

**CITY OF WILLIAMSTON  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MARCH 7, 2023  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**1. Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Williamston City Hall Council Chambers by Vice Chairman John Magee and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**3. Roll Call:**

Vice Chairman John Magee, Commissioners Noah Belanger, Brandon Gilroy, Brandon Lanyon, and Lee Fisher. Absent: Jeff Markstrom.

Also Present: City Manager John Hanifan, Deputy City Clerk Barbara Burke, City Attorney Timothy Perrone, Planner Raphael Kasen, Renee Leone, Chris Silker, Chase Mallory, Liz Harrow, Ken Szymusiak, Ben Tselis-Jackson, Byron Aldrink, Monica Schafer, Tim Ludwig, Will Long, Craig VanBuren, and other members of the public.

Motion by **Lanyon**, second by **Belanger**, to excuse Markstrom. **Motion passed by voice vote.**

**4. Approval of Agenda:**

Motion by **Gilroy**, second by **Lanyon**, to approve the agenda as presented. **Motion passed by voice vote.**

**5. Audience Participation on Non-Agenda Items:**

Ingham County Commissioner Monica Schafer introduced herself – she is here to connect and to serve the community. Resident Tim Ludwig said he is interested in applying for the opening on the Planning Commission.

**6. Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes of August 4, 2022:**

Motion by **Lanyon**, second by **Gilroy**, to approve the regular meeting minutes of August 4, 2022 as presented. **Motion passed by voice vote.**

**7. Public Hearing – Change-of-Use Text Amendment for 114 North Putnam St. (parcel ID: 33-18-03-36-352-021)**

**7a. Open Public Hearing:**

Vice Chairman Magee opened the public hearing at 7:05 p.m.

**7b. Chair States Purpose of Hearing and Rules of Procedure as Deemed Necessary:**

Vice Chairman Magee stated the purpose of the public hearing and rules of procedure.

**7c. Presentation by Staff Summarizing the Item:**

Planner Kasen reviewed the application, where the applicant has requested an amendment to the zoning ordinance to allow ground floor residential dwellings as principal permitted uses on North Putnam Street in the C-1 Central Business District. There are six sections in the zoning ordinance where this specific text amendment would need to be changed.

**7d. Questions from Board to Staff:**

None.

**7e. Presentation by Applicant:**

Renee Leone went over the history and timeline of the building from the time she purchased it. She reviewed the unexpected fire suppression code requirements that posed significant obstacles to the advancement of this project and explained she had to pivot and do research on other options. She feels with this requested text amendment to residential/residential it would contribute in a positive way to downtown. There is a need for high quality housing options for young professionals and empty nesters.

**7f. Questions From Board to Applicant:**

None.

**7g. Testimony From Public:**

- i. Presentation of Written Comments – two letters of support were included in the packet.
- ii. Presentation of Oral Comments –
  - a. Chris Silker, realtor, spoke in support, stating tenants will frequent the downtown establishments, and the construction and aesthetics of this property are a benefit to the downtown area.
  - b. Will Long, Williamston business owner, said it would be a shame not to have the first floor for retail/commercial use.

**7h. Concluding Comments From Staff:**

Attorney Perrone said there are six separate sections in the zoning ordinance where this would need to be changed.

**7i. Concluding Comments From Applicant:**

Renee Leone was grateful for this review and feels the residential/residential is the right fit for this location and beneficial to the downtown.

**7j. Concluding Questions or Comments From Board:**

None.

**7k. Close Public Hearing:**

Vice Chairman Magee closed the public hearing at 7:29 p.m.

**8. Public Hearing – Special Land Use for 200 Elevator Street (parcel ID: 33-18-07-01-151-026)**

**8a. Open Public Hearing:**

Vice Chairman Magee opened the public hearing at 7:29 p.m.

**8b. Chair States Purpose of Hearing and Rules of Procedure as Deemed Necessary:**

Vice Chairman Magee stated the purpose of the public hearing and rules of procedure.

**8c. Presentation by Staff Summarizing the Item:**

Planner Kasen reviewed the application, where the applicant has requested special land use approval to construct a micro-distillery and tasting room to be located east of the existing building at 200 Elevator Street.

