

CITY OF CHEBOYGAN PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting April 19, 2021

Present: All Members Absent: None Admin: Eustice

Meeting called to order at 7:01 p.m. Horntvedt made a motion to approve the minutes of March 15, seconded by Kopernik. Granger commented that in paragraph 2 line 7 the word “and” needed to be “an”. Minutes unanimously accepted as corrected.

Under old business the proposal of a Social District was introduced. Bryan Groff of the Cheboygan Brewing company read the introduction of his proposal. Granger pointed out that the commissioners had the proposal and had already read it. Groff explained that Petoskey has a social district, and it has been successful.

Much discussion regarding people walking around with open alcoholic beverages, crossing state roads, going to family parks, etc. One big concern was with trash being generated.

Horntvedt questioned the hours suggested for the social district, Groff replied Noon to Nine. Groff further explained that containers could not be brought into other establishments. The intent is to allow people to pick up a food carry out, pick up a beverage carry out and be able to go somewhere in the social district to eat and drink. Some proposed locations in the social district are Washington Park and Festival Square. Proposed district boundaries are in the proposal. Kronberg questioned whether it was being proposed to close Main Street. Groff replied no. O’Brien stated that Main Street or Highway 27 is a State jurisdiction.

Rogers questioned whether the social district was necessary to close Pine Street. Groff said it was not, they could split the street in ½. Rogers stated that a social district may be a tough sell in the community. O’Brien stated that Traverse City and some others he spoke with operate with a “Cafe Permit”, they changed the flow of traffic and have done other creative things.

Horntvedt questioned if a social district would be temporary or permanent. Groff stated it would be permanent. Horntvedt stated that with the current 50% capacity limit in bars and restaurants it was going to get more difficult as summer approaches for businesses to make money; he supports the idea. Kronberg supports but stated a social district needs to be kept democratic, needs to benefit all businesses. Horntvedt stated the proposed district basically followed the imprint of the DDA district. Khan-King stated that the proposed boundaries do not have to be the boundaries adopted by council, they could adjust. O’Brien agreed that the council would have to clarify district.

Kopernik thanked Bryan for the proposal but stated he does not envision people walking around with drinks. He stated that Petoskey and Traverse City are different from Cheboygan and that Cheboygan is NOT ready. Groff was questioned on whether Chief Jones had been consulted. Hornvedt stated he likes the idea of the freedom of walking the streets with a beer. Khan-King stated it was not feasible to request Groff to discuss with Chief Jones or gather more information, the Planning Commission is the first step.

Granger pointed to page 3 of the proposal where it states that the responsibility of cleaning and maintaining the social district falls on the city. Granger does not feel that the social district would benefit all businesses, it would only benefit businesses that sell alcohol. He also pointed to page 5 that lists all the city would be responsible for. He stated the city would have to hire additional personnel to clean the social district. Khan-King pointed out that any business could be revoked from the social district if they were not being responsible. O’Brien stated that people use parks now and leave trash, city must clean.

Horntvedt stated closing Pine street for 90 days should be tried. Kopernik stated why not shut any street then. Granger stated that the commission was looking at the proposed social district and not Pine Street closure. Horntvedt stated we need to do anything we can to help the local businesses. Need to act as a team. Kronberg thinks DDA should be driving force for social district. Kopernik disagrees, planning commission represents all residents, DDA just represents businesses. Granger stated DDA cannot write ordinance.

Kopernik questioned Groff whether he had discussed proposal with other businesses. Other than Hive North, reply was he has not discussed with others. O'Brien stated that he has discussed with several community members and 99% are in favor of doing whatever it takes to help businesses. Kronberg stated that buy in is needed from DDA. Khan-King stated she was on the DDA and supports a social district. Kronberg feels there is not enough information for Planning Commission to make recommendation. Discussion on what a closed container was. Khan-King confirmed purchased beverage was required to have a lid.

Kopernik questioned whether we were looking to make a recommendation to council. Groff indicated that he was presenting the proposal to DDA on May 4 to get their support. Horntvedt suggested Groff go to other businesses seeking support. Khan-King stated people ask every day if Pine street is going to close. Kopernik again stated his concerns about people walking around with drinks. Kronberg stated it may be better to discuss closing Pine rather than discuss social district. Granger suggested the social district get set aside.

