

MINUTES
CITY OF DEKALB
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
February 6, 2019

The Planning and Zoning Commission held a Meeting on February 6, 2019, at the City of DeKalb Municipal Building, 200 South Fourth Street, DeKalb, Illinois. Chair Christina Doe called the meeting order at 6:00 PM.

A. ROLL CALL

Recording Secretary Christine Wang, called the roll. Planning and Zoning Commission members present were Chair Christina Doe, Katharina Barbe, Vicki Buckley, Ron Klein, Max Maxwell, and Jerry Wright. Commissioner David Castro was absent.

City staff present were Principal Planner Dan Olson, Community Development Director Jo Ellen Charlton, and Recording Secretary Christine Wang.

B. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA (Additions/Deletions)

Chair Christina Doe requested a motion to approve the February 6, 2019, agenda as presented. Ms. Barbe motioned to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Maxwell seconded the motion, and the motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 19, 2018 – Ms. Buckley motioned to approve the minutes, Mr. Maxwell seconded the motion, and the motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Open Floor to Anyone Wishing to Speak on Record)

None

E. NEW BUSINESS

1. **Concept Plan Review** – Request by 145 Fisk LLC, represented by Nicholas Cronauer, for review of a Concept Plan (Sketch Plan) for a proposed 40-room boutique hotel and associated commercial uses at 145 Fisk Avenue.

Charles “Chip” Bulson of Genoa, on behalf of Nicholas Cronauer - applicant, stated they would like to restore the building and turn it into a boutique hotel. He noted they had meetings with structural engineers to evaluate its use as a hotel. He presented the concept plan but stated that there was no landscape plan yet. He indicated the upper three floors will be lodging and the lower level

will be food preparation and service. He said the entryways will be re-done and there will be a new addition to the rear of the existing building. Mr. Bulson said that accessibility features would be added to the hotel, which would include elevators and stairwells for egress. He went over the site plan and access proposed for the site and noting they are providing 54 parking spaces on the plan. He emphasized that the historical presence and significance of this building is one of the reasons why it should be developed into a boutique hotel. He said the existing home at 201 Fisk Avenue to the east of the building may possibly be added to the project to provide better access and parking. Mr. Bulson said that a traffic study would be done in order to determine the proper access to the site and necessary roadway improvements. He responded to comments brought up by the property owner at 521 DeKalb Avenue by indicating they will try to save the trees adjacent to their site, however engineering/grading plans have not been completed yet. He said they would work with the owner of 521 DeKalb Avenue to possibly plant new trees next to their lot to provide shading.

Principal Planner Dan Olson went over the staff report dated February 1, 2019, and the history of the building noting it was originally constructed in 1922 as St. Mary's Hospital, and following its closure in 1964, the building was used as a girl's dormitory until its vacancy between 1970-1973. He said that from 1973-1992, the building was owned and used by School District 428 for administrative functions, before it was sold and rezoned from "MFR" Multi-Family Residential District to the "NC" Neighborhood Commercial District and a special use for medical/dental offices was approved. Mr. Olson stated that those uses were never established and a project to convert the building to luxury lofts by Midwest Estate Development LLC in 2006 also never materialized.

Mr. Olson said the petitioner is the contract purchaser, and the applicant has provided documentation for how they feel the project fits in with the goals of the City's 2025 Strategic Plan. He said that on December 18, 2018, the City Council voted to approve a Resolution authorizing a Preliminary Development Incentive Agreement for the renovation of the building to a boutique hotel and associated commercial uses. Mr. Olson noted that under the terms of the Agreement, TIF funding would be secured for the project but was contingent upon several items. Those items included obtaining the necessary zoning and plan approvals to accommodate the proposed uses and the applicant to submit preliminary plans, a zoning petition, and the necessary supporting documents within 120 days of approval of the Agreement.

Mr. Olson said several waivers to the UDO would be necessary if the project went forward. He said that one of the waivers will be to the PD-C required 50-foot buffer area adjacent to residential zoned property. He noted that another waiver would include a 10-foot parking setback along Sycamore Road, as the UDO requires this setback adjacent to any public roadway right-of-way. Mr.

Olson also said that a waiver for a 5-foot parking setback along the east and west property lines would be necessary as a 5-foot parking/paving setback is required for all interior lot lines. Mr. Olson said waivers would also be required for landscape quantities due to the reduced setbacks noted.

Chair Doe opened the Concept Plan discussion to public comment.

Robert Carlson of 3 Wedgewood Cove stated that he owns several apartment buildings close to 145 Fisk Avenue and is concerned about noise pollution and parking from the proposed use. He added his tenants are long-term, older tenants, and that noise issues could affect his investment in the properties. He said he does real estate appraisals and is therefore knowledgeable about property values.

