
PRESENT: Mayor Robert Novitke
Council Members Chylinski, Dansbury, Dickinson, Granger, Steiner

ABSENT: Council Member Fahrner

ALSO PRESENT: City Administrator Bidigare
City Attorney Catlin
City Engineer Westrick
Assistant to City Administrator Donnan
Recording Secretary Wohlfield

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Novitke at 7:43 p.m.

Motion by Dansbury, supported by Chylinski, that Committee-of-the-Whole member Fahrner BE EXCUSED from attendance at tonight’s meeting.

Motion carried by the following vote:
YES: Chylinski, Dansbury, Dickinson, Granger, Novitke, Steiner
NO: None
ABSENT: Fahrner

Mayor Novitke welcomed Planning Commissioner Mary Mitts as a member of the audience.

Tonight’s only agenda item concerned Master Planner Interviews. At 7:45 p.m., Mayor Novitke turned the meeting over to Council Member Granger, Chair of the Planning Committee.

Council Member Granger gave a brief overview of the Planning Committee, a joint committee of the Planning Commission and City Council, having selected three firms to interview for the position of Master Planning Consultant for the City of Grosse Pointe Woods. The three firms selected for interviewing are: Abonmarche Group, McKenna Associates, and Carlisle/Wortman Associates.
Chair Granger then introduced the Planning Committee. They are:

Planning Commissioners: Grant Gilezan, Paul Guaresimo, Joseph Sucher, John Vitale

Council Members: Allen Dickinson, Eric Steiner

The interviewing panel also included City Administrator Bidigare and City Engineer Westrick. Assistant to City Administrator Donnan performed timekeeping duties.

Each firm was interviewed separately using a Interview Script, dated January 10, 2000, with thirteen (13) questions with a point range and scoring grid.

The first firm interviewed was Abonmarche Group whose representatives included Team Project Executive Chris Cook, Project Manager Steve Rudisell, Landscape Architect/Planner Chet Hill, and Traffic Engineer Tim Drews.

In answering questions, they indicated involvement in cities of Holland, Coldwater, Albion, and Portage. They stressed the importance of involving the community to a great extent through the futuring process and interactive workshops with various groups to gather and then analyze information. Because the community is involved from the beginning, it helps them to buy into and accept the program/project.

After driving through Grosse Pointe Woods, the Abonmarche Team felt it was a unique community with a stable commercial development. They indicated the parking issue was one they would address in creative ways, and they would look at zoning ordinances to improve rear facades and user-friendly alley utilization.

In answer to City Engineer Westrick’s question about expectations 20-30 years down the road, Mr. Hill that controlling growth, maintaining the current quality of life, and determining the needs and desires of the community would be drawn out at workshop sessions, to be analyzed and strategically implemented by means of ordinance amendments to retain better aspects and improve negative aspects.

Mr. Rudisell added that the historic character of buildings should be maintained and that the younger generation needs to be continually brought back into the City. Changing patterns of traffic re-routing could engender heated debates. Involving the community, knowing the facts, and having good, sound information leads to positive results.
Mr. Cooke showed a sample chart with a scheduled timetable that would be used to make sure project is on time and within budget. He assured the Committee that Abonmarche has a broad range of in-house staff to get the job done.

In response to a question regarding “big foot” housing, Mr. Hill stated that it was exceedingly important to take a stand one way or another on this issue because it can change the character of a neighborhood and community.

Should Abonmarche Group be selected, Mr. Cooke would be the sole point of contact. There would be a Web page established. In closing, the response to the last question, “Why should Grosse Pointe Woods choose Abonmarche?” was that they have a quality team, good management techniques and follow-up, and a fair price.

There was a brief recess at 8:45 p.m. to allow McKenna Associates to set up their presentation materials.

Chair Granger gave a brief overview and introduction of the Committee Panel to McKenna Associates representatives.

Mr. Phillip McKenna, President, began by indicating that their task is four-fold: (1) to identify hopes, expectations, and ambitions; (2) to document the needs of the community; (3) to take the information and express it into a plan; and (4) to identify how to accomplish that plan, through zoning, capital improvements, design standards, etc.

The McKenna Team was introduced: John Jackson, Project Manager; Mario Ortega, Planner/Mapper; and Amy Neary, Assistant Planner.

McKenna Associates has been involved in 75-80 communities in Michigan and Ohio with a full range of area, commercial, industrial, residential. Many of the cities have mature residences, including Birmingham, Orchard Lake, Fenton, Franklin, Harper Woods, Richmond, Kalamazoo, and Grosse Ile. Mr. Jackson is currently wrestling with issues facing older communities.

