

MINUTES

ANN ARBOR CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

BUSINESS/ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

7:00 p.m. – July 1, 2008

Time: Chair Pratt called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber, Second Floor, 100 North Fifth Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Emaus, Lowenstein, Mahler, Potts, Pratt, Westphal

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Cheng, Foondle, Kowalski, Pulcipher

INTRODUCTIONS

None.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Carlberg, seconded by Emaus, to approve the agenda.

A vote on the motion showed:

YEAS: Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Emaus, Lowenstein, Mahler, Potts,
Pratt, Westphal

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

ORGANIZATION OF COMMISSION

a. Election of Officers (Article V of the Bylaws).

(1) Chair

Potts nominated, and Carlberg supported, Bonnie Bona as Chair.

A vote, after nominations were closed, showed

YEAS: Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Emaus, Lowenstein, Mahler, Potts,
Pratt, Westphal
NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

(2) Vice Chair

Carlberg nominated, and Emaus supported, Eric Mahler as Vice Chair.

A vote, after nominations were closed, showed

YEAS: Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Emaus, Lowenstein, Mahler, Potts,
Pratt, Westphal
NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

(3) Secretary

Bona nominated, and Lowenstein supported, Kirk Westphal as Secretary.

Borum nominated, and Mahler supported, Ethel Potts as Secretary.

Following a secret ballot vote, Kirk Westphal was elected Secretary.

b. Review of Bylaws.

Potts noted that the page from the City Charter still contained reference to "Planning Director."

Bona stated that staff would look into this.

c. Committee Assignments.

Bona asked Commission members to review their assignments to see if any changes were needed or desired.

d. Public Notice and Input Overview.

Bona read the description of the overview.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

None.

REPORTS FROM CITY ADMINISTRATION, CITY COUNCIL,
PLANNING DIRECTOR, PLANNING COMMISSION OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES,
WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS AND PETITIONS

Pratt reported that the A2D2 steering committee that was originally scheduled for July 2 was cancelled and that a new meeting date would soon be determined.

Bona stated that she attended the DDA Partnership Committee meeting last week. She said the committee continued to discuss the underground parking structure next to the public library, adding that this proposal would be scheduled for an upcoming Planning Commission working session.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Jim Mogenson, 3780 Greenbrier, spoke regarding the notice of intent to plan for the Transportation Plan Update. He expressed concern about the process, noting that the City, AATA, DDA and University have issued an RFP for a connector study. He said there was transit service for mobility for people in the urban area and transit service for people who drive and park outside of the City. There was tension developing about jobs being created in the core and not a lot of people living in the urban area, he said, stating that some bus services have been eliminated based on employment. He stated that public transit was moving away from those living in the urban area and it was becoming more and more difficult to take the bus, causing a dilemma. With regard to land use planning, he said, if the City was approving projects based on the people living in those new developments having fewer cars and using public transportation, there was a significant concern because those bus services were being eliminated. Adequate planning was needed for this, he said, otherwise there would be a large problem.

PUBLIC HEARINGS SCHEDULED FOR NEXT MEETING

Bona announced the public hearings scheduled for the July 15 Planning Commission meeting.

REGULAR BUSINESS

a. Public Hearing and Action on Grace Bible Church Site Plan for Planning Commission Approval, 20.42 acres, 1300 South Maple Road. A proposal to revise the natural features protection plan to show alterations to and mitigation for the existing wetlands (postponed from 6/17/08 meeting) – Staff Recommendation: Approval

Kowalski explained the proposal and showed photographs of the site.

John Eaton, 1606 Dicken Drive, representing the South Maple Group, a coalition of groups and individuals opposing the 42 North project, stated that the group also opposed the Grace Bible Church site plan. He said this site plan has come before the Planning Commission three times. The first time, he said, the site plan was approved by the Planning Commission even though the petitioner's experts failed to identify all of the wetlands governed by State law. It was approved again the second time, he said, even though it did not mitigate for all of the wetlands being destroyed by the 42 North project. He expressed two problems: 1) The wetland mitigation site was far removed from the area of the natural wetlands that would be destroyed on the 42 North property. He said the function of the natural wetlands on the 42 North site included assimilating and processing water and adding it to the watershed. Locating this mitigation area so far from the 42 North property, he said, removed that function. 2) The proposed plan before Commission tonight included water detention pools, including one near Maple Road that would collect water during storms and slowly disperse it into the watersheds. He said these were designed to completely dry up, retaining water long enough to slow the rate of flow. He said the 42 North project would increase the amount of water into all of these watersheds and, most importantly, increase the amount of water going in to Allen Creek, the most fragile of the City's watersheds. He stated that this would have an impact everywhere downstream from that watershed all the way to the river. The State estimated that 80 percent of wetland mitigation failed, he said, and has recommended against placing wetland mitigation on sites where wetlands already existed. He believed this site plan should be rejected because of the impact it would have on the watersheds.

