PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
October 14, 2015
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER
7:00 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: R. Johnson, H. Jugenitz, P. Hollifield, A. Bedogne , C. Zuellig, L. MacGregor

Staff: Bonnie Wessler, Planner II
Nan Schuette, Executive Secretary

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Zuellig moved to approve the minutes of September 16, 2015 (Support: H. Jugenitz) and the motion carried unanimously.

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None

V. PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

1. 602 Emmet

Ms. Kochanek, Associate Planner, stated that this is a request for a Special Use to increase from a 9 unit rooming house to 12 rooms. The property is on a corner lot at Emmet and Perrin Streets, with frontage on Emmet. There is parking at the rear of the structure. Zoning is CN – Core Neighborhood, which allows for a rooming house after approval as a special land use. The applicant is proposing to convert an old living room and chapter room on the first floor of the house to rooms for sleeping. They plan to add bike racks and do other property improvements including a screened trash enclosure. The plans call for four parking spots at the rear of the property.

The special use criteria was reviewed, after which, the Planning Department recommended approval of the special use since it is substantially in compliance with Sec 122-165(b) and with the condition that it would be subject to approval of the site plan and that every resident with a vehicle must purchase a parking permit. Staff recommends that the site plan also be approved and listed the various findings and conditions.

Chairman Johnson asked if the property to the north is also a rooming house to which Ms. Kochanek responded that all properties around there are student residences.

Commissioner Zuellig asked the number of people allowed to occupy one room. Ms. Wessler responded that this comes under the building code. Commissioner Zuellig also asked about min sq. ft per unit as required by the housing code – do we have any idea if they meet the minimum requirement and Ms. Wessler responded that it is her understanding they are in compliance with the building code. Commissioner Zuellig's concern is that by allowing more people in one room, it would increase density of proposed use, with the possibility of being able to have a total of 24 people, which would entail more parking, etc.

Commissioner Jugenitz moved to open the public portion of the hearing (Support: A. Bedogne) and the motion carried unanimously.

Bob Beaugrand, co- owner of the property with his brother, Michael Beaugrand – was in attendance to discuss the project/property at 602 Emmet, which they have owned since August 2015. They were born in Ypsilanti as well as attending EMU and have invested over $150,000 in this property. He gave some history on the property stating that it was formerly owned by the Arm of Honor, a fraternity house. Over the years there had been many complaints about the noise and use of the property and parking, including numerous weekly calls by the Police Department, who labeled it as a drug house. The Alumni Association had declining membership which also meant declining rent and unable to pay taxes. As a result, the house was facing condemnation earlier this year and the residents were forced to vacate the property by court order. The new property owners plan to make many improvements with only one person per room. They will have a security system and video surveillance on the property and will have parking at the rear for four vehicles, each of whom must purchase a parking permit. He detailed the living areas as well as the common areas, which will consist of a kitchen, dining area and computer room. They will have a resident manager to oversee the property to ensure there are no problems and have also met with EMU officials to discuss public safety in the area and it is their intention to be good community neighbors.

He showed pictures of the property when it was first purchased and the renovations they have made so far. It has passed all the inspections.

Commissioner Hollifield asked about the property to the west to determine if it is a shared driveway. Mr. Beaugrand responded they own ½ the driveway at 604. He does not foresee any parking problems since he feels there is adequate parking. His long-term plan is to come in on Emmet, have angle parking in the back and pull out on Perrin. Commissioner Zuellig asked if the owner felt confident that the trash cans would be big enough if they were granted the additional 3 units and he responded that they would have recycling bins as well as large trash containers. Commissioner Zuellig also asked that the parking on the lot should be clearly defined adding bumper blocks to limit parking on grass, etc. Mr. Beaugrand agreed to this.

Robert Barnes, managing partner of Barnes & Barnes Properties. He is a neighbor of the applicant and commends the work that they have done on the property and agrees they are doing a good job. However, he is not in agreement with taking a nine room property and increasing it to 12 units which will add constraints to the neighborhood, making it more non-conforming.

He understands that corridor better than anyone having properties in that location for the past 30 years – this increase runs with the land. This is a very densely occupied area of our community. He listed all the various rentals in the area and the number of bedrooms in each with zero parking and by giving this special use, would make it even more of a problem with regarding to parking. All of these units have to get a parking permit from the city but there are not enough parking spaces right now.

Mike Beaugrand – applauds Mr. Barnes and knows he has done a great job with his rentals. It is his opinion they are actually reducing the use by only having one occupant to a unit and it would be reduction in use of cars. Not every student will have a car.

Bob Barnes – reiterated they are doing a fabulous job but he has 30 years' experience on that block and knows the parking situation intimately. He provides every room he rents parking space for a car.

Commissioner Jugenitz moved the close the public portion of the hearing (Support: P. Hollifield) and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Jugenitz asked about the new layout and how much common area there would be which Mr. Beaugrand repeated – kitchen area, dining area, computer room, which he felt could accommodate 12-15 people if someone had a friend visit.

Chairman Johnson asked if they would consider covered bike parking and Mr. Beaugrand agreed that this could be accommodated and he would make note of it.

After further discussion among the board, Commissioner Zuellig moved that the Planning Commission approve the Special Use Permit for the 602 Emmet Student Housing with the following findings and conditions:

Findings
1. The application is substantially in compliance with Sec 122-165(b

Conditions:
1. Special use approval shall be subject to approval of the site plan.
2. All residents of 602 Emmet with a car shall be required to get a residential parking permit
3. Staff will evaluate the parking situation within two years and work with the applicant to find a solution, if needed.

The motion was supported by Commissioner Jugenitz. A roll call vote was taken and carried unanimously 6:0.

Commissioner Zuellig moved that the Planning Commission approve the Site Plan for the 602 Emmet Student Housing with the following findings, and conditions:

Findings:
1. The application substantially complies with Sec 122-127.
2. Proposed parking is more conforming than the current parking.

Conditions:
1. New rooms must comply with the building code.
2. Resident manager contact information is required.
3. The gravel drive needs to accommodate the four parking spaces at the required minimum dimensions and shall be clearly delineated with either curb or bumper blocks.
4. Lighting is not addressed in the plans, parking needs to be artificially lit at night. A lighting plan is needed and can be administratively approved.
5. Plans call for 4 parking spaces where 12 are required. However, the 4 spaces are an improvement from what currently exists. Applicant shall make at least 8 of the bike spaces to be covered to provide a discount of two additional parking spaces, thereby reducing the nonconformity.
6. 10% of lot size is 500 sqft and is required as landscaping and plans shall be amended to show amount of space that the landscaping will occupy. Amend plans to show percentage.
7. Quality of plants needs to be addressed. Plantings must be maintained and planting plan can be approved administratively

The motion was supported by Commissioner Jugenitz. A roll call vote was taken and carried unanimously.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

None

VII. OLD BUSINESS

None

VIII. FUTURE BUSINESS DISCUSSION/UPDATES

October 21st regular meeting – 1420 Washtenaw
November 18th meeting - Parkridge

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Non-Motorized committee – appoints, resignations

Commissioner Bedogne moved to appoint Kelly Kowatch and Lena Reeves to the Non-Motorized Committee (Support: L. MacGregor) and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Non-Motorized Committee – January thru September minutes included in packet

X. ADJOURNMENT

Since there was no further business, Commissioner Zuellig moved to adjourn the meeting (Support: P. Hollifield). The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.