

**Minutes of the Planning Commission  
Of the City of Portland**

Held on Wednesday, November 13, 2013 at 7:00 P.M.  
In Council Chambers at City Hall

Portland Planning Commission Members Present: Grapentien, Kmetz, Gorman, Swaney-Frederick, Sunstrum

Absent: Clement, Krause

Staff: City Manager Dempsey, City Clerk Miller, Code Officer Gensterblum

Guests: None

Chair Grapentien called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

City Manager Dempsey stated that Member Clement informed him she is out of town and Member Krause informed him that she was handling a family emergency and would not be able to attend tonight's meeting.

Motion by Kmetz, supported by Swaney-Frederick, to amend the Agenda to excuse Planning Commission Members Clement and Krause.

All in favor. Approved.

Motion by Kmetz, supported by Sunstrum, to approve the amended Agenda.

All in favor. Approved.

Motion by Kmetz, supported by Gorman, to approve the Minutes of the October 9, 2013 regular meeting as presented.

All in favor. Approved.

Under New Business, City Manager Dempsey presented information on the Old School Manor property at 306 Brush St. and the request to recommend to City Council that it be designated as a targeted revitalization area in the City of Portland. Several years after the property was converted into apartments both the owner and the bank walked away from it and Ionia County took over the property. The property has now been vacant for the past few years and Ionia County has put it in the Ionia County Lank Bank. The City has been diligently researching options to rehabilitate the property. Costs to demolish the building and mitigate the asbestos would be approximately \$350,000 to \$400,000.

The WODA Group, out of Ohio, has been developing a plan and working to secure funding to rehabilitate the property. They have previously completed a similar project in Durand called "The Sycamore House" targeted as senior housing. Their original plan for Old School Manor was intended for senior housing but it did not meet the requirements to secure funding. They are now looking at an affordable housing mixed residency use. In an effort to have the project looked upon favorably for funding, the WODA Group is asking the City to designate the property as a targeted revitalization area.

City Manager Dempsey further stated the property is grandfathered for this use. This is a great opportunity for both the developer and the City of Portland.

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Chair Grapentien commented that this is a great idea as the current state of the property at 306 Brush St. is of no use or help to the City of Portland.

There was discussion.

Member Sunstrum asked if the WODA Group has any experience with affordable housing and if the results would be affected by the property being developed as affordable housing instead of senior housing.

City Manager Dempsey stated the WODA Group has been focused primarily on senior housing on other developments as the tax credits have been more generous but he doesn't expect the quality of the project would be affected; there would only be different residents.

Member Gorman stated he sees no problem with the development of the property, but has some hesitancy with it being developed for affordable housing. He would want to ensure the property and residents were maintained well.

City Manager Dempsey noted the market is not there in terms of a different type of development for the property; others have been researched. If the property is not developed in the near future it may become beyond the point of repair.

There was continued discussion.

Motion by Swaney-Frederick, supported by Kmetz to recommend to the City Council to reclassify the property at 306 Brush St. as a targeted revitalization area.

Four in favor. One abstention. Approved.

Member Gorman stated that he does feel like the investment in the property is worth the risk but would like to see the property managed appropriately.

City Manager Dempsey stated he would send the article published in the MML publication, The Review, about The Sycamore House project in Durand, MI completed by the WODA Group.

City Manager Dempsey further stated that the Police and Code Departments do what they can to ensure the safety and protection of the City residents and noted the City also has to ensure housing for all segments of Portland's population.

Under Planning Commission Member Comments, Member Swaney-Frederick noted that Holidayfest will be held November 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> in Downtown Portland.

Motion by Kmetz, supported by Sunstrum, to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 P.M.

All in favor. Approved.

Respectfully submitted,

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John Kmetz, Secretary