Noting no further speakers, Bona declared the public hearing closed.

Moved by Pratt, seconded by Carlberg, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby approves the Grace Bible Church Site Plan for Planning Commission Approval and recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Grace Bible Church Development Agreement.

Pratt stated that the petitioner for the 42 North project presented a chart identifying the effects of different storm events and asked if this information was still available. He recalled that the quantity of water would be reduced.

Earl Ophoff, of Midwestern Consulting, representing the petitioner, displayed the chart that had been previously shown. He said the two impacts on watersheds in terms of storm water were a reduction in discharged rates during storm events, but an increase in overall storm volume. He said the discharge for the Allen Creek drain would be reduced by 73 percent, the Honey Creek area discharge rate would be reduced by 15 percent, because most of it was naturally discharged, and the Malletts Creek reduction would be 30 percent. Regarding volumes released into the watersheds, he said, there would be an increase because of the increase in impervious surface. He stated that the amount of runoff into the Allen Creek watershed would be 18 percent, the amount of runoff into the Honey Creek watershed would be 90 percent, and there would be no increase in the Malletts Creek watershed. He said benefits were the reduction in the rate of discharge and allowing water in the neighborhoods downstream of this site to flow out of the system before this water reached them.

Carlberg asked if during a storm event, which was when Allen Creek was too full to adequately handle water, the water coming from this site would be less than before.

Ophoff replied yes, stating that all water discharging to the Allen Creek watershed would go into a detention basin either on the west side of the parking area, at the northeast corner of the church, a shared detention basin between this site and the 42 North side, or another basin further to the south.

Carlberg confirmed that the water from the streets and the rest of the system going through Allen Creek will have passed through the system before the water from this site drains into it.

Ophoff replied yes, most of the water would be gone.

Carlberg asked what the impact was of having a greater volume of water flowing through after most of the water was gone and if this would cause any flooding.

Ophoff stated that the rate of discharge from the new development would be less and the length of discharge would take longer. He stated that no flooding was anticipated to occur. The root of the problem for Allen Creek flooding, he said, was the older subdivisions downstream because they were not developed with storm water detention or pre-treatment systems. He said the water coming from those subdivisions was then overloading the system and what was really needed was for those areas to be retrofitted with updated systems.

Carlberg confirmed that this proposed mitigation would not negatively impact the Allen Creek, not cause flooding to a degree greater than what currently occurred.

Ophoff replied yes, this is what they believed to be true.

Pratt asked how long it would take for the drain to dry.

Ophoff said it was either 24 or 48 hours, but that it would be what the County Drain Commissioner required.

Pratt stated that 18 percent of 24 hours was about four hours, so for the first 20 hours after the pond filled up, which was usually at the end of a rainfall, the water would be draining at a much slower rate, and then the last four hours was when Allen Creek would receive the extra 18 percent of water.

Carlberg asked for clarification regarding Mr. Eaton's comments about the State not wanting this kind of mitigation to take place.

Andrea Klein, of Environmental Technology Consultants, representing the petitioner, stated that her firm designed the proposed wetland mitigation and that the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has approved it. She said she has never heard about a recommendation from MDEQ that discouraged this type of mitigation.

Pratt stated that his experience with the MDEQ was that they did not support creating a wetland where there has been dry ground, as the chances of wetland survival were less. He said MDEQ preferred tagging onto an existing wetland.

Klein added that the MDEQ did not support excavating within an existing wetland to create an enhanced wetland or preserve existing wetlands as mitigation, but putting wetland mitigation areas near existing wetlands was a very common and approved practice.

Carlberg asked if there were any information on the success of this kind of mitigation.

