

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
April 19, 2017
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER
7:00 P.M.**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: H. Jugenitz, C. Zuellig, A. Bedogne, L. Dahl MacGregor, M. Dunwoodie,
P. Hollifield, T. Dennis, C. Madigan

Absent: Jared Talaga

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

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner MacGregor moved to approve the minutes of March 15, 2017 (Support: M. Dunwoodie) and the motion carried unanimously. Commissioner MacGregor moved to approve the minutes of the Joint HDC, PC, ZBA Meeting, March 16, 2017 with recommended changes by Chairperson Jugenitz (Support: T. Dennis) and the motion carried unanimously

IV. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None

V. PRESENTATION AND PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

1. Special Use and Site Plan Review

Bonnie Wessler, City Planner, presented this item stating that it is a request for approval of a Special Use for multi-family for 206 and 210 N. Washington. The property is 0.45 acres with frontage on N. Washington St. There is an existing 7,197 sq. ft. three floor apartment building with an attached 2,903 sq. ft. single story apartment building. There are two outbuildings on the east side of the site at 504 sq. ft and 407 sq. ft respectively. Parking is located to the south and to the east of the structure. The parking spaces are currently unmarked, therefore, it is unclear as to how many are currently on site.

The three story structure has been used as an apartment building since it was built in approximately 1926. In 1926, the ZBA allowed a variance from the 800 sq. ft requirement for

each family dwelling unit. No special use permits have previously been approved for the property. The one story office was added in 1944 and an addition to the rear of the office was built in 1955. The one-story addition was converted to apartment use likely at the time of the 1955 addition, but the files are silent on precise timing. A fire on January 1, 2017 resulted in substantial damage to the structure and the cost of restoration is expected to exceed the 100% of the state equalized value, thus prompting the need for a special use application under Sec. 122-205(4). At the time of the fire there were 156 units in the building; the applicant is seeking approval for 14. It was previously a 16 unit dwelling.

The parcel is zoned CN-Core Neighborhood, which allows for multiple family dwellings of more than 4 units per building after approval as a special land use. The plans submitted call for a reduction in the number of units to 14 and some additional landscaping while retaining the pre-fire site layout. A single barrier-free parking space has been added to the site with the new plans.

Ms. Wessler added that staff recommends approval of the Special Use, however, they would like to see according to the Master Plan two barrier-free units and two barrier-free parking spaces, which she has noted in recommended findings and conditions.

Ms. Wessler also stated that staff is recommending approval of the Site Plan with significant parking layout changes, which she noted in detail along with a number of findings and conditions.

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

Greg Davel, Balmoral Holdings, owner of the property – stated that all of the findings and conditions as stated by Ms. Wessler look reasonable. He added that he had not had time to explore the ADA requirements.

There was a number of questions of the owner regarding number of units and layout of apartments and how parking would be handled on-site and options for bike parking. Clarification was asked of Ms. Wessler, City Planner, on barrier-free requirements.

Commissioner MacGregor asked Ms. Wessler if Planning Commission could designate certain units to be barrier-free or if it could construct an approval that would allow for several different compliance scenarios. Ms. Wessler responded that such a Special Use permit would not be considered best practice, and was not likely to stand the test of time. Planning Commission also asked how staff would determine final compliance and the course of action were the units not made barrier-free; staff responded that they would work with the Building Department, as per usual, to ensure that compliance with the Site Plan and Special Use permit was in place before issuing a Certificate of Occupancy.

Since there were no further questions, Commissioner Bedogne moved that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the Special Use Permit for the Phoenix Apartments Restoration Project at 206-210 N. Washington with the following finding and conditions:

Finding: The application is substantially in compliance with Sec 122-165(b).

Conditions:

1. Special use approval shall be subject to approval of site plan.
2. Barrier free access into the structure and barrier-free units are not addressed. Applicant to make two units barrier-free, add barrier free access to the structure, and provide two barrier-free parking spaces.
3. Applicant to provide eight covered bicycle spaces due to the site's high walkability and proximity to transit options.

The motion was supported by Commissioner Dunwoodie. A roll call vote was taken and carried with a vote of 7:1. Commissioner Zuellig opposed.

Commissioner MacGregor moved that the Planning Commission approve the Site Plan for the Phoenix Apartments Restoration Project at 206-210 N. Washington with the following finding and conditions:

Finding: The application substantially complies with Sec 122-127.

