

PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes

March 6, 2008

DRAFT

The City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission meeting was called to order by Commissioner Kuseske at 7:00 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers, 241 W. South Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007. There were approximately 6 additional people in attendance.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Terry Kuseske, Chair; Sonja Dean; Casey Fawley; James Kneen; Merilee Mishall; Bertha Stewart; Linda Wienir

MEMBERS EXCUSED

Frank Cody, Vice Chair; Reed Youngs

CITY STAFF

Keith Hernandez, Deputy Director/City Planner; Robert Bauckham, Assistant City Planner; John Kneas, Assistant City Attorney; Amy Thomas, Recording Secretary

ROLL CALL

Planner Hernandez completed roll call and determined that the aforementioned members were present.

AGENDA (March 6, 2008)

There were no changes to the agenda.

Commissioner Kneen, supported by Commissioner Dean, moved approval of the March 6, 2008 Planning Commission agenda. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES (February 7, 2008)

There were no changes to the minutes.

Commissioner Mishall, supported by Commissioner Wienir, moved approval of the February 7, 2008 Planning Commission minutes as presented. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

PUBLIC HEARINGS

P.C. # 2008.02: Consideration of a request from August Krymis to rezone 325 and 401 N. Sage Street from Zone CO (Commercial, Office District) to Zone CC (Commercial, Community District).

Planning Commission Minutes

March 6, 2008

Page 2 of 4

Planner Bauckham gave the staff report, which is incorporated in these minutes by reference hereto. This application involves two parcels of land on Sage St. between W. Main and Stonebrook. There is a vacant building on the south parcel; an accounting firm is located in the building on the north parcel. The applicant wants to rezone the south parcel to allow a wider array of uses for the property. The north parcel is included in the request. The Future Land Use Plan for these parcels places them in the General Commercial category; this category would support a CC zoning district. The rezoning would provide continuity with the adjacent properties. The vacant building contains four tenant spaces, which could be altered or combined. The applicant has no plans to demolish the building, but could remodel it to suit future tenants.

(7:05 p.m. – Commissioner Fawley arrived.)

Commissioner Dean inquired if there is a trend in changing this area's zoning from the CO to the CC zoning district. Planner Bauckham advised that rezoning the south parcel to the CC zone would provide a wider range of options for prospective tenants. Uses such as restaurants, retail stores, and convenience stores would be allowed in the CC zoning district but not the CO zoning district.

Commissioner Kuseske referred to the traffic light on Picadilly, which is near the subject property. He inquired if the traffic associated with this project had been taken into consideration. Planner Bauckham advised that a meeting is scheduled next week to discuss traffic issues regarding the property on the north side of W. Main, which is near the subject property.

The applicants were present to answer questions.

Public Hearing

No one spoke at the public hearing.

Commissioner Kneen, supported by Commissioner Dean, moved to close the public hearing on P.C. #2008.02. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Kneen, supported by Commissioner Stewart, moved to recommend to the City Commission, the approval of P.C. #2008.02, the request from August Krymis to rezone 325 and 401 N. Sage Street from Zone CO (Commercial, Office District) to Zone CC (Commercial, Community District). With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

CITIZENS COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

None

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

None

CITY PLANNER'S REPORT

Planner Hernandez stated that 10 consultants submitted proposals for the Portage Creek Corridor project. City staff is in the process of ranking the proposals; the Stakeholders Committee will review the top three proposals.

The April Planning Commission meeting will be held in the Vine Neighborhood. Further details will be provided shortly.

Commissioner Fawley inquired as to who submitted proposals for the Portage Creek Corridor project. Planner Hernandez advised that two of the proposals are local, four are regional. Commissioners Kneen, Kuseske, Dean and Wienir are on the stakeholders group.

Commissioner Fawley inquired if a local group would have an advantage. Planner Hernandez advised that having a local office is not part of the criteria on which the consultants are ranked. However, they should be within a day's drive from Kalamazoo. Accordingly, consultants from Chicago or Detroit might be under consideration.