Rogers stated concern over how long the process could take if Planning Commission sets aside... what is the problem with suggesting council move forward. The issue would come back to the Planning Commission to draft an ordinance IF council agrees to move forward.

O'Brien made a motion to recommend that council move forward with the proposal of a social district and make a recommendation back to Planning Commission to draft an ordinance. Motion seconded by Rogers. Granger commented the council bypassed Planning Commission with marijuana ordinance. Kopernik stated the Governor wrote an ordinance but it was a framework. Roll call vote on motion: O'Brien yes, Granger yes, Khan-King yes, Kopernik no, Rogers yes, Kronberg yes, Horntvedt yes. Motion carried.

Granger stated it was now time to discuss the Pine Street temporary closure and asked if commissioners had received the letter in opposition from the library board. O'Brien stated that the businesses requesting the temporary closure had sustained a hardship due to COVID and the city needs to do whatever it can to help. He also stated that Pine street was not the only route to the library. O'Brien questioned Groff why they could not use their parking lot. Groff responded that parking was already an issue and may become a larger issue with a nearby building being recently sold.

Rogers is in favor of recommending temporary closure. Kopernick restated his position of being in opposition to closing a public street for 3 months. His concern is that this closure would benefit only 2 businesses, would not be equitable to others. Horntvedt reminded the commission that Pine street on the other side of Main street had been completely given away by the city to then business owners that did not follow through with their proposals. City gave away beautiful waterfront property where people used to fish and enjoy the water. He stated if the city can just give away the property why can't they try closing the road for 90 days to see if it works. O'Brien said the city would benefit from temporary closure.

Horntvedt made a motion to recommend to council to close Pine street from the Friday of Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day with the understanding that it is properly barricaded in accordance with public safety and cleanliness standards are upheld by businessowners.2nd by O'Brien. Discussion follows.

Kopernick asked if the street would still be a thoroughfare for pedestrian access. Khan-King explained that under MLCC rules it could not be a thoroughfare because requirements demand a complete enclosure, with only access from the buildings. Khan-King further stated that the stretch of Pine street is unique in that there are no residences there.

Kronberg commented on what a gem the library is, their board should not be disregarded. Pine street is the most direct access to the library. Khan-King stated library users will go to the library regardless of Pine being closed. Kopernick feels Pine street is important, he is against 3 month closure. Granger stated that should closure be approved by council, it would only be this year. Eustice suggests moving directional sign to library currently at Pine to Locust. Much discussion on pros and cons of closing street and ways to get to library.

After discussion, Granger called for vote, all in favor say yes, all against no. Khan-King abstained, Kopernick voted no, 5 yes votes, motion carries.

Rogers informed the board of the resiliency planning series offered by MSU extension stated it was quite informative and timely. She is to send link to the commission. Kronberg complimented Eustice and his staff for handling issues so efficiently throughout the pandemic. O'Brien wondered if zoning/planning applicants were receiving enough information from city. Granger stated the ordinance spells out exactly what is required and it is available online. Horntvedt complimented Rogers on recent Tribune article about Planning Commission. Kopernick complimented Groff on the professionalism of his proposal. Horntvedt questioned when the hearing was regarding Lavigne alley and street vacation. Eustice stated the hearing was the previous Tuesday and council voted to vacate the alley. Applicant withdrew request for street vacation.

Eustice stated he recommended Groff come to Planning Commission prior to DDA because they represent the entire city. DDA should be in favor of a social district. Khan-King stated DDA is working on having recycling receptacles around DDA district.

Eustice explained that a preliminary site plan had been distributed. It is preliminary as it is not complete. The marijuana processing facility that had been proposed by the History Center is now being proposed at a new location that is zoned light industrial. The biggest issue with the site plan is stormwater. He further stated that there may be 3 grow facilities in the industrial park, issues there are with electricity. New city manager Dan Sabolsky will likely start June 1. He is coming from West Yellowstone, Montana. Eustice stated that Dan is professionally qualified for the position.

Mary Ann Beard, Cheboygan Brewery employee stated she had attended a city council meeting in high school (several years ago). She said it was interesting to see the conversation that takes place at the planning commission and wants to learn more. Bryan Groff thanked the commission for their consideration and moving forward.

Kopernick motioned to adjourn the meeting, 2nd by Khan-King, motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda J. Rogers, Secretary
City of Cheboygan Planning Commission