



**Planning Commission Minutes of Meeting  
City Commission Chambers, City Hall**

**CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL:**

A regular meeting of the Bay City Planning Commission was called to order by Lori Dufresne at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Lori Dufresne, Bob Shea, Douglas Rise, Jim Reaume, Shelley Niedzwiecki, Ashley Dardas

Absent: Dan Matthews

Excused:

Others: Staff Liaison Terry Moulane, AICP, Planning & Zoning Manager; Lisa Griffiths, Planning & Zoning Administrative Assistant; Chris Girard, City Commission Liaison

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Motion made by J. Reaume to approve past meeting minutes for June 16, 2021 as submitted.

Seconded by B. Shea. Motion carried unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT - NON-AGENDA ITEMS:**

None.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Case SPR 21-04 – 512 Backus Street – Bay City Light & Power Electric Substation.**

Present: Tracy Hutchinson, P.E., Engineer from Driesenga & Associates (by Zoom); Andrew Webster, Director of Bay City Light & Power.

T. Moulane explained he had distributed a memo to the commission members that included The Michigan Planning Enabling Act, Act 33 of 2008. He said it talked about certain projects being in an area covered by the Municipal Master Plan being reviewed by the Planning Commission to be forwarded to the City Commission for review. Based on this act, he said a recommendation could be made to the City Commission to approve the substation. The North Trumbull substation was similar. He said he did not put the application through the site plan review process because a lot of the areas would not have been applicable because of the type of circumstance the station is, but it did meet the setback requirements for the district. He noted screening recommendations could be made for the site. T. Moulane stated the project fits within the scope of the Act and the site plan review procedure process was not appropriate given the type of public utility system being proposed. The plans have been reviewed by the Engineering and the Electric Department.

Mr. Webster said the existing substation was located across the street, opposite side of the railroad tracks. It is in a tight area that was actually only meant for servicing residential customers and needed to be upgraded since it only has two circuits and is starting to meet the capacity requirements. He said the transformer, steel and concrete was from 1964-65; the regulators were from 1978 and the breakers from 1980-81. He explained they would lose their NESC specifications because of the clearances if they upgrade or add new equipment because at least 10 feet from any live parts is required from any side of

the substation. They barely meet that requirement now with the current configuration and it would not work at all if additional equipment was added. A decision was made to move to a larger site, and they approached Monitor Sugar concerning a parcel of land across the street on the west side of the railroad tracks. Mr. Webster stated the larger footprint of the new site would allow them to add two circuits and increase voltage to be able to meet the load demands of new agricultural businesses in the area. A second transformer would be installed for redundancy.

Ms. Hutchinson was in attendance by Zoom. She presented site plans using screen share and described the basic site development plan.

The property is approximately 1/3 of an acre in size situated in the NW corner of Backus Street near the railroad track right-of-way. The neighbor to the north of the property is also a railroad company. Three quarters of the site is surrounded by a fence and most of the area was covered in gravel. A driveway would circle the site and support heavy equipment and trucks. The interior would have an additional layer of gravel for the substation equipment with a storm drain underneath the gravel that would discharge storm water into a small basin on the site, then into another swale, and then into a controlled outlet structure connected to the city system that connected on the north side of Backus Street. Ms. Hutchinson explained screening had not been addressed because of the site being in an industrial area and surrounded by railroad tracks along with having very limited property for landscaping.

Ms. Hutchinson stated everything was contained in the center of the site. Safety warning signs would be installed on the fence perimeter which would also provide contact and emergency information for the substation. The site would not have water or sanitary sewer services on the site. It would be perpetually illuminated by yard lighting for safety purposes. Ms. Hutchinson noted the driveways would be curved commercial concrete surfaces. There would be three gates. The west gate would prevent access to the drive. The north drive allowed vehicles to park in a section with a gravel surface but a gated fence blocked access to the interior of the site. The third gate would be a man-gate.

L. Dufresne asked what type of fencing would be used. Mr. Webster answered it would be 10-foot chain link with a tight weave and a plastic guard across the top rail to help keep animals out. T. Moulane noted a building permit would be needed for any fence over seven feet tall.

A. Dardas asked how long it would take to be built. Mr. Webster said they anticipated having the substation online in February or March of 2022. A. Dardas wanted to know how long it would take to build the substation once construction started. Mr. Webster answered it would typically be only a couple of months.

A. Dardas made note of the houses to the west of the site. Mr. Webster said the houses were about a football field length away and that construction would only be done during the day. The construction would be contracted out to expedite the process.

T. Moulane asked if the planned clear panels along the top of the fence would be a certain width. Mr. Webster answered the panels would be two or three feet in height and sit around the top of the fence perimeter.

A. Dardas wondered if the old site would remain or be removed. Mr. Webster replied the old site would be decommissioned and dismantled once the new site was built. Usable parts would be kept.

Transformers are disposed of properly by an outside company. The oil would be recycled and tested for PCB's.

L. Dufresne asked to confirm the west gate closed right at the edge of the site. Ms. Hutchinson pointed out the location of each gate and the area where vehicles could park on the site plan. She said anything marked with a "C" was an entrance gate and that there would be concrete pads under them.

L. Dufresne asked if it were fenced between the two most eastern gates. Ms. Hutchinson replied it was. The fence ran along the west side of the retention basin. She said letter "E" was the callout on the site plan for the fencing.

T. Moulthane asked for the reason of having the gate if they were already within the compound. Mr. Webster clarified there was no gate at the eastern most entrance. Any vehicular traffic could get into that side but would not be able to access the substation without entering one of the two gates. He said they do routine inspections, and it allows vehicles to be able to park off the road. They can then enter through the man gate to get inside.

D. Rise inquired about the anticipated life of the facility. Mr. Webster said an average of 25 years but typically get a more longer life span depending on the load. He said they wouldn't envision making any drastic changes within the next 30 or 40 years.

D. Rise asked if there would be sufficient capacity for any new additional customers. Mr. Webster explained they had planned for being able to change out transformers to increase capacity without changing the fundamental structure.

Motion made by A. Dardas:

I make a motion for Case SPR 21-04 512 Backus Street based on the need for this station and as allowed in the zoning with the conditions of a building permit for fencing, curb-cut permit, and storm water management application issued by the city engineer for approval.

Seconded by B. Shea.

Motion carried unanimously. The site plan review is approved.

### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

T. Moulthane's comments:

- Upcoming & previous Zoning Board of Appeals cases were shared.
- A meeting had taken place via Zoom between planning staff and the consultant to review significant rezoning changes in the zoning maps for the new zoning ordinance. A summary of the zoning changes was presented to the commission members. Notifications will need to be sent to the affected property owners and public open-house meetings will need to be held to explain the changes.
- An application for the Zoning Board of Appeals to appeal the Planning Commission's decision to deny a site plan review for 411 S. Henry St. had been received.

- Announcement he would be the liaison for the HDC, ZBA and PC meetings until a replacement was hired for S. McKillop who had retired.
- One upcoming special use case for the August agenda regarding 521 Madison.
- New Planning Commission notebooks will be put together for all the members.

Motion to adjourn by J. Reaume, seconded by D. Rise.  
Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

*Prepared by Lisa Griffiths, Planning & Zoning Administrative Assistant*