

THE CITY OF HURON, OHIO
Proceedings of the Huron City Council
Work Session of Tuesday, November 28, 2023 at 5:30pm

Call to Order

The Mayor called the Huron City Council work session to order at 5:30pm.

Roll Call

The Mayor directed the Clerk to call the roll for the meeting. The following members of Council answered present: **William Biddlecombe, Sam Artino, Mark Claus, Monty Tapp, Joe Dike, Matt Grieves and Joel Hagy.**

New Business

Boards and Commissions Eligibility Discussion

Mayor Tapp said that he wanted to get Council's thoughts on possibly opening up committees to not only City residents, but also to Township residents should they choose to apply.

Mr. Lasko said this might be a very quick conversation, but they thought they would at least ask the question to Council. We can then decide whether it's a non-starter or whether there's additional conversations and deeper sessions they should have moving forward. They wanted to at least inquire to help with the applicant pool for certain boards and commission, whether they should cast a little bit wider net beyond the City itself and minimally look to include the Township, which would add roughly another 4,000 potential application and people to serve on boards and commissions. There are three Chartered boards and commission that this would not apply to – the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Planning Commission and the Charter Review Commission – which require, by Charter, residency within the City. Without Charter amendments, those remain off-limits.

This would be for boards such as HJRD, Utilities Committee, Safety Committee and a few of the more ancillary committees. The administration doesn't have an opinion on this matter, but before they look at alternative ways and deeper ways of broadening the applicant pool, they at least wanted to see if they should lighten up restrictions from a residency requirement. If they decide to proceed and it's worth exploring, they will have some more detailed work sessions about what committees this could apply to and whether they want to explore any alternatives from a member standpoint.

Mr. Hagy said he doesn't see anything inherently wrong with it himself, but did they think through or talk through that if a person is a resident, they would get preference over somebody who is not. Mr. Lasko answered that they discuss that if they did this with certain boards and commission, it should explicitly say that there should be priority or preference for residents. Mayor Tapp brought this up because we are asking a lot of the citizens that serve on these boards and commissions – it's their time, and it's tough trying to find somebody. It does open up the pool, and again, it's just a conversation. It's something he thought would spread this out a little bit and maybe gives them access to more people that should apply or would apply.

Mr. Artino said he doesn't have a problem. They have all talked about it for a few years now that they really rely a lot on the Township – not just the Township government, but the input from the people in the Township. We are not talking about going too far away. He thinks they talk about partnering with them. It's too bad those 3 chartered committees/commissions are excluded. Our people volunteer for

these things, and he remembers there have been times when they don't have enough people to fill these committees. We already have Township members on the HJRD. He agrees with Mr. Hagy that a resident would have the first option. He thinks it would be helpful.

Mr. Claus asked Mr. Schrader if they would have to pass legislation, or will each individual committee have to pass some sort of internal rule change. Mr. Schrader answered that they would have to restructure it, but he will tell you that there is a fairly strong argument that the Charter contains references to the BZA and the Planning Commission, as well as the Board of Trustees of the Police & Fire Relief and Pension Funds, which do not exist anymore. If this went forward, he thinks this would be something they would, at a minimum, they would do by an ordinance to expand the scope to include Township residents if that was decided.

Mr. Claus added that some of the discussion with the Mayor and staff was that there was some expertise in some of these committees that would be valuable for us that we are not able to tap into. That's one of the reasons why they thought this could be helpful.

Mr. Biddlecombe said he really has no issue with it. We already have the HJRD, the joint fire district, and a joint school district. Everyone who is a resident of the City is also a resident of the Township, so they should look at this as this one joint community. If we have good candidates come out of the Township, it's only going to make these committees better.

Mr. Lasko said if there is at least general consensus to at least explore it, he thinks they would minimally want to bring back to Council an exhaustive list of all of the boards and committees this would apply to, and they will make sure they work with Mr. Schrader to properly delineate them and some potential language on what a catch-all ordinance would look like. Yes, this does broaden the applicant pool, but he thinks there is some thought that a lot of the people on boards and commissions are professionals in their daily lives who he doesn't think are going to care whether they are a resident of Huron proper, or not. It's really, can we tap into their expertise? They are going to make prudent decisions because of their background. If this is something they bring back deeper information to Council as to who this would apply to and what draft language would look like, they are happy to do so. Mayor Tapp said that he believes there is a general consensus that some additional research is warranted. Mr. Biddlecombe agreed.

Main Street Corridor Plan Presentation

Mayor Tapp introduced OHM Advisors, who would be presenting the Main Street Corridor Plan. Mr. Lasko thanked OHM first and foremost for all of their efforts on what has been a somewhat long process, but an absolutely necessary process. It has been a tremendous lift for the residents, citizens, stakeholders and property owners that have touched this plan in some form or fashion. His guess between all of the work sessions, steering committees and surveys, they are probably close to 1,000 people that have in some sort or fashion touched this plan. There has been a lot of work to get them to this point. He wanted to stress that if this plan is ultimately adopted, every one of these projects or initiatives is going to have to come before this Council for approval from a funding standpoint, etc. Simply adopting the plan and the concept is a step, but there are going to be multiple safeguards and protections for the public to have opportunity to weigh in on each specific project as they are undertaken.