Klein stated that they have had good success for all of the projects they have done and they were confident that this wetland mitigation would be appropriate.

Carlberg asked about the advantage of removing invasive species from existing wetlands.

Klein stated that it enhanced the value and diversity of the plants in the wetlands.

Pratt stated that there was debate as to whether agencies overseeing the wetland restorations had the appropriate resources to monitor and require improvements. He said many wetlands required care in the first couple of years with replanting, water level adjustments, etc. He noted that Ann Arbor had standard language in its development agreements that provided the City the mechanism to require any repairs or improvements needed. This provision in the agreement made him more comfortable with this, he said.

Potts asked if the area where the new wetland would be created was particularly appropriate for this.

Klein stated that it was the lowest part of the site, so water would flow downhill and collect in that area.

Potts said it appeared as though the highest part of the site was somewhat in the middle and flowed to the east and west. She wondered what would happen to the water draining to the east and how water would be directed to go around the high point to the wetland.

Klein said the discharge from one of the storm water detention basins was directed to the mitigation site, and another was the area next to the soccer fields where swales would be created to convey water from the fields to the mitigation site. She said water going to the east was not part of the wetland mitigation, but that this water would drain into the detention basins on the east side of the site.

Potts said the most impermeable surface part of the site would only be temporarily detained on its way into the pipes, which is what she was most concerned about. She stated that right across the street at Maple and Pauline was the end point of a study done to figure out where sewer disconnects could be done for the best effect on the Dartmoor flooding. The apartments at Maple and Pauline appeared to be where the flooding originated, she said. She thought this proposal sounded as though volume would be added, not an increase in rate, and she did not think this section of Allen Creek could handle an increase. An 18 percent increase in volume was a lot, she said, and any water leaving this site would be causing problems. She thought this would be hazardous to the neighborhoods downstream. Because this site consisted of clay, she said, the people living downstream would see an increase in water.

Ophoff stated that this was why they engineered the system to get as much of the water as possible to go into the Honey Creek watershed.

Bona was disappointed that the 42 North project would no longer contain the cisterns that were included in the original site plan that was denied. She stated that these cisterns were to keep water on the site to be used for watering.

Ophoff stated that the cistern system for roof drainage was actually still part of the current site plan. He said it would be attached to an irrigation system that covered a limited area of the 42 North site.

Bona expressed gratitude for this being part of the site plan, as it was not a requirement.

Emaus expressed concern about long-term maintenance provisions for the storm water detention system in the development agreement. He asked who exactly was going to be the Proprietor overseeing the maintenance: Grace Bible Church or 42 North, or a combination. He also was concerned that although a five-year monitoring plan and an invasive species control plan would be submitted, the requirement in paragraph P-2 of the agreement only involved the enforcement of repairing all defects that occurred within one year of development. He wanted to make sure the City had the capability to see that repairs were done and a monitoring plan implemented over the entire five-year period.

Ophoff stated that as part of the sales and development agreements, the church and the 42 North development will be jointly responsible for the maintenance.

Kowalski stated that paragraph P-2 of the development agreement was intended to address the types of improvements identified in paragraph P-1, such as water and sanitary sewer improvements. Paragraph P-13 contained the provisions for the wetland monitoring plan, he said, such as the ability to enforce it for five years.

Westphal asked if the 10-year storm event was the standard to use for modeling as required by the MDEQ, or if the 100-year storm event was what should be used. He was trying to envision the effect of a larger storm event, wondering if the rate of water would actually increase once everything was filled to capacity.

Ophoff stated that they used the 10-year storm because it had a reasonable possibility of occurring and was easier to understand. The weakness in using the 10-year storm, he said, was that the storm water detention system was designed for a 100-year storm and the comparison between the two storm events was not as direct as it could be.

Pratt confirmed that the discharge rate would be the same because it was controlled by the same device.

Ophoff replied that this was correct.

A vote on the main motion showed:

YEAS: Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Emaus, Lowenstein, Mahler, Pratt,
Westphal
NAYS: Potts

Motion carried.

b. Public Hearing and Action on Ann Arbor Municipal Center Site Plan, 2 acres, 100 North Fifth Avenue. A proposal to construct a new five-story, 103,000-square foot building to house the Police and 15th District Court, renovation to the existing City Hall (Larcom Building), 19 parking spaces, and associated site work (postponed from 6/17/08 meeting) – Staff Recommendation: Approval

Cheng explained the proposal and showed photographs of the site.

