

**City of St. Joseph Michigan  
Planning Commission  
Annual Report  
Calendar Year 2018**

**Approved January 10, 2019 by  
City of St. Joseph Planning Commission**

## **Background.**

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires the Planning Commission to complete a report annually to the City Commission discussing three specific areas. Following are the three reporting areas and the Planning Commission's report for 2018:

- A. The operations of the Planning Commission during the past year.
- B. The status of any ongoing planning activities.
- C. Recommendations regarding City Commission actions related to planning and development.

On January 10, 2019, the City of St. Joseph Planning Commission reviewed the draft Annual Report. After finding it to be appropriate, they directed staff to forward the finalized document to the City Commission.

## **Planning Commission Membership, Attendance and Training.**

During the 2018 calendar year Richard Gresens and Jack Sanderson both resigned from the Commission at time of re-appointment in May. In April 2018, the City Commission reappointed Mr. Miller to the Planning Commission and his term along with the two unfilled terms will expire in May of 2021.

During the annual organizational meeting in June, Ms. Hartzell was re-appointed to serve as Chair for the 2018-19 term, while Mr. Ebbert was re-appointed as the Vice Chair.

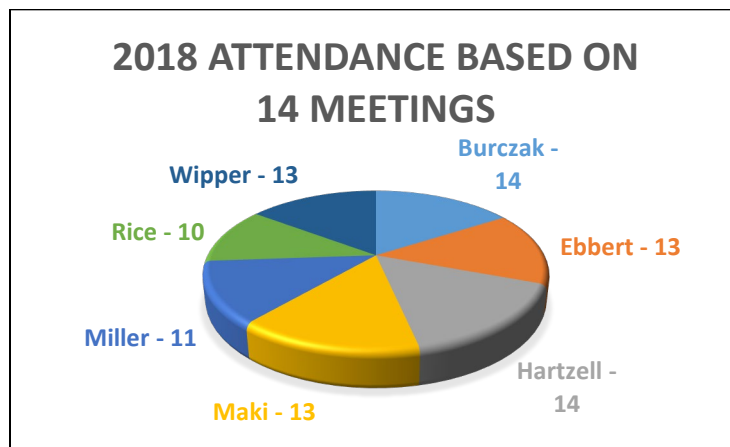
The Planning Commission was scheduled to meet fifteen times in 2018. There was one joint meeting with the City Commission, Downtown Development Authority, Parks Advisory Board and Zoning Board of Appeals to discuss the upcoming downtown planning process that is being overseen by the Downtown Plan Steering Committee. The regularly scheduled September meeting did not take place due to no quorum at the time of the meeting. However, a special meeting did take place later that month to take action on a pending application.

The fourteen meetings ranged from 0.5 to 3.5 hours for a total of 29.75 hours. Planning Commissioners spend additional time reviewing the agenda packets prior to the meeting and visiting the site. The overall member meeting attendance rate for the year was approximately 86%. Staff was informed of almost all absences prior to the meeting.

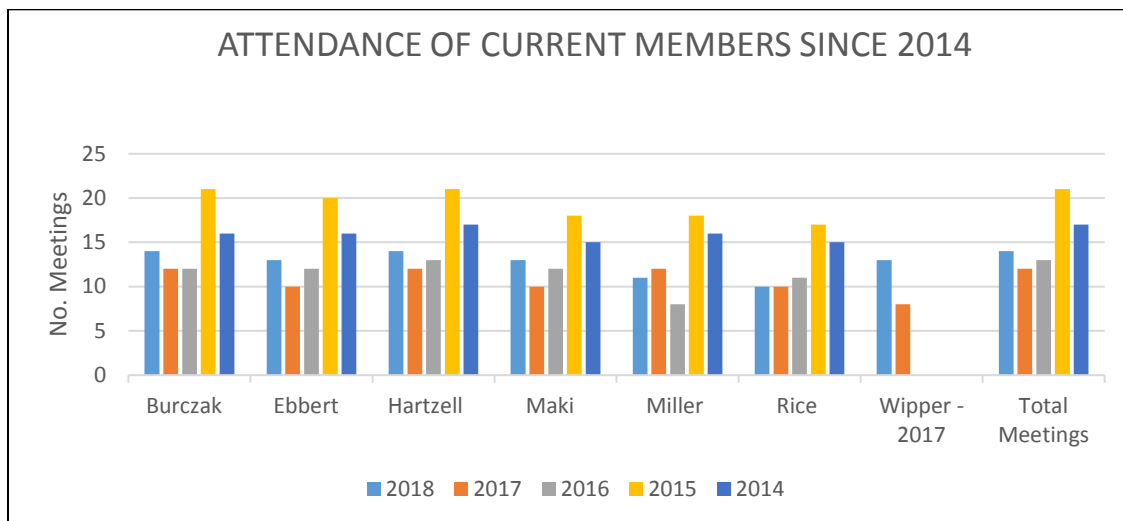
Below is a list of the members with attendance rate, appointment dates, years of service and term expiration dates.

