlund proposed Southfield Road as a roadway with two lanes going north and one lane coming south out of Birmingham, where traffic is coming from one lane. He noted that traffic turning onto Southfield Road from Fourteen Mile Road is also coming from one lane. Strader suggested looking at hourly traffic counts to see if Southfield Road could be modeled to work with two lanes north and one lane south. Wilson added that it might be feasible and functional if a slip road could connect traffic roughly from Beverly Road to 13 Mile Road.

Strader will work with Wilson and obtain the most recent directional counts. Strader said that he would come back to the Planning Board with rough schematics with either a cross section or plain view of a couple different ways the road could work and what the consequences might be.

PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Abboud suggested that the Planning Board was ready for informal public involvement on the Southfield Road corridor plan. He thought that the Village needed those tenants and business owners involved sooner rather than later in order to make the plan work.

It was Freedman's opinion that the Planning Board should do more groundwork before engaging the public. Today's meeting helped advance some good ideas. Jensen concurred that the Board explored new possibilities for Southfield Road tonight. Members need to discuss the next steps and what is feasible for the roadway, massing models, and design ideas before talking to the public.

Strader suggested that the Planning Board should not get too far down the road before involving the public, but it should get to the point where it has some answers to issues that will be raised. He thought that there could be a workshop in early 2011 with the public and property owners.

Borowski added that the new ideas should be scrutinized with any downsides identified and examined. Ostrowski said that the corridor plan should be a well defined item at the time the Planning Board has its annual joint meeting with Council in February. That meeting could result in constructive dialog.

Jensen proposed that the Planning Board, planning consultants and Wilson continue discussing the Southfield Road Corridor plan at the January meeting and finalize elements of the plan in order to present ideas to Council at the joint meeting in February. It may be time to talk to the public in March.

ADMINISTRATION COMMENTS

There will be a first announcement of a vacancy on the Planning Board at the Tuesday, November 16 Council meeting due to Mr. Prew's election to the Village Council. The second announcement will occur at the first Council meeting in December.

Wilson mentioned a couple of cities near his property in Algonac that have the same one-sided downtown issue, but with a river on one side. He referred to the City of St. Clair and possibly Lexington and Harbor Beach. Wilson will try to take photographs that will show similarities and exhibit how those cities developed a one-sided downtown.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

Motion by Westerlund, second by Borowski, to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 p.m.

Motion passed (7 – 0).

David Jensen, Chair
Planning Board

Ellen E. Marshall
Village Clerk

Susan Bernard
Recording Secretary