Ken Klein, of Quinn Evans Architects, representing the design team, stated that he and other members of the design team would be available to answer questions.

Noting no further speakers, Bona declared the public hearing closed.

Moved by Potts, seconded by Lowenstein, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby approves the following resolution:

Whereas, the City Administrator is directed to obtain comments and suggestions from the appropriate City departments with regard to certain City projects meeting private development regulations prior to recommending that City Council approve funding for them; and

Whereas, such projects are to be reviewed by the City Planning Commission prior to City Council approval;

Whereas, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission finds that the Ann Arbor Municipal Center adheres to City private development standards.

Potts stated that this was an elaborate project with a long history and many aspects that one could discuss. An issue of significance for her was the proposed parking not meeting private development standards. She stated that 117 spaces currently existed on the City Hall site and the new proposal contained 52 spaces, 11 of which would be for the public. She noted that a large percentage of the existing 117 spaces were available to the public and they would now be gone with this new proposal. She presumed one of the 11 spaces would be a handicap space and pointed out that existing spaces along Ann Street would be eliminated to make room for the new driveways into the site, so there would be more of a loss. She strongly believed this issue had to be resolved before ground was broken because City Hall would continue to operate during construction. When she visited City Hall, she said, there normally were parking spaces available and she believed the amount of parking being proposed for the new project would mean that there would no longer be parking available for customers. She questioned where people attending evening meetings, like the Planning Commission meeting tonight, would park, expressing safety concerns for people having to walk in the dark to the Ann/Ashley parking structure three blocks away. Also, she said, the structure often was full during the day. She believed that it would be good planning to make sure the parking issue was resolved prior to the start of construction.

Emaus stated that he agreed with the letter from the DDA Citizens Advisory Council (DDA CAC) in that this was an extremely unfriendly building from any view other than from the Huron/Fifth intersection. He said it was not pedestrian friendly at all on Fifth Avenue and the façade along Ann Street was very utilitarian to say the least. He strongly believed that the City should install parking underground and make the ground level a civic place with a welcoming access to citizens. The ground level did not do this with this design, he said. He called attention to the unwelcoming appearance of the garage door and said he only saw a need for one curb cut on Ann Street for access to everything. He saw no reason to have three curb cuts on Ann Street. He also agreed with the DDA CAC that something needed to be done with the first level to address many of the issues the A2D2 guidelines. He believed this building could have a much more open façade.

Bona also expressed concern about the façade. She asked what would actually be happening on the first floor of the building.

Clein showed a diagram of the first floor of the project. He stated that the parking lot on Ann Street would have porous pavers to facilitate serving as a public place for certain occasions. He explained the reason for dedicated parking for official vehicles and stated that the first floor offices would be for those service units with considerable public usage. He also explained the public arcade space and the lobby. The reason why there could not be just one driveway, he said, was because the police needed the ability for emergency ingress/egress at all times. He also noted that there was an egress stair in the location of where a drive would go if there were just one curb cut and there was no other appropriate location for that stair. Adequate space for refuse vehicles was also a consideration, he said. He stated that this was a very constrained urban site. They tried to incorporate underground parking, he said, but noted that they would have had to create a ramp that would end up creating a canyon between the building and the street, which was not very pedestrian friendly. He stated that there would be a temporary entrance to the building with limited parking during construction. He said the City was having discussions with adjacent property owners to see if the use of off-site parking could be arranged, adding that perhaps a parking structure to the east might be something to look at again in the future.

Emaus asked about a parking structure being constructed where the parking lot is proposed on the north.

Clein was doubtful that a structure would fit in that location. He stated that the second level was about 10 to 12 feet higher than the street grade and a great deal of distance would be needed for ramp access. He said a speed ramp would make it very steep. He understood the concerns about parking and said this was a concern that the City would be dealing with on a larger scale in its desire to increase density and residential use in the downtown. He said the parking issue was not isolated to this project.

