

This Special Meeting of Council was called to order on Monday, October 4, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. by Jon Hannan, Council President. Mrs. Field gave an invocation and Mr. Kocisko led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: Justin Ring, Chuck Kocisko, Jon Hannan, Mike Lampa, Jennifer Wagner, Julie Field

ABSENT: Anthony Lombardo [joined at 6:09 p.m.]

ALSO PRESENT: John Cieszkowski, Planning Director
Patrick O'Malia, Economic Development Director
Julian Curtis, City Architecture Consultant
Alex Pesta, City Architecture Consultant
Mark Majewski, Northstar Planning & Design
Caroline Kremer, Clerk of Council

MOTION: TO EXCUSE MR. LOMBARDO WHO WAS RUNNING LATE.

Moved by Mr. Lampa, seconded by Mrs. Field. Upon voice vote, **motion carried.**

Special Business

Work Session to Review and Consider the Core Concept Plan as Recommended by the Planning Commission

Mr. Cieszkowski thanked Council for starting this meeting early at 6 p.m. He explained that the Core Concept Plan before Council tonight was the culmination of 15 months of work between the Core Concept Working Committee (three members of the Planning Commission, three members of Council, Mr. Cieszkowski, and Mr. O'Malia with some assistance from Mr. Czekaj and Mayor Broska). The Core Concept Working Committee made a recommendation on May 19, 2021 to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission reviewed the plan and made a recommendation to City Council on August 10, 2021. The meeting tonight was for City Council to discuss the plan prior to making a motion for adoption at an upcoming Regular Council Meeting. The Planning Commission did a similar process with a work session, which went well.

Mr. Cieszkowski said the primary reason for undertaking the creation of the Core Concept Plan was to help to implement several of the goals, objectives and strategies noted in the City's Comprehensive Master Plan; to create a core area for the City. Zoning was not included as a part of what was presented to Council. Per the Charter, anything that was referred from the Planning Commission to City Council had to be acted on within 120 days for first reading, and final reading within 120 days from that. He said they had not referred any zoning changes from the Planning Commission to City Council so as to not start that 120 days too early. He said it had been considered that once this plan was adopted, then the Planning Commission could review the zoning, undertake a public education and information campaign so the voters would know what they would be asked to vote upon prior to Council considering the zoning element of this plan. The zoning element of this was the piece that triggered the vote of the public, so the administration wanted to make sure the citizenry was education on the topic prior to it being on the ballot.

Mr. Cieszkowski asked Council to remember that this was a concept plan; it was a long range plan, similar to the Master Plan, therefore it was a living, breathing document that was subject to change, so Council should not see anything in it as set in stone as to location or layout, etc. It was to be used for discussion and to be used to help to market the potential for the property and was subject to change.

Mr. Pesta and Mr. Curtis from City Architecture, the prime consultants, partnered with Mr. Majewski from Northstar Planning. Mr. Majewski focused on the zoning side of things and

would return and be involved with the Planning Commission when they worked to make a recommendation to City Council for the zoning.

Mr. Curtis introduced himself and thanked Mr. Cieszkowski, Mr. O'Malia and the Council Members for their work on this project. He said they had worked on this project since February 2020 (15 months) with delays and challenges due to COVID-19. [Mr. Lombardo joined the meeting at 6:09 p.m.]

Mr. Curtis said he and Mr. Pesta worked to unpack what Streetsboro wanted from City Architecture and from this process. Mr. Cieszkowski had outlined it as establishing a central core area in town that was highly visible and active and represented the City's positive identity, demonstrated community cohesion, and was an economic driver for the community. Right now that was missing; there was no "downtown" or "core." Through this process the Committee shaped what that might look like and what might be included in that place, which was all guided by the Master Planning work that was previously done that teased out that this was a desire of this community.

Mr. Pesta said back in February 2020 they started by trying to understand some of the circulation patterns and some of the land use there and to start thinking about this area in a much different way. It was clear how it operated today with the major access of SR 43 and SR 14, but in the center of the Core District with Market Square Drive and Market Square Plaza it felt a little like a hole in a donut. They wanted to look at ways to open up opportunities. He noted this work relied on the group that had a vision, or the ability to shape a vision. Mr. Pesta said he would share what the plan was, but emphasized that "this is not what is going to get built here." What would be shown was not exactly what was going to happen, but without a vision like this communities did not plan, they reacted, which took away their ability to shape what the future of their city would be. He said this work was very thorough because they looked at every opportunity within that space and by doing this type of planning Streetsboro would have something to help guide decisions over time as opportunities revealed themselves. Over the last 15 months the Committee stayed committed which had been difficult through COVID-19. There were other communities City Architecture had worked with that slowed down or stopped similar projects during the last year.

