

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE OAK PARK PLAN COMMISSION
VILLAGE HALL- COUNCIL CHAMBER
September 3, 2015
7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Chair David Mann; Commissioners Jeremy Burton, Garret Eakin (arrived 7:09 p.m.), Mark Gartland, Douglas Gilbert, JoBeth Halpin and Greg Marsey, Monica Sanders (arrived 7:09 p.m.)

EXCUSED: None

ALSO PRESENT: Craig Failor, Village Planner; Jacob Karaca, Attorney; Floyd Anderson, Lohan Anderson Architects

APPLICANTS: Andy Stein, Clark Street Developments; Mike De Rouin, FitzGerald Associates Architects

Roll Call

Chair Mann called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. Roll was called. A quorum was present.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Mann asked for comments on the minutes from July 2, 2015. He noted a change on page 3 from South to North. Commissioner Burton moved to approve the minutes with the correction. Commissioner Halpin seconded. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Commissioner Gilbert moved to approve the minutes as submitted from July 9, 2015. Commissioner Burton seconded. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Commissioner Gilbert moved to approve the minutes as submitted from July 16, 2015. Commissioner Burton seconded. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Other Business

Presentation by Clark Street/Fitzgerald Associates on Oak Park Station Follow Up

Mr. Andy Stein, Clark Street Development, and Mr. Mike De Rouin, FitzGerald Associates Architects, were present to provide updated elevations. Mr. Stein said they worked with the Village's architectural consultant, Mr. Floyd Anderson and Chair Mann, as well as Village staff to make some of the changes.

Mr. De Rouin reviewed the items that were identified in the Findings of Fact at the prior PC meetings. Mr. De Rouin reviewed each material and manufacturer. He reviewed changes to the garage screening, which now encompasses the entire garage. He reviewed changes to the pedestrian bridge and the cornices of the north building. He said there was much discussion about the façade of the Westgate elevation. He said they decided to keep the garage screening the same there as it was in the rest of the building.

Mr. De Rouin said Sto, the stucco manufacturer, had provided a letter detailing projects that have used the product on high rise structures and the manufacturer was very comfortable with that application.

Mr. Stein said the Public Art Advisory Commission approved the garage screening as a piece of public art.

Mr. Floyd Anderson, the design consultant retained by the Village, said he met a number of times with the developer and their architects. He said the design has changed for the better and the team was very responsive to comments about the project. He said the aim was to make the design a bit simpler as there was a lot going on with the previous design. He said he was pleased with how it turned out.

Mr. Failor explained that the Board directed the applicant to work with Mr. Anderson and Chair Mann to incorporate some of the Plan Commissioners' comments into their updated design. Chair Mann clarified that any comments tonight were for staff review going forward. Mr. Failor agreed.

Commissioner Gilbert asked if the holes in the garage panels would still vary. Mr. De Rouin agreed. Commissioner Gilbert asked if the west elevation would have movement in the paneling as well. Mr. De Rouin agreed.

Commissioner Eakin said he appreciated the improvements on the garage and the pedestrian bridge was much less clunky. He said he didn't understand why the courtyard was stucco rather than brick as it seemed much more natural to go with brick. He said he was wary of vinyl windows and stucco walls in a high rise and he wasn't sure how that would weather long term. He said the Westgate building could be improved upon. He said he could support the design.

Commissioner Halpin asked why one portion of the east face of the garage was without panels. Mr. De Rouin said it was the furthest portion from the street and if someone would look at grade level down the alley it would look solid.

Commissioner Gilbert said he agreed with Commissioner Eakin on the garage panel improvements. He said he believed the bridge improved but he wasn't 'wowed' by it. He said it will be a gateway and an uncommon element for the village and maybe there could be an artistic element on the top of it. He encouraged them to continue to think about it and make it a statement piece that would work financially. He said the connection to the north building was very clunky. He said the Westgate façade was an improvement and he thought they could play with some of the angles of the garage at this corner.

