

PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes

July 8, 2008

DRAFT

The City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission meeting was called to order by Commissioner Kuseske at 7:00 p.m. in the Lawrence Education Center, Rm. #122, Borgess Hospital, 1521 Gull Rd., Kalamazoo, MI 49024. There were approximately six additional people in attendance.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Terry Kuseske, Chair; Sonja Dean, Vice Chair; Frank Cody, Casey Fawley; Merilee Mishall; Linda Wienir

MEMBERS ABSENT

James Kneen, Bertha Stewart, Reed Youngs

CITY STAFF

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

GUESTS

Mattie Jordan-Woods, Northside Association for Community Development

ROLL CALL

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

AGENDA (July 8, 2008)

Commissioner Kuseske referred to the second item under public hearings and advised that P.C. #2007.08 should be #2008.08.

Commissioner Wienir, supported by Commissioner Dean, moved approval of the July 8, 2008 Planning Commission agenda. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES (June 5, 2008)

There were no changes to the minutes.

Commissioner Mishall, supported by Commissioner Dean, moved approval of the June 5, 2008 Planning Commission minutes as amended. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Planner Hernandez advised that updates regarding the Portage Creek Reuse Plan will be posted at www.portagecreekreuse.com.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

P.C. #2008.06: Consideration of a request from International BioResources, LLC to rezone 705, 713 and 719 N. Park Street from Zone CC (Commercial, Community District) and Zone RM-36 (Residential, Multi-Dwelling District) to Zone CO (Commercial, Office District).

Planner Bauckham gave the staff report, which is included in these minutes by reference hereto. The parcel at 713 N. Park Street is currently split-zoned. The rezoning would allow the applicant to expand the former blood donation center building at 705 N. Park Street. The building would extend onto 713 N. Park Street and a new parking lot would be created at 719 N. Park Street. The CO zone would create a buffer between the CC zoning to the south, east and west and the residential zoning to the north of the parcels.

If the rezoning is approved, the vacant commercial building at 713 N. Park would be demolished. The applicants are proposing to construct an approximately 5,000 square-foot addition onto the north side of the former blood donation center building. A different blood donation center would occupy the space.

The applicants originally requested the parcels be rezoned to CC (Commercial, Community District). However, concern was expressed by some of the residents of the neighborhood that this zoning designation would allow too intense uses in the future. Accordingly, it was decided that the CO zone would be more appropriate. The blood donation center would be a permitted use in the CO zone. If the rezoning is approved, the applicant will need to submit a formal site plan to city staff for review. City staff is recommending that the Planning Commission recommend to the City Commission approval of P.C. #2008.06.

Commissioner Mishall inquired if the house to the north is occupied, and Planner Bauckham responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Dean inquired if the neighborhood association had expressed any opinions about the revised rezoning. Planner Bauckham advised that the neighborhood association has expressed no objection to the revised rezoning.

Kevin Ayers, International BioResources, LLC, Lafayette, Louisiana, was present to answer questions. He stated that International BioResources (IBR) is a rapidly growing company. There is an increased global demand for plasma products, which are used in the treatment of hemophilia and immune disorders and a variety of other things. The applicant would like to locate in an area with a low viral marker rate. It is anticipated

that the company will employ 10 to 12 people during the first few months, including doctors, nurses, medical technicians, lab technicians and phlebotomists. This is one of the most highly regulated industries in the world. International BioResources likes to make sure that all of the processes are working correctly and that all regulatory issues are in hand before they increase the number of donors they take and the number of employees at the facility. After approximately 8 months to one year, there would be approximately 25 full-time employees. It is estimated that the facility would handle between 100 and 150 donors per week. This would put between \$25,000 and \$30,000 back into the community.

Commissioner Cody inquired as to the meaning of “low viral markers.” Mr. Ayers advised that it refers to hepatitis and HIV, etc. Individuals with high viral markers are not able to donate.

Commissioner Dean inquired if the applicant is working with the neighborhood association regarding job recruitment. Mr. Ayers advised that they are not working with the neighborhood association at this time, but they will look into that possibility in the future.

Public Hearing

No one spoke at the public hearing.

Commissioner Cody, supported by Commissioner Dean moved to close the public hearing on P.C. #2008.06. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Mishall inquired as to why the former blood donation center moved from that location. Planner Bauckham stated that the Biomat moved to a larger facility in the downtown area. Commissioner Mishall inquired as to why the proposed donation center would be successful in that location versus the one that moved out. Mr. Ayers advised that he didn't have any information regarding Biomat. He stated that the new facility will be expanded and completely renovated. IBR is dedicated to providing a comfortable environment for its donors.