Mr. Engle thanked Council, the Planning Commission, the Steering Committee and most importantly, our residents. Our plans are only as good as our resident input and they hit a home run with that participation process. From an internal standpoint, they want to use this plan to update our policies from a development standpoint and really hit the ground running in reshaping our downtown. Downtown is the bread and butter of the community; it is our local commercial hub and they really want it to be the best it can be. Mr. Engle then turned the podium over to Mr. Arthur Schmidt with OHM Advisors.

Mr. Schmidt then went through OHM Advisors' PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is attached hereto as Exhibit "A." Questions from Council included:

Q: (Hagy) In Zone 1 you talked a few times about a shared use trail. Where is that?

A: (Schmidt) The shared use paths in Zone 1 would be to the north of Main Street. It's the greenish-blue line at the top to the north of the street. It would run parallel to the road. There was discussion on what made sense, whether it would be on that side of the street or the other side. The decision was made to go with that side because there was a little bit more room in terms of right-of-way and fitting everything in. There were discussions in both the vision and action plans, and it was always determined that it would be on that side of the street, which was confirmed by Mr. Engle. It make more sense based on orientation.

Q: (Hagy) In Zone 4, I just want to make sure, is that boardwalk continuing north and connecting?

A: (Schmidt) Yes, understanding that there have been many conversations between staff and the Steering Committee about its feasibility. We know it's feasible, but it's not cheap. There are other things that need to be investigated with it. Being a visioning effort and wanting to put the big statement of intentions out there, we felt it important to keep it in there and show that that is a long-term goal.

Q: (Artino) One thing I would like to say, I am glad to see we are putting a lot of energy into the east and west, as well. We are not just north and south, one street. I think our existing businesses in those areas will really appreciate this effort. The other thing is, as opportunities come up, we may have a business that wants to come into town, and we may be focused in on section versus the other, but as opportunities come up, I think that we have to be flexible enough to take advantage of those opportunities. My concern is parking. I know that you told us just a few weeks ago that the owner of the private parking lot by the hotel has submitted plans for condos there. Is there any movement there? That is going to take a lot of parking away from what we already have. That is something we may have to start looking at pretty quickly.

A: (Lasko) I would say we could looking at that two-fold. One is by municipally owned parking lots, but what I will mention with specific property owners by name, albeit these can change ... in Zone 1, we show significant new parking to be constructed on Huron Cement's property south of the tracks. There's maybe 10-20 staff parking spaces, but there is massively underutilized gravel to the east, and we have had very preliminary conversations with the Falbo family about doing something joint, whether it's something Huron Cement improves and the City leases it – some type of joint effort. I think from a combination of either municipally owned lots or shared parking uses – Sean Neer, who bought the properties across from Huntington Bank, has a decently sized parking lot in front of his properties. He has approached us about potentially doing something shared there. A lot of times, his needs are during the day, while the corridor's needs are at night and on weekends. I think there are a combination of ways... we know we need to address it, not

just in the number of spaces, but also accessibility and ease of access for people to find those spaces, as well. The thing I like is that not only do these projects have to come before Council, but we almost envision doing micro-designs for each zone, as well. A good example is we are out to RFQ on design and engineering services for Zone 1, where we are going to dive even more deeply. We just got a Coastal Management Assistance Grant (CMAG) to help us to design, in part, Zone 5. We are going to be able to get even more granular with each of these, moving forward. The point is well-taken and stated that we need to address that in each zone.

A: (Schmidt) Just to further delve into that, that was a discussion we had regarding parking. In general, was that idea of what are individual needs, day versus night, and how we can balance those two out. Secondly, making sure that we have this cohesive corridor helps in terms of the connectivity to where these parking spots or lots are located, and how to bring people up. I can recall in one of our first session, many of our team members walked the length of the corridor back and forth. It wasn't a bad walk, but you had to know where you going and know the direction you were heading. We felt pretty strongly that if we create that kind of cohesive streetscape, that would help in that regard. Thirdly, some of these other shared use paths, such as the Route 6 Greenway active transportation improvements, can also help in the parking matters where you have individuals who are a little bit more local who will decide not to drive their car to the main corridor and downtown. They may walk, they may take their bike, and that starts to open up opportunities for others who are coming in from a little bit further out.