Mr. Pesta said they looked at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. They compared this area/geography to other case studies regionally and nationally to see what was happening with other retail centers with this amount of frontage or connectivity. Shopping patterns and trends were changing, so things were explored to see what could be done with these areas to make sure it had the most positive impact on the community today and into the future because this would take time to implement. Mr. Pesta reviewed some of the 3-D models. He said they wanted to create a main street with an icon; they were very much in support of creating a downtown district with identifiable spaces and places. The design guidelines were developed to make sure that it became more of a Market Square main street district instead of all the asphalt and parking that was there today. It included rentable/leasable space and also active spaces like courtyards and alleyways to connect to outdoor gathering spaces to complement the retail or other activity happening there. He thought a similar case study that was most applicable to this district was the reimagined VanAken district in Shaker Heights, which was now more of a mix of residential, commercial, green space and new streets, and connectivity like the proposed Streetsboro district.

Mr. Pesta said as they reviewed the area to determine where there was value from a redevelopment standpoint and where it might make more sense to think of it as public spaces because the land would be challenging to develop or because it didn't have utility service, etc. they arrived at an amphitheater or public gathering space adjacent to Market Square Drive to take advantage of the topography of the site. He said this was an option as an additional feature to provide other opportunities and be a draw for people to come to the district. Another item

City Architecture was asked to study, slightly unrelated, was to consider what would happen with the public square, which was four quadrants that were very much disconnected because of SR 43 and SR 303/14. An idea was to think of each quadrant separate but related and think of them themed to the four seasons through landscaping and even some small programming. He said this was something that got support from the Core Concept Working Committee because it did not require a lot of investment or heavy programming to make this a usable space. It could be a gateway place to show off what Streetsboro was about and what Streetsboro was capable off from a public space perspective; it would be a win for the community. He said they had also wanted to be sure they were not creating competing green spaces and open spaces through the district; so this was more passive than active but a way to celebrate that intersection that has been a part of Streetsboro since day one.

Mr. Pesta said he was not a patient city planner and visions that took 20-30 years was too long. He wanted to see things happen much quicker. He felt a long-term plan was about 5 years and they tried to aim for actionable items that were within the first year with medium range items in 1-2 years, and 2-5 years was long term. He said they were focused on implementation and that had been part of this work since the beginning, so he was pleased that the administration was considering zoning along with this Core Concept Plan. He noted that the current zoning would not allow any of the proposed models to happen. He supported considering zoning code updates to promote and to accommodate the vision at the same time as very important. It would make it more difficult to attract a developer to build within this vision if the zoning was not accommodating and the developer had to get a lot of variances to make it happen.

Mr. Pesta said they had thought about how the potential buildings might support the walkable destination idea and help to define the areas. Without a series of design guidelines this plan would probably sit on a shelf and gather dust, so they wanted to provide the tools for City Council's review process to shape this plan. Within the Core Concept Plan document there were a series of related design guidelines with a goal/intent.

Mr. Pesta said the directive the Working Committee had given City Architecture in the beginning was to present something to make the area highly visible, active, a community core, with a positive identity, and to maximize the economic value and opportunity and they worked to get this with a series of new streets, formalized connections to create a hierarchy and a way to circulate through the space that was defined with places to park and places to build with intentional views as people move through the space. He summarized that this could be a singular place with an icon/a town center, but right now it did not feel that way, it currently felt like it was a series of places stitched together and hard to define. He said they really felt this could work and could be a partnership with the City, the private development community, and the current property owners. He commended the Working Committee for seeing the value of a planning process like this and sticking with it.

Mr. Hannan thanked Mr. Pesta and the rest of the Working Committee for their work and for this presentation/explanation. Mrs. Field said this was exciting and she was encouraged that they were expecting some things to happen within five years. She had lived in Streetsboro for 17 and felt the City was eager for a downtown area. She loved the vision presented. She wondered what was feasible regarding the ratio for residential/business/retail. Mr. O'Malia answered that an issue the City would continue to have with this, even if it were to implement the new Core Concept Zoning Overlay, was that the City did not have enough density currently allowed that would make a residential project cash flow for a developer; he thought it was about 12 units/acre which was too low to be financially feasible for a residential development.

Mrs. Field thought the new Core District would allow for higher density than zoning districts that already existed in town. Mr. Cieszkowski explained for Mrs. Field that there was a new district, the SC-Streetsboro Core District, was being created with an overlay option. The overlay would promote flexibility for large scale development, and the details of the zoning still needed to be

developed, but this proposed new district would replace the current B-Business District that was on this area. He clarified that it was not the Core Concept Plan itself that would trigger a vote of the electorate, it was the proposed map amendment and zoning text associated with that map amendment that would trigger the vote of the public. He didn't want to rush the zoning side of it from Planning Commission to City Council without Council having reviewed the plan first.