**8d. Questions from Board to Staff:**

None.

**8e. Presentation by Applicant:**

Ken Szymusiak reviewed the details of the project as outlined in the application. The use will be limited to distillation of gin, which may have a slight smell similar to baking bread. If this is accepted, their goal is to open in Spring of 2024.

**8f. Questions From Board to Applicant:**

Commissioner Gilroy asked what would happen to the current ice house building. Mr. Szymusiak said they would secure the exterior; paint it; tear down the lean-to section, etc. In the future it may be an event space.

**8g. Testimony From Public:**

- i. Presentation of Written Comments – none.
- ii. Presentation of Oral Comments –
  - a. Byron Aldrink, resident and neighbor to the project, said many of his questions were answered during the applicant’s presentation. He is not opposed to the project. He was concerned about preserving the architecture of the original building, lighting, odor, hiring local, as he wants to preserve the value of his home.
  - b. Will Long, Williamston business owner, supports this project as it will help downtown.

**8h. Concluding Comments From Staff:**

Attorney Perrone noted the City is in the process of changing the street name to Norma Jean Court.

**8i. Concluding Comments From Applicant:**

Mr. Szymusiak thanked the commission for consideration. He and the other investors all live in Williamston.

**8j. Concluding Questions or Comments From Board:**

None.

**8k. Close Public Hearing:**

Vice Chairman Magee closed the public hearing at 7:43 p.m.

**9. Action Items**

**9a. Change-of-Use Text Amendment for 114 North Putnam Street (parcel ID: 33-18-03-36-352-021):**

Motion by **Lanyon**, second by **Belanger**, to recommend the proposed ordinance amendment be referred to the City Council for adoption as it is consistent with the City’s Master Plan and

will contribute positively to the C1, Central Business District. Yes: Belanger, Magee, Gilroy, Lanyon, Fisher. No: None. **Motion passed.**

**9b. Special Land Use Permit for 200 Elevator Street (parcel ID: 33-18-07-01-151-026):**

Motion by **Lanyon**, second by **Gilroy**, to approve the special land use for a “bar, tavern, or alcohol service establishment” on parcel 33-18-07-01-151-026 at 200 Elevator Street. Yes: Lanyon, Gilroy, Belanger, Fisher, Magee. No: None. **Motion passed.**

**9c. Preliminary Site Plan Review for 200 Elevator Street:**

Motion by **Lanyon**, second by **Gilroy**, to approve the preliminary site plan for 200 Elevator Street contingent on the following:

1. The applicant must apply and be approved for a dimensional variance per Section 74-9.207C of the Zoning Ordinance for the waiving of the 30-foot setback requirement due to the site’s adjacency with a lot located in the I-2 district.
2. The applicant must submit detailed project elevations for the proposed building and all landscaping, including all proposed fencing and plantings along the perimeter of the site, as well as the locations and manufacturer specifications for all exterior lighting fixtures.
3. A final signage plan must be submitted.
4. The final proposed circulation plan must be approved by the Northeast Ingham Emergency Service Authority (NIESA).
5. The final site plan must be reviewed and approved by the City Engineer.

Yes: Gilroy, Magee, Fisher, Lanyon, Belanger. No: None. **Motion passed.**

**9d. Adoption of 2023 Meeting Dates & Times:**

Motion by **Gilroy**, second by **Belanger**, to approve the 2023 meeting dates and times as presented: January 3, February 7, March 7, April 4, May 2, June 6, July 6 (Thursday), August 1, September 5, October 3, November 7, December 5. Yes: Fisher, Gilroy, Lanyon, Magee, Belanger. No: None. **Motion passed.**

**10. Staff Reports:**

Manager Hanifan said it is time for a review of the Master Plan; look for that to come.

**11. Audience Participation on Non-Agenda Items:**

Vice Chairman Magee called for public comments at this time and there were none.

**12. Planning Commissioner Comments:**

Vice Chairman Magee thanked everyone for their patience.

**13. Adjourn to the Call of the Chair:**

Vice Chairman Magee adjourned the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

**\*Meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Barbara J. Burke, Deputy City Clerk

Date approved: \_\_\_\_\_