Commissioner Mishall inquired as to how the applicant disposes of their medical waste. Mr. Ayers advised that Stericycle picks up the medical waste one to three times per week, and then it will be incinerated. The medical waste will be kept in a freezer prior to the time it is picked up. This is a highly regulated industry and the applicant has had no issues with waste disposal.

Commissioner Cody, supported by Commissioner Wienir, moved to recommend that the City Commission approve P.C. #2008.06, consideration of a request from International BioResources, LLC to rezone 705, 713 and 719 N. Park Street from Zone CC (Commercial, Community District) and Zone RM-36 (Residential, Multi-

Dwelling District) to Zone CO (Commercial, Office District). With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Mishall inquired if adequate screening would be provided for the adjacent homes. Planner Bauckham advised that the zoning ordinance clearly states the screening requirements, and that will be addressed during the site plan review process.

Commissioner Kuseske added that the site plan review process will allow for adjustments after the official site plan is submitted.

Commissioner Dean inquired as to what uses the CO zoning designation would allow in the future. Planner Bauckham stated that offices, government buildings and medical uses would be allowed in the CO zone. Party stores or bars would not be allowed in that zoning district.

2. P.C. #2008.08: Consideration of a request from the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission to vacate E. Harkins Court between N. Burdick Street and N. Edwards Street.

Planner Bauckham gave the staff report, which is incorporated in these minutes by reference hereto. The subject property is a narrow, paved public street measuring approximately 390 feet long and 30 feet wide. The applicant owns all of the property that abuts the court, with the exception of a strip of land to the northwest owned by the Norfolk Southern Railroad. That strip of land measures 132 feet long by 9 feet wide and the Gospel Mission is negotiating with the railroad to acquire the land.

Last month, the Gospel Mission received site plan approval from the city to rebuild its facility at 524 N. Burdick St., which was extensively damaged by fire. The building will contain the used goods store for the Mission, plus storage for donated items. The store will abut the railroad property, and a new parking lot will be created on the south side of the property. The Mission would like to have the court vacated so it can be included in the parking lot and for future development of its property abutting the court. Normally, the applicant would be required to pay the fair market value of the vacated property. However, if the vacation request is approved, the City of Kalamazoo is considering exchanging the vacated property for other property owned by the applicant, which could be incorporated into a recreational trail that is being planned for downtown Kalamazoo. If the exchange is successfully completed, the applicant would not be required to pay the fair market value for the property. If the value of the street property exceeds the value of the property to be exchanged, the applicant will pay the difference to the city.

City staff is recommending that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the street vacation to the City Commission with two conditions: 1. An easement shall be provided to the city for the underground utilities in the road segment to be vacated. 2.

Continued adequate access shall be provided to emergency service agencies to the existing and future buildings on the court.

Commissioner Mishall inquired if the value of the land to be exchanged is equal. Planner Bauckham advised that the value of the land has not yet been determined. It is possible that the Mission could pay the difference in property values or they may be required to pay full market value if an agreement cannot be reached.

Dennis Jokela, Board of Directors, Kalamazoo Gospel Mission, advised that acquiring the subject parcel would be beneficial to the new facility. The warehouse burned down last summer. The railroad has owned a portion of the subject property since 1865, and the Gospel Mission is trying to negotiate with them now to transfer ownership of that land.

John Zull, member of the Gospel Mission Board, requested an explanation of the easement for emergency vehicles. He indicated that he thought the city had automatic access. Planner Bauckham advised that the Fire Marshall needs to have access so that emergency vehicles can reach buildings fronting on those streets. Mr. Zull inquired where the access would be, and Planner Bauckham pointed out the access point on the map.

The applicant mentioned that one of the adjacent buildings on Ransom would be used for temporary power and water. As soon as the new facility is completed the old building will be demolished. Accordingly, access to that building should be a moot point. Commissioner Cody inquired if the existing buildings could be accessed from Ransom Street. Planner Bauckham responded in the affirmative. He stated that the fire trucks also need to access those properties from the south. Access could be limited in the future depending on the size of the buildings that are constructed there. Also, there are utilities in the street and the city would not allow buildings to be constructed over them. The access also pertains to buildings that might be constructed on the property in the future.

Commissioner Kuseske commented that it is important to look at the present situation and make sure that everything is addressed as well as it can be to accommodate possible future changes.

Planner Bauckham advised the applicants that city staff was not directing them as to where they could put their building, just the need for access to those buildings.