<u>Member</u>	<u>Attendance</u>		<u>Years' Service as of Dec 2018</u>	<u>Term Expires</u>
	<u>2018</u>	<u>Appointed</u>		
Kathy Burczak	100%	5/2012	6	2020
Sean Ebbert ( <i>Vice chair</i> )	93%	3/2007	11	2019
Patsy Hartzell ( <i>Chair</i> )	100%	7/1985	33	2020
Phil Maki	93%	1/2009	9	2019
Aaron Miller	79%	7/2005	13	2021
Becky Rice	71%	2/2006	12	2019
Ceile Wipper	93%	3/2017	2	2020
Richard Gresens	33%	7/2015	2	2018
Jack Sanderson	83%	12/2014	3	2018

Chart I depicts 2018 attendance records.



Below is Chart II which depicts attendance for the current members since 2014. It shows that members are consistently attending meetings and understand the commitment when accepting appointments.



All members of the Planning Commission are encouraged to participate in additional learning opportunities. In past years, on-site training has been provided through the Michigan Association of Planning. Ms. Burczak attended a day-long conference sponsored by the Michigan American Society of Land Architects as part of her professional continuing education requirements and to help maintain her designation as a Master Citizen Planner through Michigan State University Extension.

### **Staff Support and Packet Creation.**

In 2018 the Planning Commission was staffed by Kristen Gundersen, Community Development Director/Zoning Administrator; Laurie Schmidt, City Attorney, Cecil Derringer, Chief Building Official and Trudy Wilder, Building Inspector.

All packets were created using the Granicus Legislative Management Software. Once completed, packets were typically delivered to each member the Friday before the scheduled meeting and are posted to the City of St. Joseph's "Public Hub" website section the Monday before the meeting. By utilizing the software package it has allowed for the packets to be available to the public prior to the meeting in an easily searchable format that also includes the City Commission packets.

The Community Development Director attended the following training and workshops:

1. Michigan State Floodplain Conference, Lansing, Michigan, three day conference in February 2018. Obtained continuing education credits necessary for designation as a Certified Floodplain Manager.
2. Disney Training sponsored by Cornerstone Chamber over one day in St. Joseph, MI in March 2018
3. Capital Improvement Program workshop, sponsored by the City of St. Joseph in April 2018.
4. Social Media Training, one-half day workshop sponsored by the City of St. Joseph in May 2018.
5. Understanding Tourism for Michigan Communities, one-half workshop sponsored by MSU Extension in Lawrence, MI in June 2018.
6. Damage Assessment for Local Officials, one-half day workshop sponsored by Assessors and MI State Police in Benton Harbor, MI in July 2018.
7. Breakfast, Beverage and Bright Ideas – one-half day workshop sponsored by MI Association of Planners, Holland, MI in July 2018. Obtained continuing education credits necessary for AICP membership.
8. Basic Short Course, three day long training sponsored by the MI Economic Development Association, Lansing, MI in September 2018.
9. Michigan Association of Planning – State Conference, three days in Grand Rapids, MI in September 2018. Obtained continuing education credits necessary for AICP membership.
10. Michigan Downtown Association State Conference, two days in Frankenmuth, MI in October 2018.
11. In addition attended several on-line webinars to maintain membership in the American Institute of Certified Planners and Certified Floodplain Managers.

The City Attorney attended several municipal law conferences and seminars and is sitting on a panel working on a model Sign Ordinance which addresses the Supreme Court ruling in 2015,

The Chief Building Official and Building Inspector attended two annual building conferences held by the State of Michigan to help obtain continuing education credits needed for different certifications.