Mr. Klein stated to Mr. Bulson that he did not believe the proposed parking was adequate and asked about overflow parking. Mr. Bulson responded they have solutions to overflow parking through discussions between other property owners and an adjacent church. He said that during times when there are no events at the hotel, parking should be adequate based on other hotels he has observed. Mr. Klein said that the proposed access to Sycamore Road could possibly cause accidents due to vehicles coming off of North 1st Street. Mr. Bulson said that those concerns would be addressed through the traffic study. Mr. Maxwell asked if the parking on Fisk Avenue is limited. Mr. Olson said the parking on Fisk Avenue allows unrestricted street parking, and any allowance for reserved parking for the hotel would have to be in a parking agreement. Ms. Buckley asked about the entrances and exits and parking while it was used as a hospital. Mr. Olson said that he believed parking was likely in the open area behind the building on the property. Mr. Maxwell asked if the property owner was responsible for the improvements to the turn lane. Mr. Olson responded that yes they would be.

Peter Gerlach of 218 Sycamore Road said this project caught his attention when the media reported on it as a boutique hotel as part of a downtown revitalization project. He said this hotel sounded expensive and it was not located in the downtown area. He said he had spoken to his neighbors and that he or his neighbors did not want this project to go forward. He cited issues with traffic and reduced property values. Mr. Gerlach added there are traffic problems now and will be made worse with this project. Mr. Klein asked Mr. Gerlach if he thought the property values in the neighborhood would be reduced with the continued deterioration of the building. Mr. Gerlach agreed that property values would drop and wished the City would buy it for a park.

Mr. Wright asked about Mr. Bulson's experience with development. Mr. Bulson stated that he had experience with construction and development, and this project would require more of an internal renovation and that it was not as large of a project as his others. Mr. Wright asked why a boutique hotel is more

attractive than a commercially owned hotel. Mr. Bulson stated the hotel would be a 4-5 star hotel and would be reasonably priced. He said a boutique hotel gives a unique experience and may be higher-quality than a commercially-owned hotel. He said a boutique hotel would therefore provide a higher-quality stay and higher-quality lodging. He said they believe a boutique hotel is needed in the current market. Mr. Wright asked about the first floor and if there were plans for food service in that area. Mr. Bulson said the plan is to have food service and a small eating area, and the food service would be intended for the public and hotel guests.

Chair Doe asked if the restaurant would be open to the public or for guests only. Mr. Bulson stated they would like the restaurant to be open to both. Chair Doe also asked about outdoor seating. Mr. Bulson stated they have not been able to evaluate it yet. Ms. Buckley asked about what kind of food service would be offered. Mr. Bulson stated it would be a higher quality than typical continental breakfasts. Chair Doe asked if the hotel would be locally owned or a national chain, Mr. Bulson responded the hotel would be locally owned.

Mr. Carlson asked if alcohol is going to be served. Mr. Bulson indicated that it was a possibility. Mr. Carlson stated that if a lot of alcohol is served at the hotel on high volume weekends at NIU, it would be a problem for adjacent property owners and residents. Mr. Klein asked if the abandoned hospital has a more or less adverse effect on property values than the proposed development.

Resident Dan Steimel stated the building is in the middle of a historic district and said the guests at the boutique hotel would likely be a more mature group than the ones previously mentioned by Mr. Carlson. He also said the acquisition of 201 Fisk Avenue would help solve the access issue. He said the hotel would be a nice addition to the neighborhood and that apartment buildings also have problems and issues.

Judith Rodeo of 222 Sycamore Road asked how many jobs this project would add. Mr. Bulson said that it would create temporary construction jobs, and then also hotel staff that would include four-five full-time employees and a few part-time jobs as well. He also stated the hotel will bring business to the rest of the City.

Nathan Books of 201 Fisk Avenue asked about the proposed mechanical equipment on the subject site and stated he works from home and is therefore concerned about noise. Mr. Bulson said the equipment used would be quiet and the HVAC equipment would be on the roof or basement, adding they want a quiet experience for the hotel guests.

Chair Doe asked about the placement of garbage. Mr. Bulson said he planned to have a completely enclosed structure. He stated that garbage service would come twice a week and the dumpster would be located in the northeast area of

the site. Chair Doe recommended that garbage should be moved from that area because it would be adjacent to the neighbors. Mr. Bulson said he could do that, and coordination of garbage pickup would also be considered to accommodate residents. Chair Doe also asked about the turning ability for emergency vehicles. Mr. Olson said that would be look at in the plan review process.

Mr. Klein asked how they would draw customers to the hotel. Mr. Bulson said that he would be finding customers mostly online. He also said that local manufacturing companies and NIU will bring guests as well. Ms. Buckley asked about signage. Mr. Bulson said they have not looked at it, but it would be minimal. Mr. Maxwell said that parking needs further review and purchasing the home to the east (201 Fisk) would help. Mr. Bulson agreed and said that he will be working with the Fire Department to ensure that there is enough room for parking.