Public Hearing

No one spoke at the public hearing.

Commissioner Dean, supported by Commissioner Mishall, moved to close the public hearing on P.C. #2008.08. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Mishall, supported by Commissioner Cody, moved to recommend that the City Commission approve P.C. #2008.08, consideration of a request from the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission to vacate E. Harkins Court between N. Burdick Street and N. Edwards Street, with the conditions outlines by city staff. With a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS REGARDING NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Dennis Jokela commented that he had served on the Portage Planning Commission, and that it was a pleasure to observe the City of Kalamazoo Planning Commission.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

None

CITIZENS' COMMENTS

None

CITY PLANNER'S REPORT

Planner Hernandez advised that a public meeting will be held on June 24th regarding the Portage Creek Corridor Reuse Plan. There were over 50 people in attendance at the last public meeting. This is a high turn out for a planning meeting. Contamination at the former Allied Paper Mill Site was high on the list of concerns voiced by the public. The objective is to develop a vision plan for this project. The next meeting will be held in mid-August.

City staff is participating in the Downtown Comprehensive Plan process. There has been much input from various stakeholders. The public wants a more user friendly, greener downtown and better connectively with Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College campuses.

Commissioner Kuseske advised that he participated in a focus group looking for a greener downtown with higher density. The trailway is a major focus now for people living in the area, and economic support of this project is important.

Planner Hernandez stated that people want more parking downtown. Discussions are ongoing and the process is going well so far.

Planner Hernandez advised that he is involved with the planning process for the Edison, Eastside and Vine Neighborhoods. He encouraged the Planning Commissioners to attend the neighborhood planning meetings. Commissioner Dean stated that she would provide information about these meetings to city staff.

Planner Hernandez stated that he, Planner Bauckham and Sharon Ferraro, the Historic Preservation Coordinator, met with the DDRC (Downtown Design Review Committee) to discuss updating the DDRC guidelines. Discussion is ongoing regarding dimensional issues for signs. The general consensus is that the sign sizes allowed by the guidelines are currently too small. Next steps are being formulated as part of the process of updating the guidelines.

The CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) is currently under review. Commissioner Kuseske stated that he plans to attend the next CIP meeting. The meetings will be held on the first and third Mondays of the month in the Community Room on the second floor of City Hall, 9:30 a.m. It was difficult to evaluate the CIP a couple of years ago, but now the process has been streamlined. He thanked staff at the City Manager's office for their efforts to make the process clearer. He also thanked the City Planners for their input.

Planner Bauckham referred to the issue at the Mangia Mangia restaurant in downtown Kalamazoo regarding the projecting sign. There are no specific standards in the zoning ordinance to address these issues. There is a possibility that standards which are applicable to the downtown and other areas will be added to the zoning ordinance, and the DDRC guidelines will refer to those standards.

Possible agenda items for the August Planning Commission meeting are as follows:

The Market Place Plat in the Edison Neighborhood is in a commercial zone. City staff is looking at having the parcels rezoned to a single-family/residential zone so construction of the houses can proceed.

Planner Bauckham referred to the parcel off Sage St. behind the Jaqua Real Estate building. Discussion has begun with regard to the possibility of having a senior citizen complex on that parcel, but it would need to be rezoned first. This is a possible contract zoning situation. If it is rezoned and the project doesn't proceed, the parcel would revert to the prior zoning designation.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Mishall commented that there were very few members of the public present for the July Planning Commission meeting. She inquired as to what could be done to generate more interest with the public in attending Planning Commission meetings. Planner Hernandez advised that meeting notices are published in the Kalamazoo Gazette and announcements are made at the City Commission meetings.

Commissioner Fawley commented that people are not generally interested in attending meetings if none of the agenda items affect them.

Commissioner Kuseske distributed copies of an article regarding urban redevelopment and the role universities play in that redevelopment. The article indicates that residents want to have a connection between the university and the community.

Commissioner Kuseske inquired as to the progress on the Portage Streetscape issue. Planner Hernandez stated that an employee at the State of Michigan is championing the issue, and the city might receive grant funds. However, there has been no recent progress to report. Also, MDOT and either MEDC or MSHDA was to have provided grant funds but that source is also at a standstill.

Commissioner Kuseske requested an update regarding the King Highway plan. Planner Hernandez advised that city approvals are in place. It's in the city's CIP and the City Commission approved the allotment of the city's funding portion to the project. The project is still awaiting approval from the other entities.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Mishall, supported by Commissioner Wienir, moved to adjourn the July 8, 2008 Planning Commission meeting. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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