Chair Mann asked if the high rise had vinyl windows. Mr. De Rouin said it will be aluminum cast window wells. Chair Mann asked if the glass was tinted. Mr. De Rouin said there was only a low-E coating. Chair Mann said the garage screening was a much more artful solution and asked how it would be lit. Mr. De Rouin said it would be lit from the inside. Mr. Failor said the PAAC preferred lighting on the inside rather than the outside. Chair Mann suggested pulling down the top screen on the Westgate façade side to keep it in scale. Commissioner Eakin agreed. Commissioner Gilbert said care was needed to not see the tops of cars. Commissioner Burton said the screening was much improved and wondered if the colors and pattern would be integrated with an artist. Mr. De Rouin agreed.

Commissioner Marsey asked about the stucco material's look- would there be hills and valleys that would catch dirt and how would it be cleaned. Mr. De Rouin said it would be cleaned with a system like window washing. Commissioner Marsey asked how often it would be cleaned. Mr. Stein said it would be cleaned per the manufacturer's guideline. Commissioner Marsey asked how it would be replaced if cracked. Mr. De Rouin said they could caulk along panels and they were planning many panels to make replacement easier. Commissioner Marsey expressed concern that replacements would not match and asked the applicants to consider a darker color than champagne that might weather better. Mr. De Rouin said they would consider it.

Chair Mann stated it was a simplification headed in the right direction and the screening could be something fantastic. Mr. De Rouin said they enjoyed working with Mr. Anderson and Chair Mann and felt together they produced a better building.

Public Hearing(s)

PC 15-03: Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment & Special Use Permit with a Height Allowance; Verizon Wireless c/o Dolan Realty (409-419 Greenfield Avenue – United Lutheran Church); The Applicant, Verizon Wireless c/o Dolan Realty, is requesting a text amendment to Article 4 (“Use Regulations”) Section 4.5.2 (U) (“Radio, Television, and other Electronic Transmitting and Receiving Devices”) of the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance. The Applicant also seeks a special use permit pursuant to Section 3.1 (Summary Use Matrix) and Section 4.5.2 (U) of the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance requesting that it be authorized to construct a wireless facility in an R-3 Single-Family District. The Applicant also seeks approval of a height allowance from the requirements to Section 3.5.3(A) (2) (Building Height) of the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance in order to install a total of three (3) proposed antennas at a centerline height of 64 feet.

Mr. Doug Dolan, Dolan Realty, project manager for Verizon Wireless, gave an overview of their application. Mr. Dolan said Oak Park has a lot of dense residential areas that cannot be reached by traditional cell towers. He said for the church site, they’ve come up with a special design that reduces the traditional nine or ten antennas to three antennas. This will help increase Verizon’s service to this area.

Mr. Dolan said the church was in the center of their problem coverage area. He said the tower would serve a quarter mile area and it would improve coverage and capacity.

Mr. Dolan said the title of the application was called William Hatch School as it was the center of the coverage area. He said the E-911 (emergency calls) service area would greatly increase and provide reliable service. He said there was no commercial zoning anywhere in this area and under the zoning ordinance they were not permitted to attach antennas to any current building; hence the need for a text amendment.

Mr. Dolan reviewed the photo simulations of the proposed antennas. He said the height was important to improve coverage, so they were extending beyond the roof of the church and most of the trees. He said there were a lot of customer complaints in this area and there were no commercial buildings or water towers to use for antennas.

Mr. Failor reviewed the staff report. Mr. Failor said they were allowing this in a very specific and in a limited location within the R-3 district. He said staff would revisit this issue as they go through the zoning rewrite process. He said staff was in support of this application as there was no visual impact to neighbors as it was on top of the chimney, painted the same color, and not very visually recognizable. He said there was a height allowance with the special use as there was a height restriction in R-3.