Mr. Books at 201 Fisk Avenue said he was in support of this project and the property is not quiet as he has made multiple calls to emergency services for vandalism, people living on the property, or breaking and entering. He repeated his concern regarding traffic but voiced his support for the project.

Chair Doe asked if the Commissioners had any more questions or comments.

Mr. Wright said that he would like to see this property developed. Mr. Maxwell and Ms. Barbe agreed. Mr. Maxwell noted concern about parking and access. Mr. Klein expressed concern about the parking and access issues also. Ms. Buckley stated that she would like to see the next step with the questions brought up tonight answered. Chair Doe stated that she wants to see something happen with the building and to see it preserved but is hesitant to give full support. She noted concern about the access at Sycamore Road.

Mr. Olson said that the concept plan will go to the City Council and that neighboring property owners will also receive official notice from the City when the public hearing takes place.

2. **Public Hearing (continued)** – Petition for approval of City of DeKalb-initiated text amendments to Chapter 23 “Unified Development Ordinance” of the Municipal Code to amend Article 7.06 to further restrict the type of fences allowed, Article 7.12 to change who authorizes traffic studies, Article 12.03 to allow alternative paving materials for parking lots and driveways, Article 12.04 to modify the landscaping and berming requirements for front, side, and rear yards, Article 13.02 to allow variations for off-site temporary signs, Article 16.03 to change the reference from Board of Appeals to Planning and Zoning Commission regarding appeals, and Article 18 to amend the regulations regarding the reference to the Board of Appeals, the appeals process and clarifying what variances can be applied for.

Mr. Olson said that this was a continued public hearing from January 23, 2019, and the Commission had recommended staff do additional research on the proposed changes, particularly the alternate materials for driveways and storage areas. Mr. Olson stated that for the fence regulations, the language was amended to be more specific on what materials would be prohibited. He also noted the Commission's recommendation regarding requiring more days for traffic counts at the last meeting was relayed to the City Engineer for future traffic studies. Mr. Olson stated that in regard to construction requirements for parking lots and driveways, the comments received by Scott Schirmer of 744 Kimberly Drive were reviewed by staff. He said Mr. Schirmer wanted to allow alternate materials for secondary parking/storage areas in residential districts based upon the size of the vehicle/boat/trailer/RV being stored. Mr. Olson stated that the City Engineer reviewed Mr. Schirmer's suggestions and indicated having paver blocks less than 3-inches and not on a stone base will cause maintenance problems down the road. Mr. Olson stated the proposed language was not changed.

Chair Doe opened the hearing to public comment.

Donna Gable of 850 Sycamore Road stated she was in favor of permeable pavers for parking lots but noted she had fallen at Van Buer Plaza when it was iced over. She added that after contacting the City, she learned that there was not much the City could do because the same chemicals used on streets could not be used on the parking lot because of the paver bricks. She asked that the material regarding permeable paving be considered as well.

Chair Doe gave one more opportunity for public comment. There was none.

Chair Doe closed the public hearing.

Chair Doe asked if the Commissioners had any more questions or comments.

Mr. Maxwell made a motion to recommend to the City Council approval of text amendments to the following Articles of Chapter 23 "Unified Development Ordinance" of the Municipal Code: Article 7.06 to further restrict the type of fences allowed, Article 7.12 to change who authorizes traffic studies, Article 12.03 to allow alternative paving materials for parking lots and driveways, Article 12.04 to modify the landscaping and berming requirements for front yards, Article 13.02 to allow variations for off-site temporary signs, Article 16.03 to change the reference from Board of Appeals to Planning and Zoning Commission regarding appeals, and Article 18 to amend the regulations regarding the reference to the Board of Appeals, the appeals process and clarifying what variances can be applied for as shown on Exhibit A of the staff report. Seconded by Mr. Wright.

A roll call vote was taken. Ms. Barbe – yes, Ms. Buckley – yes, Mr. Klein – yes, Mr. Maxwell – yes, Mr. Wright – yes, Chair Doe – yes. Motion passes 6-0-1. Mr. Castro was absent.

F. REPORTS

Mr. Olson mentioned the next Planning and Zoning Commission meeting will be Wednesday, February 20th, and there are no public hearings scheduled. Ms. Buckley asked about updates on projects that had previously come before the Commission. Mr. Olson stated that he will provide the updated list of development projects to the Commission.

G. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Buckley motioned to adjourn, Mr. Klein seconded the motion, and the motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:44 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Wang, Recording Secretary

Minutes were approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission on March 20, 2019.