Conditions:

1. Applicant to provide sign details with sign permit application.
2. Provide barrier-free entry to buildings from parking areas.
3. Applicant to make the following changes to the southern lot:
 - a. Narrow existing drive; it is significantly wider than the drive apron.
 - b. Install landscaped island in south-west corner of lot
 - c. Rotate parking spaces and reconfigure lot to allow for 90° spaces. Angled parking with a two-way aisle is not beneficial for maneuverability. This includes adding small curbed areas at the east end of the lot to aid in cars backing from the easternmost spaces.
 - d. Grade lot to address drainage issues (apparent per paving failures). Staff recommends a rain garden in new SW landscaped island.
 - e. Applicant to consider providing screening between southern parking area and commercial lot to the south.
4. Applicant to make the following changes to the eastern lot:
 - a. Provide one barrier-free parking space.
 - b. Ensure that a barrier-free path of access exists to proposed dumpster enclosure.
 - c. Consider adding a mirror at the one-vehicle choke point between apartment building and northern outbuilding, due to limited visibility and narrow path of travel.
5. Applicant to provide eight covered bicycle spaces, per Special Use Permit recommendations.
6. Applicant to submit revised parking plan upon redesign of southern and eastern parking areas and to include bicycle parking.
7. Applicant to install dark sky compliant lighting and provide staff with a detailed lighting plan for staff review.
8. Applicant to provide details for a compliant dumpster enclosure for staff review.

9. Applicant to provide a visual buffer of at least 80% opacity and 6' height on the south side of the south parking lot.
10. Applicant to provide an additional four trees in the front yard to meet the street tree requirement. Trees to be located between the sidewalk and the curb.
11. Applicant to maintain all existing and new landscaping in good condition.
12. Applicant to replace or repair existing fence on site.

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

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Complete Streets Staff Report

The City Planner, Ms. Wessler gave a brief staff report noting that our engineer, Marcus McNamara, OHM would provide a larger staff report. She stated that he had provided these plans for us to review, however, since it is a mill and overlay project, not a complete reconstruct, it is not subject to the complete streets ordinance. He is looking for a courtesy review and feedback from the commission.

Mr. McNamara stated that this is a project primarily funded by federal aid through WATS and run through state transportation and has design constraints, such as 11' motor vehicle travel lanes. The city has done a number of reconstructs over the years but this is just taking off the top layer of asphalt, therefore, we are limited to number of curb lines that can be installed. The project is four streets although the planning staff only reviewed three: Hamilton from Cross to Washtenaw; Congress from Elm to Ballard; and Summit from Washtenaw to Michigan.

There was a lot of discussion by all members and staff. They had a number of recommendations including the addition of proposed bump-outs everywhere new/upgraded ramps are done; no room to add dedicated bike lanes but they are adding signage and sharrows per PC request. Also, planning staff suggests bike friendly signage "Bikes may use full lane". Street trees are not eligible with the state contract – they could be added but would be 100% responsibility of the city. Mr. McNamara responded to the many questions put forth by the commission members.

Mr. McNamara will incorporate recommendations and report back to Ms. Wessler.

2. Non-motorized Staff Report

Ms. Wessler stated that back in January, Planning Commission received letters submitted by the Non-motorized Commission to MDOT requesting action on certain areas on signage and ADA ramps, which is a safety issue specifically for people in wheelchairs. The letters were specifically referring to Hamilton/Ferris, N. Huron St at Pearl, Hamilton at Michigan Avenue and Huron Street Crossing of I-94. Planning Commission had asked for a staff review of these items and recommendations on priority items. Staff included recommendations in the agenda packet dated April 14, 2017 for all these locations. Ms. Wessler reviewed each of the locations in question. While there was much discussion on all of the recommendations, including some interesting ideas and comments, it was the opinion of Ms. Wessler that the city would have to

make a strong case to the state identifying traffic counts, crash counts, lighting, and safety issues, etc. She referred to the HAWK crossing on Washtenaw between Oakwood and Cross noting that it was a five year process in order to get this put into action and completed. While Ms. Wessler did agree that there are many challenges, many of these recommendations are good long-term options.

Chairman Jugenitz stated that it was her opinion, given the complexity of the issues, that the commission does not take action tonight. She added that she would like to take concrete action at the next meeting and take some of the actions forward. She thanked Ms. Wessler and Bob Krzewinski, Non-motorized Committee Chairman, for all of the effort devoted to this issue. Ms. Wessler asked what is expected from staff for the next meeting – Chairman Jugenitz added that she would like to have a brief synopsis of the comments and suggestions that were made this evening to review.

