

MINUTES OF RAVENNA CITY PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
January 14, 2019

The Meeting of the Ravenna City Planning Committee was called to order by Chairperson Rob Kairis at 6:25 P.M. Present were: Amy Michael, Scott Rainone, Bruce Ribelin, Paul Moskun, Andrew Kluge and Joe Bica. Also attending the meeting were Mayor Frank Seman; Finance Director, Kim Cecora; Service Director, Kay Dubinsky; City Engineer, Bob Finney; Police Chief Jeff Wallis; Larry Silenius of 123 North Walnut Street, Ravenna, Ohio; Clifford Soudil of 434 Woodland Street, Ravenna, Ohio Diana Kane and Angie Reedy representing the Design Review Commission.

Mr. Kairis said the first item on the agenda is the bicycle trail grant.

Mr. Finney said this specific grant is called the Droplet Trail Development Fund for trail strategic planning. It is a private family who has created this fund. He would like to ask for \$10,000.00 with the City matching with \$5,000.00 for a total of \$15,000.00. This is a strategic planning grant.

Mr. Kairis asked if this is to look at the possibility of running the hike and bike trail to the downtown.

Mr. Finney responded in the affirmative, stating there are a couple of different components one of which is the best route to get to Locust Lane. Once it gets to Locust Lane, they would like the engineering firm to make recommendations as to what to do with that section either from the library to Sycamore; Chestnut to Sycamore; provide some options, safety concerns, etc.

Mr. Kairis asked if signage would be included.

Mr. Finney responded there is potentially some signage. It's just a preliminary. What they are going to ask for is which route is better. Obviously, Cleveland Road would be the easiest and cheapest. However, it may not be the safest. With Council's approval, they do need to submit the grant application prior to the end of the month.

The clerk noted that there are times they just have to put the cart before the horse, especially when they don't get notification of grants with a longer application period.

It was decided by those present that the issue would remain on the agenda for the next committee meeting.

Mr. Kairis said the next item on the agenda is downtown murals. A task force was created before the holidays. They talked about the best way to proceed. They looked at other communities that have pretty robust mural programs. They tried to find out if there were ordinances that would be appropriate. He thinks the discussion they left was that they really didn't want controlling ordinances or restrictions. What they want to do is promote murals but not necessarily tell people how they can do it. A lot of communities have independent organizations, private or non-profit organizations like a Main Street program manage, help and

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advise people; maybe even have some funds to help with the installation of murals. At this point that was the approach they wanted to take and agreed upon. At this point, he is not proposing any additional legislation regarding murals. He knows Mr. Finney wanted to add a definition in the zoning code for murals. That is certainly something they can do. If Mr. Finney forwards that to him, they can get that started. One other component to this, a group called the Community Leadership Institute after going to Houston for a conference came back with \$4,000.00. NDS and the Chamber are accepting applications for artists to put in and install murals. It will be interesting to see how that goes. It seems to him a shorter term initiative but it might be one they can model for the future to encourage artists, if they can get funding to get them started to put in some more murals. Again, some private or independent non-profit might be better equipped for setting up some standards, ideas as to how to proceed.

Mr. Kairis said they still need to investigate where the Design Review Commission fits in this. He's not quite sure at this point. The standards for the Design Review are not available at the moment so he's not exactly sure how murals would interact with the Design Review in the historic district.

Mr. Finney said that Julie from the Main Street group made recommendations and it sounds as though other Main Street groups around Ohio have their own mural advisory committee for the local jurisdiction. He personally doesn't want to be the person approving murals. One thing they'll have to vet out is if the Main Street group is the body that would review these murals, does the City need legislation allowing them to. If somebody wants to paint a mural and they start painting, who is going to stop them? It is a façade change that is in the historic district. Design Review could have some discussion about it or advisory discussions, should the City has legislation that the Main Street group is the body that is going to review.

Mr. Kairis asked if there is any other place where the City does appoint a group to do something like that.

Mr. Finney said there is legislation stating the boundaries of the historic district and that the Design Review is there to review that.

Mr. Kairis noted that the Design Review Commission is a body of the City; not independent. He can't think of any other place where the City has actually assigned a non-city entity a responsibility like that. That might be getting into unusual waters.

Mr. Finney said if they don't then who is to say that a person wanting to add a mural even goes to the Main Street group? Right now there is no authority over it. The thought is to remove it from government permission and have an outside entity authorize that.

Discussion ensued regarding the approval process in other communities.

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Mr. Kairis said that there is a section in the City's Code regarding obscenity. They figured those are the restrictions out there. However, to be honest, that hasn't been a problem. He doesn't know if it's something they should be concerned about regulating. He thinks the other approach through promotion and encouragement and establishing and letting the Chamber, NDS, the CLI group or Main Street go about promoting, he thinks that can only produce the benefits they have talked about downtown or elsewhere.

Mr. Finney said the City wants to be hands off for murals. Main Street group was interested in reviewing these. How would he, as the zoning inspector, point to the Main Street group and, in essence, enforce and reinforce sending this person if they don't have legislation in place stating that's the step they have to go through.

Mr. Kairis said ideally, Main Street would have a program and hopefully some funding. They already do have a design committee. What Mr. Finney would do is point them in that direction. If they don't, there's really nothing they can do about it. If Council feels differently, whether it's directional, appointing somebody, restrictive as to the materials being used, etc. then he needs to know that then they have to go back and relook at it. The things that pointed them in that direction is that most other communities do not have restrictive ordinances. Some do. They did find some very detailed in the process a person has to go through with a separate arts council within the city that review these things. But most don't.

Mr. Rainone asked what makes a mural a mural. What if he decides to paint something advertising. What would be the difference? He could say that it's art.

Mr. Bica said that they can't do advertising. That falls under the sign code. There is some constraints there.

Mr. Rainone said what about things someone might find offensive.

Mr. Kairis said that is why he mentioned Section 666 of the City Code. It lays out in detail what is considered obscene. It becomes a somewhat complicated matter. When they start using terms like profanity and what is artistic and what is not. That's why he thinks they are better off with what is already there in terms of that component. But if you start putting in there things they have to start to define what a mural is so they can control it. If Mr. Finney wants to do that to some extent right now anyway.

Mr. Soudil said that as it stands right now, a mural was put up and the owner had the right to do that because it was his own building. He doesn't know what they are afraid of. Most people who have a building would give the okay for a mural. There are already ordinances that would take care of that. There are ordinances that take care of most everything with this. If they go past that they are going to run into problems with freedom of speech and what is art to one person and not another. He thinks they are stirring up a real mess if they start telling people what they can't do. There haven't been any real problems in other places. What are they afraid of in Ravenna? Come up with a definition and that's it. There are enough ordinances. One of the things Mr. Finney has been pushing for is once you put up a mural, it doesn't last forever because they can get it on canvass. There are some in Cleveland that looked like canvass but were probably steel. They do deteriorate and start to look bad. Then who takes care of it?

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There being no further business to discuss, this meeting was adjourned at 6:55 PM.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Robert Kairis, Chairman
Planning Committee