

PLANNING COMMISSION

October 20, 2011

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of October 20, 2011 was called to order by Chairman Cheesebro at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Seven citizens were in attendance.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bill Patterson, Wayne Stoffer, Miko Dargitz, Paul Welch, Rick Bosch, Allan Reiff and Chairman James Cheesebro.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mark Siegfried and Jim Pearson.

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

None.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Christopher Forth, Deputy Director of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Services and Randall Brown, City Attorney.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chairman Cheesebro led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Cheesebro referred the Commission to the October 6, 2011 meeting minutes. A motion was offered by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Dargitz, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was unanimously approved.

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

None

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Height Modification for Celebration Cinema, 6600 Ring Road. Mr. Forth summarized the staff report dated October 14, 2011 involving a request submitted by Jackson Entertainment, LLC to expand and increase the height of the northeast portion of the Celebration Cinema building from 30-feet up to a height of 43-feet. The height modification involves one movie theatre (approximately 5,300 square feet) that will be reconstructed to accommodate a new IMAX theatre. Mr. Forth mentioned that the impacts on the adjacent residences located immediately south are anticipated to be minimal, if any, due to the location and size of the proposed building addition in conjunction with the substantial setback distances and existing screening.

Mr. Roger Lubs, Jackson Entertainment, LLC, was present to speak in support of the height modification request. Mr. Lubs noted there would be no additional lighting on the expanded building and that construction is expected to begin after the Thanksgiving Holiday and conclude in April 2012.

Chairman Cheesebro opened the public hearing. There being no public comment, a motion was offered by Commissioner Welch, seconded by Commissioner Patterson to close the public hearing. The motion was unanimously approved. There being no further discussion, a motion was offered by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Patterson, that the Planning Commission recommend to City Council approval of the height modification request by Jackson Entertainment, LLC, to increase the height of the northeast portion of the building from 30-feet up to a height of 43-feet. The Commission concluded any potential impacts associated with the height increase would be minimal since 1) the subject building area represents less than 10% of the total building footprint; 2) substantial setback distances exist between the adjacent residential neighborhood and proposed building expansion; 3) an existing masonry wall and mature (large) trees already exist to the south that is an effective screen; and 4) the Consumers Energy property to the south provides an additional buffer area physically separating the residential neighborhood from Celebration Cinema. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. Final Report: Rezoning Application #11-01, 1901 Romence Road Parkway (portion thereof).

Mr. Forth summarized the final staff report dated October 14, 2011 and the request to rezone an approximate 1.3 acre portion of 1901 Romence Road Parkway from R-1B, one family residential to I-2, heavy industry. Mr. Forth also summarized the public comment received during the October 6, 2011 Planning Commission meeting and stated that staff is recommending the rezoning application be approved as submitted.

Commissioner Dargitz suggested the Commission consider rezoning the entire approximate 34 acres to OTR, office, technology and research consistent with the Comprehensive Plan designation. Attorney Brown and Mr. Forth explained that rezoning the entire 34 acres would require a new rezoning application and public hearing process. Mr. Forth indicated that if the Commission wants to consider rezoning the entire 34 acres to OTR, then the Commission may want to review the entire corridor. This review could occur during the update of the Comprehensive Plan scheduled to begin in FY2012-2013 or could be added to the Planning Commission work program. Mr. Forth suggested this rezoning application move forward so the concerns of the applicant involving future parking needs are addressed and the Commission review the Romence Road Parkway corridor between Lovers Lane and Portage Road at a later date. The Commission discussed both options and the consensus was to act on the applicant's request and review the Romence Road Parkway corridor at a later date. Commissioners Patterson and Welch suggested review of the corridor be added to the work program. Commissioner Welch indicated he is an employee of the future Quad building tenant but is not connected to the project and therefore does not have a conflict of interest.

Mr. Stewart Mills, representing 1901 Romence, LLC (applicant/property owner) was present to support the rezoning request. Mr. Mills stated he is not opposed to the OTR district but would like time to study the district requirements. In response to delaying the current rezoning application, Mr. Mills requested the application move forward to City Council so the existing single-family residential zoning does not impede his ability to negotiate with other potential tenants and expand the parking lot, if needed. No one else was present to support or oppose the rezoning application. There being no further public comment, a motion was offered by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Dargitz to close the public hearing. The motion was unanimously approved. A subsequent motion was offered by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bosch to recommend to City Council that Rezoning Application #11-01 be approved and the 1.3 acre portion of 1901 Romence Road Parkway be rezoned from R-1B, one family residential to I-2, heavy industry consistent with the surrounding zoning pattern. Commissioner Dargitz stated she would support the motion if the parcel were part of the larger corridor study included in the 2012 work program. The motion was unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

1. 2011-2012 City Council Assigned Goals and Objectives Update. Mr. Forth explained that in November of every year City Council requests an update of the current fiscal year assigned goals and objectives. Mr. Forth briefly summarized the update. After a brief discussion, a motion was offered by Commissioner Welch, seconded by Commissioner Bosch, that the Planning Commission transmit to City Council the November 2011 Goals and Objectives update. The motion was unanimously approved.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Bosch indicated he did agree that review of the Romence Road Parkway corridor was necessary and asked if a motion was necessary. Mr. Forth indicated that if there is consensus among the Planning Commissioners to move forward with the corridor study, a formal motion would be appropriate. If the Commission supports the motion, information would be assembled by staff and presented to the Commission during a workshop meeting that could be scheduled in January 2012. After a brief discussion, a motion was offered by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Dargitz that the Planning Commission add to the 2011-12 work program review of the Romence Road Parkway corridor. The motion was unanimously approved.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Forth, AICP
Deputy Director of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Services