Commissioner Kuseske inquired if the city is required to take the lowest bid. Planner Hernandez responded in the negative, and advised that city staff is working with a budget of \$150,000 and there were a wide range of bids.

Planner Bauckham referred to the Wayside West/Franklin Valley Mobile Home Park project. He advised that the owners have plans to demolish Wayside West and construct a new commercial building in that location. There are also plans to clear the mobile home park and construct a multi-level apartment complex on that site. There are 129 sites in the mobile home park, and less than 50% of them have been occupied during the past two years. There were 43 tenant spaces occupied this week. There have been problems with late rent payments, meth labs in the trailer park, fires, arrests, etc. The park is declining and many of the homes have code violations.

The owners of the park decided that it is not financially feasible to continue this way. They have been approached by the developer of the proposed project. In 2006, city staff received the first concept plan for redevelopment of this park. In January of 2008, the owners obtained a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to allow them to build the apartments with no commercial uses in the buildings. The commercial tenants will be in a separate building closer to Stadium Drive.

One of the park residents spoke at the ZBA meeting on behalf of the residents who don't want to move. The owners sent a letter to the park residents in February regarding the proposed project. The letter provided six contacts where residents could move. Eviction notices were served at the end of February advising that the residents have 60 days to move; the law requires only a 30 day notice. There were no federal funds involved with the trailer park so there would be no federal relocation process required. Eleven of the residents either don't want to move or they want to be compensated. Most of the trailers are 20 years old or more and each one would be valued at approximately \$3,000 or less. Most mobile home parks won't accept mobile homes over 20 years old. The owners are working with Housing Resources, Inc. to find suitable housing for the

Planning Commission Minutes

March 6, 2008

Page 4 of 4

residents. It was suggested that the owners of the trailer park pay the first month's rent for the displaced residents.

It will cost approximately \$1,500 to dispose of each of the mobile homes. The owners are considering paying the displaced residents the difference between the value of their trailers and the \$1,500 disposal costs. The typical cost to detach a mobile home from utilities, move it to another facility, and reconnect it to utilities is approximately \$3,000. There is also a risk that damage might occur when the trailer is moved. Due to the age and value of the homes, such moves are not very feasible.

A formal site plan has not yet been submitted for the new development; it is only a concept plan at this point. The site plan would have to be approved and the permits issued before the plan could proceed. The owners must provide updates to city staff as they move forward with this project.

Commissioner Wienir inquired if someone would be meeting with the tenants at the trailer park. Planner Bauckham stated that Housing Resources, Inc. (HRI) will meet with the residents to assess their needs and try to help them relocate. At this point, it appears that 32 of the tenants will be moving by the end of the 60-day notice period; 11 of the residents are reluctant to move.

Commissioner Mishall thanked city staff for having a dialogue with the owners of the trailer park. She requested more details as to how the tenants might possibly be compensated. Planner Bauckham stated that the tenants rent the land, but they own the structure. The code violations have not been enforced because of the potential move. There is some value in these homes/trailers but no one is sure at this point as to how the tenants will be compensated by the owners of the trailer park. City staff suggested to the owners that they find a way to compensate the tenants for their investment and provide city staff with that plan. City staff will provide further updates at the April Planning Commission meeting.

Commissioner Wienir inquired if brownfield redevelopment funds will be used for the proposed project. Planner Bauckham confirmed that is a possibility but no commitments have been made at this point. Other city departments will also be included in discussions involving this project.

Commissioner Kuseske advised that he met with Dale Shugars and Jeff Smith of the Home Builders Association regarding urban redevelopment and green buildings. Jeff Chamberlain and Bruce Merchant are working on green policies to benefit the private and public sector.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Kneen, supported by Commissioner Mishall, moved to adjourn the March 6, 2008 Planning Commission meeting. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Keith Hernandez, AICP
Deputy Director/City Planner
Community Planning and Development