Carlberg shared the concerns about parking and said the City would need to be quite aggressive in finding parking elsewhere. She agreed that 11 spaces for the public seemed quite insufficient. That scenario was difficult to imagine and she hoped the City would keep thinking of alternative ways to provide parking nearby. One challenge, she said, was that this was a police/court building, which was not a public building that should have easy access. She said just the nature of that type of building and its security needs had to be part of the design. She stated that the current façade along Ann Street consisted of dumpsters, small windows, no activity and no access, and having an entrance on Ann Street with attractive landscaping would be an improvement. She said the building design along Fifth Avenue would consist of windows that would provide a sense of activity, which seemed to be an acceptable pedestrian interface. The appearance along Huron Street was much more pleasant, she said, with large windows and a public lobby. She stated that the City was severely challenged because the choice was made to put this building on this site, which provided severe limitations in terms of what could be accomplished. She did not see this being done differently.

Borum agreed with the comments about parking. From a design point of view, he suggested that the east and west ends be flipped so the court building was interior to the block and the public meeting space was situated along Fifth Avenue to maintain a public plaza in that location. The notion of law enforcement would be what would have largest front door, he said, stating that it would be an honorary position. He understood the constraints of the site, but he did not think the court building should be the front door to City Hall. The way it was designed now, he said, made City Hall seem secondary.

Westphal agreed with many of Commissioner Borum's comments. He was struck by the intimidating façade presented to Fifth Avenue, as well as to Huron Street to some extent because of the columns that would present a dead area between the sidewalk and glass. As noted in the staff report, he said, regardless of what needed to be placed where within the site, he had hoped to see more of the design concepts that were contained in the upcoming design guidelines. He was not sure if this project spoke to any of those. He was looking for an opportunity to make it less of a block building and more in keeping with the urban fabric that surrounded it. Features like a low barricade between the sidewalk and building on Fifth Avenue would help more to connect the building with the neighborhood, he said. He stated that many people would be approaching the building from Main Street or Kerrytown and he was hoping for more of a plaza/civic/lobby space at the Fifth/Huron corner, rather than the building being turned more toward Division Street. He asked if there was a previous design iteration that had more of a civic space at Fifth and Huron.

Clein replied no. He said previous iterations maintained the approximate location of the current police/court operations. He stated that they studied the site to find out what locations would work and this was it, noting that this was the area of the site where this building would fit. He said it was their hope that the space between the sidewalk and wall of the lobby where the piers were located would serve as an access to the building, walking past the lobby and being somewhat protected from the weather. They did not envision this as a dead space, he said. He added that they intended a landscape wall containing lush plantings along Fifth Avenue.

Andrea Kevrick, representing the petitioner, stated that Fifth Avenue was a corridor that connected Kerrytown and the Main Street area and it was important that it not feel like a tunnel. She stated that the planters closest to Fifth Avenue would be about one foot high with street trees. The planters against the building would be 18 inches tall, with taller plants at the corners of Fifth/Huron and Fifth/Ann. The frontage along Fifth Avenue would become a tunnel of trees, she said, adding that the idea was to break up the linear pattern with a variety of shrubs, perennials and grasses.

Westphal asked if any thought was given to plantings along the south.

Kevrick replied yes, describing the mixture of shrubs, trees and perennials. She stated that there would be street trees along Huron Street, as well as a planter wall running from the second column from the corner and a big planter between the plaza space and the street.

Clein explained the public plaza space along Huron Street.

Westphal stated that in trying to look at this as a private development in terms of what the community would expect with regard to architectural features, as expressed in the A2D2 design guidelines, he was wrestling with how to be constructive in terms of providing feedback and what he would expect of a private development. He asked about breaking up the modules and the interior function of the building.

Clein stated that the approach was to help illustrate for the community through design how the building functioned. He said the building would be broken up more horizontally rather than vertically, with the police functions on the lower floors having more brick and the court functions on the upper floors having metal cladding. He stated that putting two pieces on top of each other could look like a rather large building and said they did a good job of creating a fenestration pattern that has large areas of windows and glass that opened on public areas. It was designed in conjunction with how the inside of the building would work, he said. The building was made to look interesting to people going by, he said, while also expressing the different functions and breaking up the building so it did not appear to be so massive.