3. Student Presentations

Commissioner Dunwoodie made a motion to move this item to the end of the agenda (Support: P. Hollifield) and the motion carried unanimously.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

1. 539 S. Huron – Site Plan Review

Since we have no new information, Commissioner Dennis moved to table this item (Support: L. MacGregor) and the motion carried unanimously.

VIII. FUTURE BUSINESS DISCUSSION/UPDATES

1. 2100 Washtenaw – Update

Ms. Wessler stated this is the dentist office on Washtenaw as you approach Hewitt from the north side of the street - they are doing an expansion and as part of that, they have submitted an easement for the non-motorized pathway to the south along Washtenaw Avenue.

2. Non-motorized

Commissioner Bedogne stated the committee is working on bike friendly applications and walk friendly applications. They have an extra meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 26th to try to tackle the application. They have some sample applications from other communities that made it through the process (League of American Bicyclists and America Walks) which will be a tremendous help.

3. Transit Station Radii

Short presentation by Ms. Wessler asking for advice from the Planning Commission. In the site plan review for 206-210 N. Washington, one of the parking discounts we gave to them was to be within 300 ft. of a transit station. The parking ordinance allows us to give 20% discount discretionary when you are within 300 ft. of a bus station, or any future rail station we may

have. The property is exactly 300 ft. from the outermost border of the station to the outermost border of 206 N. Washington. It is less than a block and a half from the transit station – it is her thought that 300 ft. is not enough and that we should consider expanding that radius. She did three buffers – 300 ft. 500 ft. and 1,000 ft. and would like some feedback. Ms. Wessler would like some direction since there are discount options of changing percentages also based on distance. After some discussion and comments, the consensus was 500 ft. Chairperson Jugenitz is interested in the idea of gradually decreasing the discount but making it applicable up to 1,000 ft. Commissioner Zuellig agreed but feels that 500 ft. would be pretty realistic. Ms. Wessler stated she will come back with more information.

IX. NEW BUSINESS - continued

1. Student Presentations

Professor Ben Tallerico, Eastern Michigan University (EMU) stated that students from his Urban Planning Class at EMU will be doing a presentation on a location of their choice in the city. This is part of their final class project and will be scored on their presentation. They will discuss boundaries, history, community development and recommendations of changes that would improve the area and the community as a whole. The first panel consisted of Briana Mason, Lucas Kempen and Chris Madigan. Their chosen area was the Miles/Garland Plan. They began with an outline of the boundaries, then proceeded with an outline of the history of the area in the 1940's, 1960's, present day conditions, and pro/cons. They pointed out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Also included was past and future city involvement with street improvements and housing. They ended their presentation with a list of recommendations on various areas and how they could be used, i.e: that the city purchase property at 601 E. Michigan, which could be used as a community space. The alley could be resurfaced to be an open area with lighting and paving; movable tables/chairs (like Time Sq.), food trucks. They provided a budget with details for each recommendation. They were limited to 15 weeks for their timeline to complete the project.

Chairperson Jugenitz stated their presentation was very inspiring. She lives in that particular area and liked the alley recommendation.

The second presentation was made by three more students, namely, Thomas Klee, Supriya Joshi and Beha. Their choice of location was the Heritage Park Neighborhood.

The group gave an outline of the boundaries and data on the area which he got from the US Census, various neighborhood groups, site Visits and neighborhood resident interviews. He stated that the area was primarily black, low income, a young neighborhood. Listing the strengths included Parkridge Community Center and Perry School and weaknesses included high poverty, low education and low home ownership. The three primary recommendations were for house painting assistance, , removal of fences from front yards, and an increase in the tree canopy giving a sense of well-being, home value and reduction of crime. They showed slides of two streets one block apart, one where there were absolutely no trees and the other that had many trees to note the huge difference in appearance. Their recommendation was to install 350 trees in the area, and while there would be an initial cost, the end result would be relatively low vs the benefits in the long-term.

Removal of fences could be done by volunteers with no cost for labor. They also recommended checking for any housing grants that could include painting of many of the homes. Their conclusion on their project was that by adding trees, removing fences and painting some of the homes, it would bring more of a sense of community to the area and personal investment of belonging, which would also encourage safety – getting to know neighbors and a feeling of pride in the neighborhoods.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Non-motorized Advisory Committee – April minutes

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Since there was no further business, Commissioner MacGregor moved to adjourn the meeting (Support: T. Dennis) and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:23 p.m.