### **2018 Planning Commission Meeting Information and Agenda Items.**

During 2018, the City of St. Joseph Planning Commission reviewed 12 requests. In December 2017, a request for a text amendment and a planned unit development were reviewed, however, both requests were continued to 2018. These two items were not included in 2017 counts and have been included in 2018 information. In addition, the Planning Commission discussed the following:

1. Sign Ordinance Discussion/Drafting. The Planning Commission has been diligently working on updating the existing 1980 Sign Ordinance and to address the 2015 US Supreme Court ruling. A compiled draft document has been used for most of the calendar year. While the draft sign ordinance appeared on most agendas, it was discussed during ten meetings.
2. Downtown Plan Steering Committee. In March, the City Commission held a joint meeting to start the Downtown Master Planning process which also established a Steering Committee. Two members of the Planning Commission sit on the Steering Committee and monthly updates are provided regarding the status of the planning process.

Following is Chart III which lists the different types of action items along with special projects the Planning Commission reviewed in 2018. Requests for sign variances and special sign approvals have the largest percentage actual requests, however, time involved in the review of these applications is typically less than those requiring a public hearing. As stated above, the Planning Commission held two public hearing in December of 2017 that required additional discussion and review in 2018 before a recommendation could be made. The two requests that included a text amendment and a planned unit development have been included in the 2018 counts.

Chart III

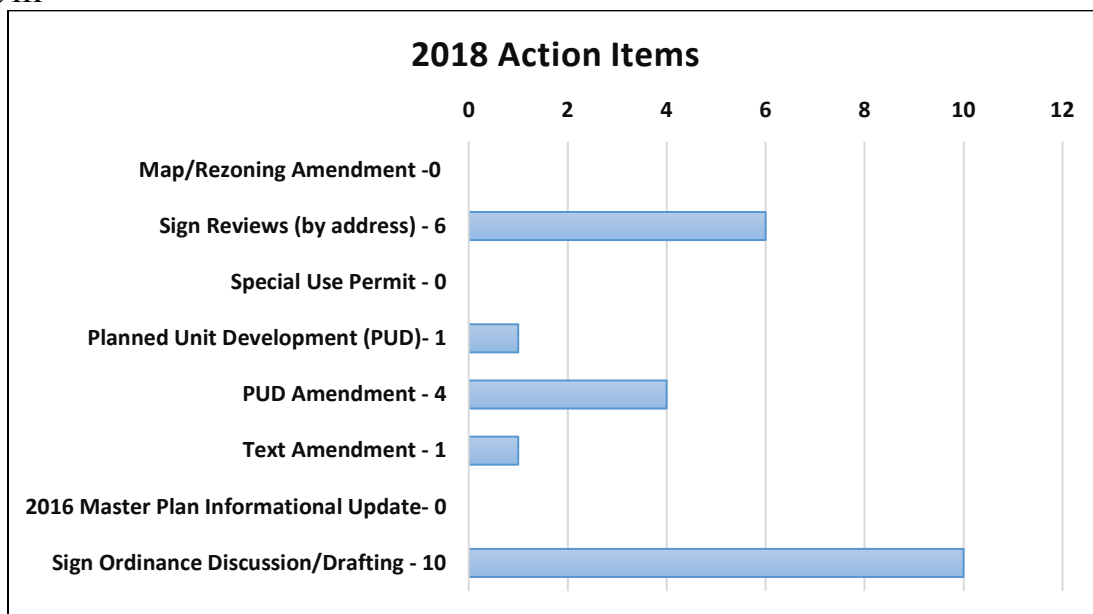
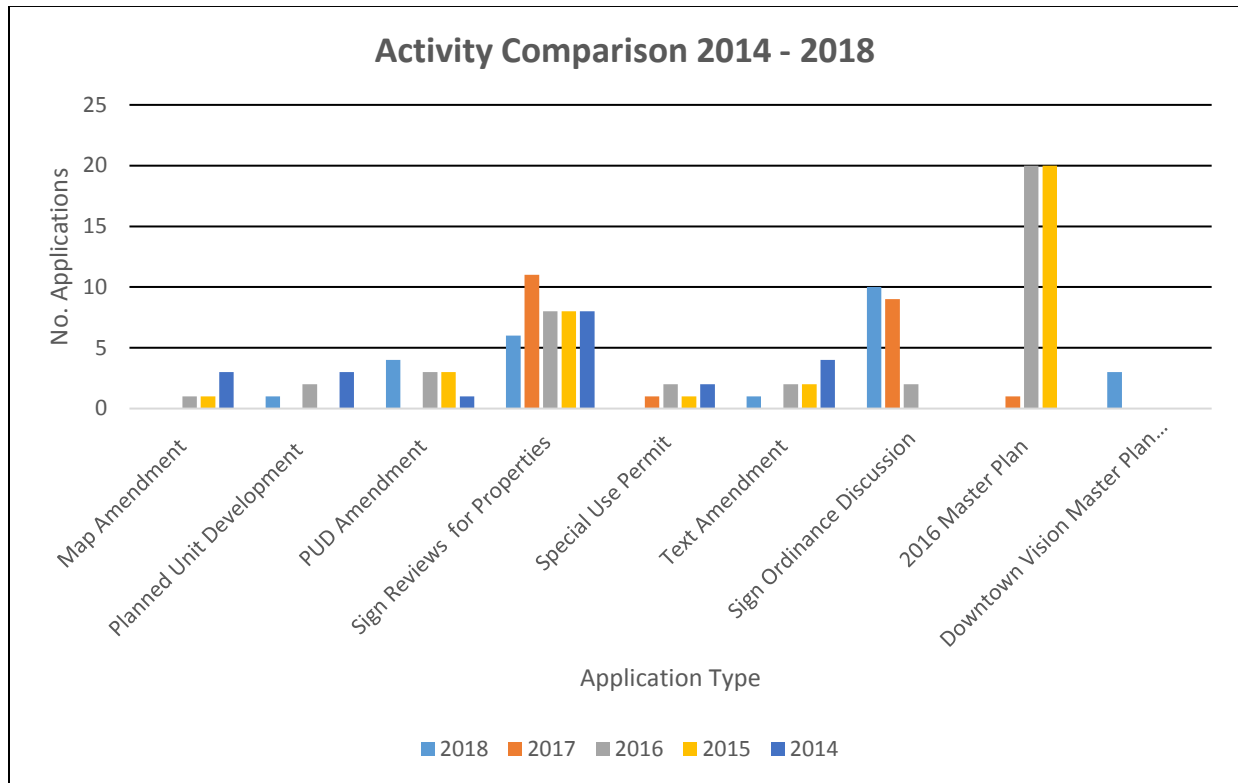