Lowenstein stated that as far as this proposal meeting some of the A2D2 design guidelines, she did not believe the guidelines addressed public buildings because these types of buildings were not built very often. In looking at some other cities, she said, what one would see in public buildings was that they were somewhat monumental, which was a city concept, not a small town concept, so she thought this proposal did make some attempts at a monumental design along Fifth and Huron. She did not think this was the kind of public building meant to be a warm and welcoming place, not the type of building in the A2D2 guidelines that would have retail and cafes on the first floor, etc. She thought this public building needed to be looked at differently from a privately developed building with the design guidelines. With regard to the issue of windows on the ground floor along Fifth Avenue, she said, this was a police/court building, which presented limitations that the design group had to consider. She also noted that this was not a large site; rather, it was a small, compact urban site. While it would be nice if there were more parking spaces on the site, she thought Ann Arbor was a little spoiled having this municipal building in an urban place and being able to drive right up to the front door. That did not happen in many urban spaces, she said, where people had to use public transportation or park elsewhere. She did not think the available parking was that far away, adding that likely a new underground parking structure would be built a few blocks away near the public library. It would be nice to have the convenience of parking, she said, but she was not as worried about this issue. She stated that if the City had unlimited funds, there may be more options, but there were budgetary constraints involved with this project. She believed the proposed design would make this an interesting building.

Pratt asked where people would be parking and why it was decided that it was okay to limit the parking.

Clein stated that in reviewing the parking available on the site, they knew there would be a reduction in parking with the new project. He said many discussions were held about opportunities for parking, as well as about whether the City should provide private parking on-site for staff at any level when this had not been done elsewhere with businesses. He said there would be no designated parking on this site for any City staff, including the City Administrator, stating that this would occur at nearby parking structures. He said there have been discussions about using the Ann/Ashley and Fourth/William parking structures, as well as 721 North Main for overflow for police vehicles. Also discussed was the lot at the corner of Fifth and Ann, he said.

Pratt assumed it was the City's viewpoint that these plans were ready to move forward; however, he believed an important goal had been missed. He did not disagree that this was an urban environment, but he said he could name 50 cities where the public could drive up to the municipal building for service. He could envision a level of frustration for customers when they found that they could not get a parking space within the 11 spaces on the site. He said it was not only the City's role to serve, but to also help. He stated that the "public" was people wanting to do business with the City and the site should be designed to be as welcoming as possible. The public needed to be treated properly, he said. He did not believe there was enough room for daily customers and suggested asking City Council how much parking was needed and where people would be parking. He would ask City Council to decide if this was the signal it wanted to send people coming to do business with the City and participating in City functions.

Mahler agreed with much of what Commissioner Lowenstein said about this being an urban setting, but he said one key difference between this site and many urban locations was that other municipal buildings did not abut historic districts that people have fought hard to protect, as was the case here in Ann Arbor. He was concerned about parking and shared many of the comments made about it, but believed sacrifices had to be made unless the City condemned a nearby piece of property and replace it with parking. He suspected there would be initial outcry about the parking situation, but thought people would adjust with time. This was a price to pay for increased density in the downtown area, he said. He expressed concern about traffic in the adjacent historic neighborhood and wondered if any type of traffic study had been done.

Clein stated that a traffic study had not been done. During public meetings, he said, most concerns centered around parking, not traffic.

Mahler expressed concern about more traffic in the adjacent historic areas from people driving elsewhere to find parking. He suggested that it would not hurt to look into the traffic situation on more of a broad level, not just the parameters of this site.

Clein was aware of discussions going on between the City and nearby property owners about the possible use of their properties for parking.

Carlberg suggested an amendment to the main motion regarding parking.

Moved by Carlberg, seconded by Pratt, to amend the main motion by adding the following language to the end of the Resolved clause, "...with the exception of parking needs for public users of the building."

A vote on the amendment showed:

YEAS: Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Emaus, Lowenstein, Mahler, Potts,
Pratt, Westphal
NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

Carlberg noted that the white garage doors on Ann Street really stood out as an ugly element of the building.

Clein agreed, stating that they would look much better in a different color.

Carlberg suggested a different material for the garage doors that harmonized with the facade. She stated that the public relations material prepared for this project would have to make it widely known how to use this parking. She identified other areas to park, such as Community High School, the market, Kerrytown, adding that she was certain that Kerrytown would love having more people parking there. Having more people parking and walking through parts of the downtown was not all bad, she said. She noted that the people visiting the County Building were already accustomed to parking in the parking structure. The City's and consultant's job would be to help the public know where to park.