Commissioner Halpin asked why it was limited to only three antennas. Mr. Dolan said it was a balancing act with what fits within the site. Mr. Dolan said three would provide the coverage and capacity they needed. Commissioner Halpin asked staff if the text amendment would cover all needs for all cell users. Mr. Failor said staff was responding to the current application. Commissioner Gilbert asked why approve the text amendment with only three antennas. Mr. Failor said they wanted to keep it restrictive until the zoning code rewrite was completed. Attorney Karaca clarified that FCC regulations limit what local governments can do in terms of colocation. Commissioner Burton asked staff if applicants could put antennas up with a special use variance without amending the zoning code. Mr. Failor said R-3 regulations won’t allow for it without a text amendment. Chair Mann asked who would study rewriting the zoning ordinance on this specific matter. Mr. Failor said they might involve other commissions about specific issues in the zoning rewrite, but they were not at that point in the process just yet. Mr. Failor said the Village was looking at potentially using street lights and the right-of-way for cell antennas as well, so that may solve some issues.

Commissioner Gartland asked about neighbor notification. Mr. Failor said per the application there were noticing requirements within 500 feet of the application and the applicants also held a neighborhood meeting. Commissioner Burton asked about any health and safety issues. Attorney Karaca said health and safety issues cannot be used to determine the appropriateness of the application per federal regulations.

Commissioner Sanders asked if the frequencies would interfere with others in the area or other technologies in the area. Mr. Dolan said the antennas were very restricted on a specific band and wouldn't interfere. Mr. Dolan said the health issues have been studied extensively by the federal government and the antennas operate under very safe levels. Commissioner Marsey asked if the rental payments to the church would be tax free. Mr. Dolan said if the payments were used for charitable purposes they would be tax free.

Chair Mann said in the application it noted the antennas will be painted but in the photos they look white. Mr. Dolan said they intended to paint them.

Chari Mann asked for public testimony. As there was none, Chair Mann asked for comments from commissioners.

Commissioner Eakin said painting seems problematic as they will need to paint them every five years or so. He suggested the less visible they make it the better and that the paint be factory coated. Mr. Dolan explained it would be a special, RF-friendly paint and it would be OK to repaint for maintenance purposes. He said the antennas would be changed out every two or three years as technology changes.

Commissioner Gilbert moved to approve the text amendment. Commissioner Halpin seconded. A roll call vote was taken:

Gilbert- yes
Halpin – yes
Eakin – no
Gartland –yes
Burton – yes
Sanders – yes
Marsey – yes
Mann – yes

The motion passed 7-1.

Commissioner Gartland moved to approve the special use application. Commissioner Gilbert seconded. A roll call vote was taken:

Gartland- yes
Gilbert- yes
Halpin – yes
Eakin –no
Burton – yes
Sanders – yes
Marsey – yes
Mann – yes

The motion passed 7-1.

Attorney Karaca reviewed the draft Findings of Fact and asked for any amendments. Commissioner Halpin noted a correction on page three from devised to devices. Commissioner Sanders added on page 9, the amendment that antennas must be maintained to match the outer façade color. Mr. Failor noted on paragraph 21, the standards should be changed to the special use standards.

Commissioner Sanders moved to approve the Findings of Fact with the changes. Commissioner Gilbert seconded. A roll call vote was taken:

Sanders –yes
Gilbert- yes
Halpin –yes
Eakin –yes
Gartland –yes
Burton –yes
Marsey –yes
Mann – yes

The motion passed 8-0.

PC 15-04: Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment for Industrial Design; The Applicant, Jason Huggins, is requesting an amendment to Article 3 (“Zoning District Regulations”) 3.1 Summary Use Matrix by adding “Industrial Design” as a permitted use in the B1/B2 General Business District and the C Commercial District, and an amendment to Article 9 (“Definitions”).

Ms. Meg Nelligan, from Tapster Robotics, reviewed their application. She said the current code does not include industrial design so this amendment was needed for them to do business in Oak Park. She thanked the village staff for help in crafting the amendment. She said their company would produce robots that can be programmed to tap touchscreen devices in order to test various procedures.

She said they hold a lease at 344 Harrison Street, which was close to the Blue Line and would be a lure to engineers or potential clients in the Loop. The workspace would be used for conceiving, designing and fabricating the robots as well as the traditional business end of the company. They have been in contact with the Oak Park Arts District Business Association and they’ve been warmly received. They also have the support of their landlord.

Mr. Failor said the property is in the B1/B2 zoning district. Staff consulted with the village’s zoning consultant for the definition of industrial design and decided it would be a good opportunity to allow it in the C district as well as the B1/B2. He said staff felt there were all types of design allowed in the village and this would be one more type.