Chart IV provides a comparison of activity from 2014 – 2018. It appears that the number of requests being processed has remained relatively consistent.

Chart IV



Following is a complete list of the applications acted upon in 2018. This list provides the address, applicant name, brief description of request, month of review and action taken by the Planning Commission.

Zoning Ordinance Amendments – Map Amendment (rezoning) or Text Amendments.

- Amendments to Social Institutions in CO Districts – Area Agency on Aging. – *Conducted public hearing and continued discussion to January 2018 meeting. Recommended approval on January 4, 2018 (not counted in 2017). City Commission approved second reading of the ordinance of January 22, 2018.*

Planned Unit Developments.

- 707 Lake Blvd., 702, 708/712 and 720 State Street – Krasl Art Center - Planned Unit Development to site improvements allow garage storage building to be on new parcel. *Conducted public hearing and continued discussion to future meeting, no discussion on January 4, 2018. Continued discussion and recommended approval with conditions on February 1, 2018 (not counted in 2017). City Commission approved the request as presented with conditions on March 12, 2018.*

### Planned Unit Development – Amendments.

800 Whitwam – The Inn at Harbor Shores, LLC, Joyce Lunsford and Lion Rock Holdings, LLC – Second Amendment to PUD to allow four dwelling units on the ninth floor/roof of the building with certain waivers. *Recommended approval of the request with three conditions modified waivers on March 1, 2018. City Commission approved the request as presented and recommended by the Planning Commission on March 26, 2018.*

Southeast corner of Whitwam Drive and Harbor Village Boulevard – Harbor Shores Community Redevelopment, LLC (Harbor Village) – Amendment to 2016 Planned Unit Development and additional waivers. *Recommended approval of the request and additional or modified waivers July 12, 2018. City Commission approved the request as presented and recommended by the Planning Commission on August 13, 2018.*

420, 430 and 440 Golden Bear Court (Lots 20, 21 and 22) – Harbor Shores Community Redevelopment, LLC and David Penezik – Fifth Amendment to 2008 PUD to allow consolidation of three lots into two residential building lots. *Recommended approval on September 17, 2018. City Commission approved the request as presented and recommended by the Planning Commission on October 8, 2018*

1234 Napier Avenue – Spectrum Lakeland Health – Second Amendment to 2016 PUD to allow modifications on the east side of the existing building and parking garage. *Recommended approval on November 1, 2018 with request for investigation of additional screening. City Commission approved as presented on November 26, 2018.*