Mrs. Field wondered what the Core area would include. Mr. O'Malia said the new Core Concept Plan did not touch on residential density. He thought what might go into this area would depend on costs for construction, which, during the current pandemic with supply line and staffing issues, was incredibly expensive. He said they would need to figure out what made sense for Streetsboro. Streetsboro was currently "corporate town USA" with a lot of national big chain stores and needed to figure out how to build something to give Streetsboro what it wanted, which was some small locally owned businesses, and be able to deliver that product in such a way that the rent would be affordable for those types of businesses. That was not an easy question to answer.

Mrs. Field thought that if the residents were going to be asked to approve a change or allow a new district, they would want to have some indication of what would go into the area or more specifics on what it might look like. Mr. O'Malia commented that one of the things he liked about the way Market Square was currently structured was that the rents were appropriate for him to try to market the location to the smaller type businesses compared to locations right on SR 43 or SR 14 that were more costly to rent (so he felt Market Square had a unique kind of purpose and it was helpful to have a place in town that was a little depressed to keep the rents low). He said for the voters that would ask "what's coming?" he would say if they were happy with the current situation of Market Square, vote No; if they felt there were additional possibilities and that Streetsboro could do better, then vote Yes.

Mr. Cieszkowski linked the Core Concept Plan to the Comprehensive Master Plan. He said page 7.18 of the Comprehensive Plan outlined the elements of the Downtown District, which was essentially the Core Concept area. That mentioned the residential density not to exceed 12 dwelling units per acre. That was what the drafted zoning (not submitted to Council yet) complied with. He thought it was important to comply with the City's Comprehensive Plan pertaining to density, height, etc. When he started at Streetsboro and they started working on the first Comprehensive Plan, it listed a maximum of 6 dwelling units per acre which he and Todd Peetz felt that was no where near what a developer would consider, so they doubled it from 6 to 12 dwelling units per acre which seemed to be the most the Master Plan Review Commission would support. He said the Comprehensive Plan spoke to residential units above ground level retail or townhome type development, not single-family detached homes (like Meadow View). The Comprehensive Plan didn't want this Downtown District to just be residential (just apartment buildings), so it was to have mixed use vertically with the retail element.

Mr. Hannan commented that the Comprehensive Plan had a maximum of 12 dwelling units per acre, but Mr. O'Malia thought developers would prefer 16 dwelling units per acre, so Mr. Hannan thought this would be a good time to do that. He was concerned about putting the Core Concept Plan in place but get no interest because the density wasn't high enough. Mr. Cieszkowski clarified that the Core Concept Plan did not mentioned density, it would be the zoning that would list the specifics, so moving forward with this did not change anything relative to density. That's part of the reason the zoning had not been presented to Council yet. If the density was going to be increased, he recommended revising the Comprehensive Plan first, then follow that with the zoning, which should comply with the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Ring said the City would look at the specific zoning later, but today's meeting was to see if this was the direction that would be most beneficial for the area. The specifics would be handled at a later date. Mr. Ring thought the Core Concept Plan was great and had a great vision; he felt the residents wanted an area like that. He thought it would add to the City if it was done right.

He wanted to move forward and approve this and then create the zoning and give the design guidelines so the developers would have a concept to work with and not just do anything. He said today's work session was to see the vision, and then do the design guidelines and zoning to "map" what would go into that area; until all these parts were done nothing like this could happen. Maybe it wouldn't ever happen, maybe no one would ever come and develop it, but until Council put this Concept Plan into place none of these ideas could happen. Mr. Ring clarified that the voters would vote on the density change after the Zoning Code amendments were processed through Council. This Core Concept Plan was just for Council to say if this was the vision or direction the City wanted for the area. If the Core Concept Plan was accepted by Council, then Mr. Cieszkowski would follow through with the Planning Commission for the Zoning Code changes needed to accomplish this. And that would go forward to the voters. Mr. Cieszkowski added that the need for the voters' approval was the map amendment, i.e. the creation of the new zoning district and the associated zoning regulations. There would be no vote tonight; this plan would go to a future Council Meeting for a vote.