They will hold three or four visioning sessions with props and a slide show. Feedback is critical. The goals and objectives of the residents are a large part of the foundation of the master plan. The McKenna team will attend the sessions. Each team member will bring their own creativity. It is critical that residents feel involved. There will be an analysis of the housing stock and a determination of the future need for investment.
Timing is important. An election in the middle of the process could bring changes, new issues. Top administration personnel changes also happen. Obstacles need to be turned into opportunities. The project manager will have a checklist. There will be monthly invoices to help keep the project on schedule. A one-year project would have the first six months producing data collection and land use determination. The final six months will consist of the approval process with hearings and implementation.

The current Futuring Committee can provide important information. Any demographic information available will be used. Chris Deussen, who is a Luedtke (past GPW consultant) helper, just did a Harper Woods project and has regional demographics, census, and some indications of how the city evolved.

Mack Avenue is a major thoroughfare and has to be able to handle the traffic and still have easy access to the commercial strip. Mack and Vernier is a major intersection; may need to do some traffic calming on Mack, widen knuckles, reconfigure intersections. It is important to lay groundwork and to link commercial support with ordinance language.

Grosse Pointe Woods has different neighborhoods with different flavors. “Big foot” homes will ultimately change the character of a neighborhood. To acquire parking, eminent domain must have the support of the community.

McKenna Associates does not have a traffic engineer but does have transportation planners who deal with land use and traffic in a more general, broader point of view.

In answer to “Why should Grosse Pointe Woods want us?”, McKenna Associates has a staff of thirty-seven (37) to give you the resources you need, we have a diversity of staff, and we offer you high quality and timeliness.

There was a brief recess at 9:45 p.m. to allow Carlisle/Wortman Associates to set up their presentation materials.

Vice President Don Wortman introduced his team, which includes Jennifer Coe, in charge of zoning regulations and land use, Sally Moore-Elmiger, Architect, in charge of commercial corridor and storefront facades, and Nathan Voght, Planner, in charge of commercial design and vision.

Mr. Wortman indicated both he and his wife grew up in the Grosse Pointe area. He reminisced about AAA replacing Blazo’s Restaurant, Boston Market now occupying the old Toddle House, and Farmer Jack on the site of Howard Johnson’s.
Giving an overview, Mr. Wortman said a Master Planner could help articulate our image, quality, values, and design. Continue character development with tweaking and adjustments to sign regulations, zoning ordinance, and parking. The Master Planning statute must be updated. Northville is presently grappling with the “big foot” or “oversized homes.” GPW needs to develop control and historic preservation is an important way to do that.

Sally Moore indicated that Grosse Pointe Woods has sound, quality housing and a strong retail, but that Mack Avenue needs some improvement, such as more decorative lighting, screening between commercial and residential. Setbacks, height of buildings, zoning regulations are ways to improve the identity and character of Mack Avenue, thereby improving the quality of life perception of the Avenue.

Jennifer Coe identified large aging population, scarce resources, the need for capital improvements with limited budgets, high Mack Avenue traffic with limited parking. She suggested a Parking Management Plan and efforts to increase the Avenue retail mix.

Carlisle/Wortman does not employ traffic engineers, but emphasizes enforcement strategy, long and short meter controls, employee satellite parking, and signalization, the phasing and timing of lights, as methods for improvement.

It was pointed out that the City is doing a good job and has a good foundation to work with. The City needs to identify its wants. The process is as important as the product. It is important to prepare for traffic increase, changing retail, and developing a nucleus. Involve the community, make a record of all suggestions, and don’t be afraid to think big. Condemnation should be dealt with very carefully. Do your homework. The City Council and Planning Commission need to continue to be involved. The City attorney needs to be aware of the legal issues. This could be a hot potato!

Why Carlisle/Wortman Associates? Experience, specializing in medium-size communities and visioning workshops with citizen/resident/business input. Parking management history will be put to good use via good assistance and solutions.

The interview process concluded at 10:40 p.m.

After brief discussion and with Committee concurrence, Chair Granger indicated there would be a Planning Committee meeting at 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, January 25, 2000, prior to the scheduled Planning Commission meeting.
Chair Novitke reconvened the Committee-of-the-Whole meeting at 10:45 p.m.

Chair Novitke requested a time frame for review of the presentations and recommendation by the Planning Committee.

Chair Novitke recessed the Committee-of-the-Whole meeting at 10:46 p.m. to allow the Planning Committee discussion time. The Committee-of-the-Whole reconvened at 10:49 p.m.

The Planning Committee concurred that they would have comments and recommendations regarding the Selection of the Master Planning Consultant at the March Committee-of-the-Whole meeting.

Motion by Dansbury, supported by Dickinson, to adjourn at 10:50 p.m. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mayor Robert E. Novitke Shirley Wohlfield
Presiding Officer Recording Secretary

Louise S. Warnke
City Clerk