### Special Use Permits.

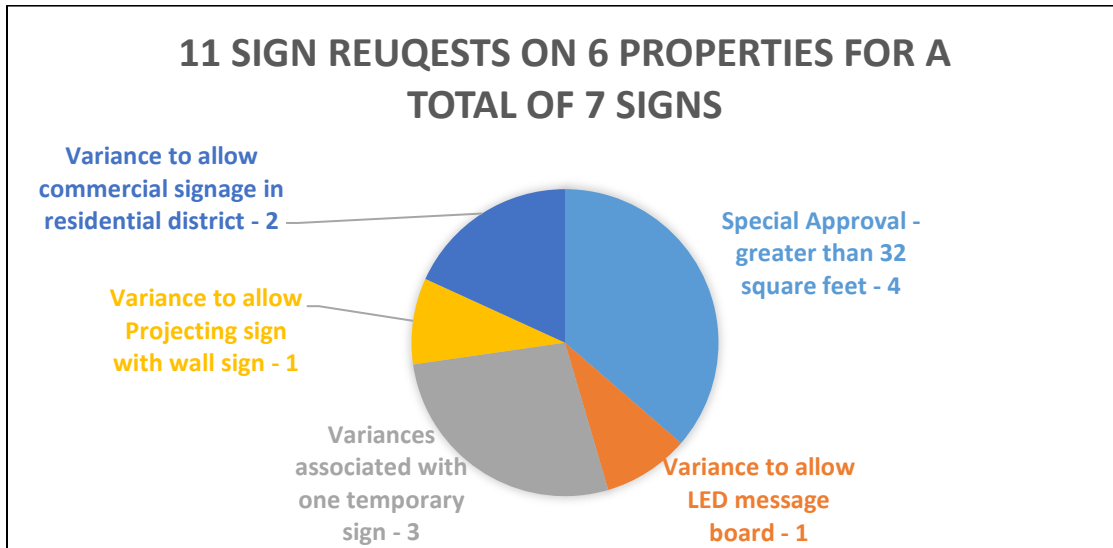
None.

### Sign Variances and Special Sign Approvals (regulations found in Code of Ordinance).

- 2844 Niles Avenue – Harding’s Market (Nate Costello) and Sign Center – 1) Special Sign approval of a sign greater than 32 square feet (actual size 94 square feet) – *Approved January 4, 2018*
- 2920 Lakeview– Area Agency on Aging and SignArt - 1) Variance to allow an LED message board; 2) Special Sign approval of a sign greater than 32 square feet (actual size 41.71 square feet) – *Approved with conditions February 1, 2018*
- 2629 Cleveland Avenue – Yoga Life and SignArt – Special Sign Approval – one free-standing sign greater than 32 square feet (actual size 49.5 square feet) - *Approved July 12, 2018 with conditions*
- 805 Van Brunt – Re/Max By the Lake – Variances to allow two wall mounted signs each being 21 square feet in size on a commercial building located in the R1-C Single-Family Residence District. *Approved October 4, 2018*
- 1234 Napier Avenue – Spectrum Lakeland Health - 1) Variance to increase the maximum display period of a temporary sign from two weeks to one month; 2) Variance to increase the overall height of a temporary sign from 10’ to 24’; 3) Variance to increase the maximum size of a temporary sign from 15 to 250 square feet; and 4) Special Sign Approval of the temporary sign greater than 32 square feet (actual size is 250 square foot). *Approved November 1, 2018*
- 414 State Street - Glicks - Variance to allow one projecting sign when there is a wall sign. *Approved December 6, 2018*

Following is Chart V, which depicts the specific sign requests made that required Planning Commission action. There were a total of 11 individual sign requests on 6 properties for a total of 7 signs. The largest number of applications submitted was for special sign approval for signs greater than 32 square feet.

Chart V



Below is Chart VI is a comparison of requests from 2016 to 2018. The request for approval of signs greater than 32 square feet along with variance requests to increase the overall height, allowed square footage and to allow LED signs has remained consistent between the two years.

Chart VI





### **Future Activities for 2019.**

In addition to the applications submitted for review and action by the public and development community, the Planning Commission will continue working on the tasks found in the 2016 Master Plan. Future activities include:

1. Complete final draft of Sign Ordinance (Code of Ordinance) to update the document and address 2015 US Supreme Court ruling.
2. Review of the Zoning Ordinance in the area of lighting, parking, landscaping, screening and other areas as determined necessary.
3. Provide assistance to the Downtown Plan Steering Committee – Two members of the Planning Commission also sit on the Steering Committee.