Bona stated that this was a parking exempt district, so she had no problem with reduced and/or shared parking. She was not sure she agreed with the argument that having more than one emergency drive was necessary when the new parking under the new building had only one entrance. If that one entrance were blocked, no one would be able to get out, so she questioned why it mattered if that area did not use one of the other two drives being provided. If this were really an issue, she suggested that a City police car be parked outside for availability at all times. She agreed that public safety was an issue, but said these parking areas could not hold every car the City owned.

Clein stated that eliminating one drive could add a couple of parking spaces, but said they believed having a drive function as access for both the police and the public would result in a greater likelihood that the drive would be blocked. There was a concern among law enforcement agencies today about people deliberately trying to obstruct safety services.

Bona offered a suggestion to make the parking one-way in and one-way out, which would result in four extra spaces. Two could be used for police cars, she said, and the other two for the public. It seemed so excessive to her that three two-lane driveways were needed for so few parking spaces. Another comment of hers had to do with curb cuts, stating that she wanted to make sure the sidewalk material was continuous. She did not want the driveways to cut across the sidewalks.

Clein agreed.

Bona said it was her understanding that the DDA improvements on Fifth Avenue and Division Street would significantly increase the number of metered parking spaces by about 100. She hoped that some of the lost spaces in the City Hall lot could be made up with the increased street parking. She expressed concern about the sidewalk along Fifth Avenue, stating that it was indicated as eight feet wide but that it appeared to be 2.5 feet in the rendering, which was narrow. She asked for clarification of the uses in the building facing Fifth Avenue.

Clein stated that the City's Information Services staff would occupy the first and second floors along Fifth Avenue.

Bona stated that it was difficult to put someone's office right next to a sidewalk, so the planter may help. She felt a little more comfortable knowing there was activity and that pedestrians would not be walking right next to someone's desk.

Clein stated that the planter adjacent to the windows was quite wide.

Bona stated that what was put in the planter should provide screening and transparency at the same time. Regarding the columns at the corner of Fifth and Huron, she thought they appeared to be so wide that they would prevent someone from walking through the corner area. She was concerned that in the desire to be pedestrian friendly, barriers were actually being erected. To her, both of the entrances appeared as though they were tucked back around the corner. It was important for people to know where they were going, she said.

Clein stated that they were made aware of this during public comment. Two of the things they looked at were signage to direct people to the entrances and a potential entrance canopy to clearly mark the main entrance.

Bona found that the most appealing part of the site plan was the meeting space and she hoped something else would be forfeited before that space was eliminated. She stated that having it open up to the public plaza would be a significant benefit.

Emaus suggested that the garage door on Ann Street be eliminated and that the underground parking be used for public parking, with people driving through the building to the parking underneath. He said the police vehicles could then use the 12 main level parking spaces.

Clein stated that public parking under governmental buildings was no longer allowed.

Potts stated that the concerns about the lack of public parking would be brought to the attention of City Council. She thought the architecture of the building was interesting and to some degree reflected what was happening in the building. She liked the overhang for pedestrians and liked the landscaping. One way this proposal exceeded private development standards was through the landscaping, she said. As the landscaping matured, she said, it would become comfortable along the sidewalk for pedestrians.

A vote on the main motion as amended showed:

YEAS: Bona, Borum, Carlberg, Emaus, Lowenstein, Mahler, Potts,
Pratt, Westphal
NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously, reads as follows:

Moved by Potts, seconded by Lowenstein, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby approves the following resolution:

Whereas, The City Administrator is directed to obtain comments and suggestions from the appropriate City departments with regard to certain City projects meeting private development regulations prior to recommending that City Council approve funding for them; and

Whereas, Such projects are to be reviewed by the City Planning Commission prior to City Council approval;

Whereas, That the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission finds that the Ann Arbor Municipal Center adheres to City private development standards, with the exception of parking needs for public users of the building.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None.

COMMISSION PROPOSED BUSINESS

Carlberg asked if it were possible to cancel the July 15 meeting, as there was only one item on the agenda, and move that item to the first meeting in August.

Pulcipher stated that staff would check on this.

ADJOURNMENT

Bona declared the meeting adjourned at 9:47 p.m.

Mark Lloyd, Manager
Planning and Development Services

Kirk Westphal, Secretary