Chair Mann asked if they would consider this as a “maker space”, a hybrid of artistic and business endeavors. Ms. Nelligan agreed, saying they were considering an existing maker space in the West Loop, but felt they were beyond what was available and decided to pursue the application in Oak Park.

Commissioner Sanders asked about any chemicals and or dangerous materials on site, given the adjacency to other buildings and residents in the area. Mr. Failor said the Fire Department did question this and they would only be using water when making the models. Ms. Nelligan said the only chemical they’d be using was a half-gallon size of acetone for cleaning and it was part of the business license process to disclose it. She said in the cutting process they would be using water and the only waste would be aluminum, which is recyclable. Mr. Failor clarified it was only an 800 square foot space and it was not a manufacturing company.

Commissioner Gilbert asked if there was any concern that future businesses could move in that could be more hazardous. Mr. Failor said the business license disclosures were screened through the Fire Department. Commissioner Burton asked if disclosure also meant approval. Mr. Failor said as the Fire Department signs off on the license, he believes there is a control in place.

Chair Mann said he supported the application, saying it was a modern use for the Village and would attract like-minded people. He said the robotics program at District 97 would be very pleased to visit this space. Commissioner Eakin agreed.

Commissioner Gartland moved to approve the application. Commissioner Halpin seconded. A roll call vote was taken:

Gartland –yes
Halpin - yes
Gilbert - yes
Eakin – yes
Burton – yes
Sanders - yes
Marsey –yes
Mann – yes

The motion passed 8-0.

Attorney Karaca reviewed the Findings of Fact and noted he used the wrong calendar number, which would be corrected. Chair Mann asked for comments or revisions. Commissioner Burton added a correction to the summary-use matrix. Commissioner Gartland moved to approve the Findings of Fact with the amendment. Commissioner Burton seconded. A roll call vote was taken:

Gartland - yes
Burton - yes
Halpin- yes
Gilbert - yes
Eakin –yes
Sanders - yes
Marsey - yes
Mann - yes

The motion passed 8-0.

Other Business

Presentation by Camiros LTD on the Zoning Ordinance – Framework Plan for Madison Street

Ms. Arista Strungys, Camiros, went through the framework report. She said their goal for the project was to remove the overlapping and numerous regulations and create one zoning district for the entire Madison Street with the exception of the Hospital district and a new institutional district for buildings such as Village Hall or the Park District headquarters.

She said they want to match the form and function of the district by addressing principal, temporary and accessory uses. One principal use would be to restrict to only retail or restaurant uses on the ground floor between Home and East Avenues, but allowing for auto-oriented uses in other sections of the corridor. She said they were looking at allowing ground floor residential outside the core to increase residential density and provide use for excess commercial land. They would recommend eliminating the current 500 foot spacing requirement of hair salons.

Mr. Chris Jennette, Camiros, reviewed the dimensional standards. He said they were recommending design and building standards be incorporated into the zoning ordinance – these would be intended to address basic design elements, while still tailoring the elements to the type of structure. He said buffer yards and screening requirements would be incorporated into the district, calibrated to lot size. He reviewed the parking recommendations noting that parking ratios may need to be adjusted; such as eliminating the residential standard based on the number of bedrooms; using instead the number of units.

Commissioner Eakin asked why the recommended 50 feet maximum on height. Mr. Jennette said looking along the corridor it made sense with the existing heights along the street. Commissioner Eakin suggested more flexibility on height and requiring less parking would be better. Chair Mann asked about form based zoning. Ms. Strungys said in the zoning ordinance even with form based zoning a number must be set on height and the Planned Development process works as a good tool to handle variations on height. Ms. Strungys said the height determination was by taking into account the types of buildings they were looking at along the street, but they may be able to tailor it to the type of building that comes in. She said they want to also be sensitive to the single family side of Madison. Commissioner Eakin said he liked form based design and agreed the higher density residential was appropriate as well. Commissioner Gartland asked about the traffic lane reduction on Madison. Mr. Failor explained the road diet would be between Oak Park Avenue and East Avenue and there would be striping to reduce traffic on either side of that road diet.