Q: **(Biddlecombe) Not to kind of beat parking into the ground, but the top 2 things I hear about in regard to Zone 5, specifically the Showboat property, is keep the parking and make sure it's accessible for fishing. That's what they seem to be concerned about the most. When we think about that as part of Zone 5, we definitely want to focus on the whole parking aspect with that.**

A: (Lasko) There is a couple of specific things, although we got a lot of feedback, that have changed in the renditions of these. One of the things we heard very early on is I think there may have been a plan that showed the Showboat property becoming all green space. We heard pretty quickly that we need to keep parking, but there are ways to further activate some of the dead space on the east side of the property. We see in this plan that certainly shown and we will be able to solidify that with the CMAG process. I know the S-curve is just not worth the cost to straighten that out, so that stayed. We did show in an early plan opening up Shirley street back to vehicular access, which the City can't unilaterally do because they sold the property. He sat down with the church one evening a couple months ago and they were pretty adamant about it. We at least wanted to come to a compromise of opening that up to be more pedestrian-friendly. There is a sidewalk, but it feels very hidden and private. Could we at least open that up to almost be a pedestrian plaza, and not vehicular traffic. I think there was a lot of good feedback that informed some of the changes that have been made from a 1-1/2 to 1-1/4 to now.

A: (Schmidt) I think that's important as this plan moves forward toward the implementation stage. Matt talked about stages with Zone 1 and Zone 5 – all of this feedback within the report. We know the general direction and those individual studies will then go into the more granular detail. Actually designing these spaces allows you to reflect back on that and make changes as necessary. There are certain elements that shift along the way, so they wanted to try to create that flexibility.

A: (Engle) Fifteen minutes is our threshold when it comes to parking and walking someplace. As we get more granular, as Matt and Arthur have mentioned, we have levels of approval that need to happen.

Q: (Grievés) What's the timeframe, is there any sort of timeframe for Zone 1?

A: (Lasko) The good news is that a lot of times plans will get announced and then you will start your work. Not that we have been presumptuous with specifically what's going to be done, but we knew that we wanted to prioritize Zone 1 for a lot of reasons. One of the things at the forefront is that from a public infrastructure standpoint and aesthetic standpoint, it looks very different from the northern section, from a sidewalks and lighting standpoint. We have prioritized Zone 1 partly through our Action Plan adopted in 2021. We have already secured about \$360,000 from Erie County to go toward the infrastructure improvement. We have dedicated about \$250,000 of our American Rescue Plan funds for that project, as well, and we are out to RFQ (which he will give an update on tonight) to select the designer and engineer. Zone 1 will be designed in 2024 and constructed in 2025. This is a plan where once adopted, we are immediately into the first phase of the plan, at least from a public infrastructure standpoint. A lot of what we see requires some private investment, as well, which will come. It is important for the City to say we believe in this so much that we are going to be the first ones in from a commitment standpoint and project standpoint. I am really excited about the fact that we can jump in this fall in picking the designer for the first phase.

Q: (Grievés) Are the next Zones more like 10-15 years?

A: (Engle) There are a lot of logistics and hurdles, especially given the proposal for Route 6. Navigating that process with ODOT, it can take some time. From a timeline perspective, he is envisioning 10-15+ years.

A: (Lasko) Something could pop up next year from a funding standpoint or an opportunity standpoint where we say, this isn't our plan, but there is an opportunity right now, and we can jump on it. I think some of these are a little bit more grand in scale, but the important thing is it shows we have thought about it and it shows that we have engaged the community so that when we make funding applications or look for philanthropic support, we've got a plan in place, which is absolutely critical. I don't like to take things slowly, by any means, I don't like to be patient, but some of these are pretty big lifts from a cost standpoint and from a scale of project standpoint. 10 or 15 years would be great to do everything.

A: (Schmidt) From past projects that our firm has worked on, having these plans adopted and in place is hugely critical because, as Matt and Eric alluded to, when a funding opportunity comes you are often-times maybe 2 or 3 steps ahead of other communities where you have a statement of intentions and have a general idea of what you would like to do, and then you can start to secure that funding to investigate it further. Often times, there are funding sources that allow you to plan and design a little more and get into the more granular detail with it, whereas if you say, I have this idea, that application is not going to be as strong as a community like yours that can say we have thought about this and have some support for it. Now we want to take it to that next level. It definitely does put you in a better position moving forward.

Q: (Artino) This is a lot better than waiting for somebody else to come in and say, this is what we want to do. Planning is definitely the way to do it. I am glad that we are taking this approach.

A: (Schmidt) I think it also helps with the private development side of things. You are showing here, at least within the streetscape, this is our intention of what we want to do. This is our professional opinion from future land use of what we think makes sense based on the configuration we are proposing for the streetscape. Now you have something there so that if someone comes in and

proposes, you have another piece of the puzzle you can compare it to and see how it would interact and move forward from there.

Mayor Tapp thanked OHM Advisors for the presentation. He thinks we are on the right track. He is sure that Council can contact OHM directly if they have any other questions.

Mr. Schmidt thanked Council for their participation at all of the Council work sessions. That was incredibly valuable for them throughout the process.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Biddlecombe to adjourn the work session.

The Mayor asked if there were any questions on the motion. There being none, the Mayor directed the Clerk to call the roll on the motion. Members of Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Biddlecombe, Artino, Claus, Tapp, Dike, Grieves, Hagy (7)

NAYS: None (0)

There being a majority in favor of the motion, the Council work session of November 28, 2023 was adjourned at 6:30pm.

Adopted: _____

27 AUG 2024



Terri S. Welkener, Clerk of Council