Although the Core Concept Plan Committee had talked about what might go in the zoning and what was to be kept out, Mr. Cieszkowski said the Zoning Code amendments had not been forwarded to City Council yet because the Charter required Council to act on any recommendations of the Planning Commission within 120 days, and they did not want to rush this process just to meet that 120 day requirement for the zoning element. The decisions and thoughts of the Core Concept Plan Committee could be presented later when City Council would review the Zoning Code amendments to be presented by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Lampa asked for Mr. Kocisko's input on this topic since he had been involved with City Council the longest. Mr. Kocisko gave some history. He said in the 1980s or 1990s there was some discussion of a downtown area and the rezoning it might require. He said there was another discussion after that too with some consultants brought in to talk about a new school, a new City Hall, etc. Mr. Kocisko liked that this discussion this time had separated the concept/vision from the specifics of the zoning which people tended to get mired in. He felt the City was on the right track with this, more so than the previous times.

Mr. Kocisko commented that although he was on Planning Commission and BZBA in the past, the layout of the businesses in Streetsboro's past was kind of haphazard especially in the early growth stages when there wasn't a whole lot in the City and the City officials were anxious to get businesses in town for the income tax. Things were not done the same way now.

There was a recommendation from the Planning Commission to recommend approval of the proposed Core Concept Plan but, there was no time constraint regarding this recommendation. The Council Members suggested this topic be discussed further at the next Service Committee Meeting to possibly move on to legislation at a future City Council Meeting.

Mr. Hannan asked what the next steps would be after City Council accepted the proposed Core Concept Plan. He had noticed that the Planning Department had budgeted for Public Education in 2022. Mr. Cieszkowski explained the public education would be to explain to the voters about the zoning which they would be voting on (not so much about the Core Concept Plan). Mr. Hannan understood the administration didn't want to rush this issue, but did they expect the potential Zoning Code changes to be on the November 2022 ballot? Mr. Cieszkowski said that was the current goal, which required Council action by early August to submit the issue to the Portage County Board of Elections. He said he would need to work on the schedule regarding public education for the residents after Council made their modifications (if any) and took an action to place the issue on the ballot (by August 2022). Mr. Lampa noted there could be different Council Members on Council next year after the November 2021 election of At-large Council Members that may not want to pursue this. Mr. Kocisko noted that even if a Council Member wasn't reelected in November, they could still voice their opinion on the issue at Citizens' Comments or the public forums. The administration was considering an open house

type education forum and City Architecture and Northstar Planning would be involved with these information sessions.

Mr. O'Malia wanted to clarify that approving this Core Concept Plan did not change anything on the ground now. It would not disrupt any of the current businesses in town. Even after the Zoning Code changes were made, nothing physical would immediately change. There was no developer lined up to build the vision that been under discussion.

Mr. Cieszkowski asked Mark Majewski, Northstar Planning & Design, if he had anything to add at this point. Mr. Majewski confirmed it was preferred to update the Comprehensive Plan before adopting Zoning Code changes regarding density. He suggested doing it as quickly as possible, maybe as a small area plan within the Comprehensive Plan. He said the City could do some research and propose an update/adjustment based on the research because the City had a good Comprehensive Plan process and it undergirded the zoning. The Zoning Code was the law and the Comprehensive Plan was the guidelines, but the Comprehensive Plan gave defensibility to the zoning. That's why Mr. Cieszkowski had suggested any Zoning Codes put in place be in line with the current Comprehensive Plan; and if the City wanted to vary the zoning, the City should revise the Comprehensive Plan first.

Mr. Ring wondered if it was necessary to make the changes in that sequence. Mr. Cieszkowski said any change to the Comprehensive Plan should be done based upon some research. He did not recommend just changing the density for a district in the Zoning Code, for example, arbitrarily, and then change the Comprehensive Plan to match. Although that could be done procedurally because the Comprehensive Plan was guidelines and not set in stone, doing it that way without the research and reasoning did not help the defensibility. Mr. Majewski added that the Comprehensive Plan provided some predictability for everybody. The community had gone through a long process to write the plan, to amend the plan, etc. and any changes should be done with respect to what's been done but recognize that things may be different now and updates may be needed; it didn't have to be a big deal to make the adjustment, but acknowledge that it was something different and give the reasons why the City felt the changes were needed at this time. He said the last update was in 2019 and a lot had changed in the last two years, so a small change with explanations was not unreasonable.

Mr. Lampa commented that he loved the idea of the seasonal quadrants at Town Square and thought it was a phenomenal idea that the residents would love.

Mr. Lombardo said he thought this Core Concept Plan was a great idea and he looked forward to being a part of the process. He hoped this proposed Core area would become a nice place to bring our families to.

Announcements

There will be a Public Hearing - Fences, a Safety Committee, a Service Committee and a Regular Council Meeting on Monday, October 11, 2021 starting at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers.

There being no further business to come before this Special Meeting of Council, and upon motion by Mr. Lampa, seconded by Mrs. Field, this meeting adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

ATTEST:

Caroline L. Kremer, Clerk of Council

Jon Hannan, President of Council