Commissioner Gartland asked about the institutional district and the need for it. Ms. Strungys said it was a common type of zoning district and was a way to put institutional uses, as well as schools, in a basket. She said it serves a purpose because if a building is sold, the Village would have control over what comes next. Also, it's for the ordinance to acknowledge clusters of land uses that are institutional in nature. For example, a school located in a residential zone would not have residential standards. Mr. Failor clarified the zone would only include buildings like Village Hall, not necessarily a whole section of a street.

Commissioner Sanders said she was concerned the desire to make portions of Madison more pedestrian friendly hadn't considered the impact to the residential adjacent areas. She said the desire conflicts with the purpose of the street, which was that of a major thoroughfare. She was concerned with restricting repair shops or other vehicle-friendly shops. Ms. Strungys clarified the restriction was only between East and Home Avenues and they were trying to be sensitive to the residential areas by looking at buffering and screening and look at how much to loosen parking requirements. Commissioner Burton asked what area of the Village was designated for auto-focused businesses. Mr. Failor clarified the road diet was not on the table. Chair Mann said what was allowed currently was not working and they should be looking at what they want the street to be.

Commissioner Burton questioned the saturation of pedestrian friendly business districts with Lake Street, Oak Park Avenue and said there needs to be a place for car business.

Commissioner Marsey commended the consultants on the report, saying it captured what was needed on Madison Street very succinctly.

Commissioner Marsey asked if there would be grandfathering of the existing auto-oriented businesses and what would happen if they would like to expand or remodel. Ms. Strungys said it would follow nonconforming use regulations. Attorney Karaca explained they wouldn't be able to expand, but they could maintain.

Commissioner Marsey said he supported the elimination of the 500 foot beauty salon restriction but wondered why it was restricted from retail use. Mr. Failor said retail use was characterized by retail tax as the majority of its income.

Commissioner Gilbert asked if there were other restrictions like the hair salon restriction in Oak Park. Mr. Failor said hair salons were restricted only along Madison Street, but the perimeter overlay districts did restrict beauty supply shops. Commissioner Gilbert said it doesn't seem like hair salons should be singled out. Ms. Strungys said they were trying to concentrate the retail and restaurant in the one area to bring a cluster of uses to the ground floor. Chair Mann said the idea was to create synergy in the retail environments so compatible businesses can come together. Ms. Strungys said with the exception of Home and East Avenues, they would be loosening the restrictions on hair supply businesses in other areas of the street. Mr. Failor explained this was the first draft and they could relook at the issue and tweak if necessary.

Commissioner Marsey noted that the most densely populated area of the village was near Madison and Washington and he believes it could support that retail.

Commissioner Gartland asked why the lot coverage requirement was eliminated. Mr. Jennette said it was to allow more flexibility to the lots on Madison and to not prohibit development but still maintain open space. Chair Mann asked if the open space requirement would go away. Mr. Failor agreed but said there would still be green space based on buffer areas and perimeter requirements.

Chair Mann said the major problem with Madison Street was the depth of the lots and that was a very big issue for development. He urged the consultants to keep that in mind.

2016 Work Plan

Mr. Failor reviewed the 2016 work plan. A short discussion ensued about establishing a design review committee. Commissioners agreed to keep it on the work plan for 2016.

Mr. Failor said staff has received a planned development application for Highland Place- a residential development at Highland Avenue and Madison Street. Chair Mann said he would be recusing himself from the Plan Commission as he will be a part of this application. Mr. Failor said he anticipates it would come for a public hearing through the Plan Commission on November 5, 2015. He said they would add a special meeting on November 19, 2015 and wrap up the application at the regular Plan Commission meeting on December 3, 2015. He said another planned development application for Harlem and South Boulevard was anticipated to come in December. He said they would add a special meeting on December 17, 2015 and wrap that up on January 7, 2016. The October Plan Commission meeting may be cancelled or may be held for zoning ordinance discussion.

Adjournment

Commissioner Halpin moved to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

Angela Schell,
Recording Secretary