

PLANNING COMMISSION

February 18, 2010

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of February 18, 2010 was called to order by Chairman Fox at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Approximately ten citizens were in attendance.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jim Pearson, Rick Bosch, Cory Bailes, James Cheesebro, Miko Dargitz, Paul Welch, Wayne Stoffer, Bill Patterson and Chairman Thomas Fox.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None.

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

None.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Christopher Forth, Deputy Director of Planning and Development Services; Michael West, Assistant City Planner; and Randall Brown, City Attorney.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Planning Commission and staff recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Fox referred the Commission to the February 4, 2010 meeting minutes. A motion was made by Commissioner Cheesebro, seconded by Commissioner Bailes, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was unanimously approved.

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

1. Site Plan: Portage Animal Hospital, 8037 Portage Road. Chairman Fox referred the Commission to a February 12, 2010 correspondence from Attorney Nelson Karre, representing the Portage Animal Hospital, requesting the Planning Commission adjourn the site plan until the March 4, 2010 meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Pearson, seconded by Commissioner Welch, to adjourn the Site Plan for the Portage Animal Hospital, 8037 Portage Road, until the March 4, 2010 meeting. The motion was made at the request of the applicant and was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Final Report: Ordinance Amendment 09-B, Sign Ordinance Regulations. Mr. Forth summarized the staff report dated February 12, 2010 regarding proposed changes to the sign regulations. Following the January 21, 2010 Planning Commission meeting, Mr. Forth indicated Section 42-546(D), RM-1 and RM-2 districts, should have also been included in Ordinance Amendment 09-B since it addresses freestanding and wall signs for non-residential uses in the multi-family residential zoning districts. The changes proposed for Section 42-545(B) are also applicable to Section 42-546(D) and the staff report has been revised to include the proposed changes to Section 42-546(D).

The public hearing was convened by Chairman Fox. No citizens spoke regarding the proposed ordinance amendment. A motion was then offered by Commissioner Cheesebro, seconded by Commissioner Welch, to close the public hearing. The motion was unanimously approved. A motion was then made by Commissioner Cheesebro, seconded by Commissioner Welch, to recommend to City Council that Ordinance Amendment 09-B, Sign Ordinance Regulations, be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. Preliminary Report: Rezoning Application 09-01, Greenspire Planned Development (West Centre Avenue and Greenspire Drive). Mr. Forth summarized the revised preliminary staff report dated February 18, 2010 that was provided to the Commission in the final agenda packet and includes an updated narrative and tentative plan provided by the applicant on February 17th. Mr. Forth stated the PD, planned development rezoning application involving an approximate 95 acre tract of land was submitted by American Village Builders and The Hinman Company to facilitate additional multiple family residential development and retail/office land use along West Centre Avenue. Mr. Forth provided background information and summarized existing conditions and Zoning Code regulations and procedures for development in the PD district. Mr. Forth reviewed the PD project as proposed by the applicant and summarized the preliminary analysis contained in the staff report.

Mr. Greg Dobson of American Village Builders was present to explain and support the project. Mr. Dobson briefly summarized the history of land acquisition and development of the Greenspire Apartments, discussed the 1980 Kalamazoo Gazette article provided by Dr. Russell Mohney and stated the commitments referenced in the article would be written into the project narrative. Mr. Dobson reviewed the proposed apartment building layout in Phase IV and the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) consideration of the setback variance request in October 2009. Since the ZBA meeting, Mr. Dobson stated the two apartment buildings have been shifted slightly and will now include a 15-foot setback from the eastern property line, will be fully sprinkled and will meet all Building Code/Fire Code requirements. The layout and setback for these two buildings in Phase IV was desired to retain the overall look and feel of Greenspire. Mr. Dobson also discussed the apartment building layout, orientation, setbacks and efforts to minimize Phase V impacts on Shirley Court/Tozer Court residents. Also discussed was the planned access arrangement, retail/office uses proposed along West Centre Avenue, building construction materials and elevations. The overall density of the apartment portion of the development under the proposed PD zone would be 8.54 units/acre, compared to approximately 9.5 units/acre, which would be allowed under the existing RM-1 district.

The Commission, staff and applicant discussed various aspects of the planned development including the ZBA setback variance request, property ownership, inclusion of affordable housing units and signalization of the Cooley Drive intersection. The public hearing was convened by Chairman Fox. Four citizens spoke during the public hearing: 1) Ms. Betty Ongley (8620 Tozer Court), 2) Mr. Terry Hall (8621 Shirley Court), 3) Dr. Russell Mohney (3500 Vanderbilt Avenue) and 4) Ms. Carol Long (2208 Quincy Avenue). Ms. Ongley expressed concerns regarding possible trespassing from apartment tenants, construction vehicle access, lack of a deceleration lane on West Centre Avenue, timing for signalization of the West Centre Avenue/Cooley Drive access, condition of Shirley Court and suggested slight adjustments in Phase V apartment buildings to lessen impact on adjacent single family residences located on Shirley Court and Tozer Court. Mr. Hall expressed concerns regarding the proposed height of apartment buildings in Phase V, grade differences between these apartment buildings and his residence and the lack of mature trees in this portion of the development. Dr. Mohney thanked Mr. Dobson for volunteering to incorporate the major provisions of the 1980 agreement into the project narrative. Dr. Mohney discussed Building/Fire Code issues associated with the previous ZBA variance consideration, public notice to the State of Michigan and the condition of Shirley Court and the need for improvements. Ms. Long expressed concerns regarding traffic safety at the West Centre Avenue/Cooley Drive intersection and the need to install a traffic signal at this intersection immediately.

The Commission, staff and the applicant discussed how development density was calculated, the PD review process and ordinance provisions, the condition of Shirley Court (a private street with deeded access), signalization of the West Centre Avenue/Cooley Drive intersection and the potential impacts on the Tozer/Shirley Court residents associated with Phase V of the development. Mr. Dobson stated there are no plans to improve Shirley Court to accommodate construction traffic. Mr. Dobson did indicate the proposed drive opposite Cooley Drive would be installed at the time the Phase IV apartment buildings are constructed. No additional citizens

spoke in regards to the proposed planned development rezoning application. A motion was then offered by Commissioner Welch, seconded by Commissioner Dargitz, to adjourn the public hearing for Rezoning Application 09-01, Greenspire Planned Development (West Centre Avenue and Greenspire Drive), to the March 4, 2010 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

PLATS/RESIDENTIAL CONDOS:

None.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher T. Forth, AICP
Deputy Director of Planning and Development Services