

PLANNING COMMISSION

April 19, 2012

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of April 19, 2012 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, Miko Dargitz, Wayne Stoffer, Dave Felicijan, Rick Bosch, Mark Siegfried, Allan Reiff, Paul Welch and Chairman James Cheesebro.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None.

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

None.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Christopher Forth, Deputy Director of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Services; Michael West, Assistant City Planner and Charlie Bear, Assistant 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 revised April 5, 2012 meeting minutes contained in the final agenda packet. A motion was offered by Welch, seconded by Commissioner Patterson, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was unanimously approved.

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

1. Valley Family Church-Kalamazoo, 2500 Vincent Avenue (Parking plan and request to exceed maximum parking requirement). Mr. West summarized the staff report dated April 13, 2012 regarding a request by Valley Family Church-Kalamazoo (VFC-K) to approve a parking plan that exceeds the maximum number of parking spaces allowed (734 spaces). Mr. West indicated the VFC-K was requesting to increase the current number of existing parking spaces from 681 to 768, 34 more spaces than allowed by the Zoning Code. Mr. West reviewed the original site plan that was approved in May 2008, along with this same request that the Planning Commission approved in July 2011. Since construction of the parking lot did not commence within six months of approval, Mr. West indicated the approval has expired. Mr. West stated the parking plan and request to exceed the maximum parking requirement are being resubmitted with no changes from the previous July 2011 approval.

Mr. Aaron Johnson, representing VFC-K, was present to support the application. Mr. Johnston discussed the sanctuary attendance and vehicular patterns of VFC-K parishioners and indicated the additional parking spaces would help address parking shortages that frequently occur and would minimize the need for shuttle bus

service from off-site locations. Mr. Johnson confirmed that the parking plan request was being resubmitted with no changes from the July 2011 approval. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Felicijan, to approve the parking plan and request to exceed the maximum number of off-street parking spaces by 34 allowing a total of 768 off-street parking spaces for Valley Family Church-Kalamazoo, 2500 Vincent Avenue, with a finding that the additional parking was necessary based on documented evidence provided by the applicant. The motion was unanimously approved.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Final Report: Tentative Plan Amendment (Oakland Hills at Centre PD), 2275, 2301 and 2401 West Centre Avenue and 8080 Oakland Drive. Mr. Forth summarized the final staff report dated April 13, 2012 regarding a request received from American Village Development II, LLC to amend the previously approved tentative plan for the Oakland Hills at Centre Planned Development. Mr. Forth summarized the proposed amendment that involves 1) the addition of a 150-foot tall wireless "mono-pine" telecommunication tower within the designated office area along Oakland Drive, 2) revision to the residential layout and reduction in the overall number of units from 116 to 107, 3) revision to the layout of the office area along West Centre Avenue and Oakland Drive and 4) an update to the project phasing timeline. Mr. Forth noted that since the March 1, 2012 meeting, the tower has been relocated to the southern portion of fenced enclosure to provide a 55-foot setback from the northern property line. Mr. Forth summarized the staff recommendation and also referred the Commission to an April 19, 2012 communication from Attorney James Marquardt, representing William Nuyen and Mangwn Properties, Inc., owner of the adjacent properties to the north.

Mr. Greg Dobson of American Village Development (AVD) II, LLC and Mr. Jonathan Crane (attorney representing Verizon Wireless) were present to explain the proposed tentative plan amendment and discuss the proposed mono-pine tower. Attorney Crane stated Verizon Wireless concurs with the staff recommendation and conditions of approval, and indicated he had spoken with Attorney Marquardt. Mr. Dobson indicated that he also met with Attorney Marquardt in an attempt to address concerns of the neighboring property owner to the north regarding the location of the proposed mono-pine tower. Mr. Dobson indicated that AVD performed a detailed review of the 47 acre PD property and concluded the Oakland Drive portion of the site was the most preferred location for the mono-pine tower. Mr. Dobson stated it was not desirable to locate the mono-pine tower within or adjacent to the residential portion of the PD planned for the interior portion of property, or, within the office area of the PD planned along West Centre Avenue due to its high visibility. Mr. Dobson stated the proposed location within the office area of the PD planned along Oakland Drive is preferred due to the lower visibility of this area, natural topography and presence of mature trees that will help the mono-pine tower better blend into the surrounding environment.

The Commission, staff and the applicant discussed the tower proposal including alternative locations, preservation of the mature trees along Oakland Drive, affects on cellular coverage if the tower was relocated to a different area of the PD and the setback of the tower from the north property line. Mr. Dobson stated relocating the tower would eliminate the opportunity to conceal the structure within the existing mature trees located along Oakland Drive. Attorney Crane summarized the structural design of the tower and referred the Commission to the letter from Verizon Wireless that indicated any catastrophic failure of the tower would be confined to a 40-foot radius around the base of the structure. Commissioner Reiff noted there is a difference in appearance between the Bloomfield Hills, MI mono-pine tower photograph and the mono-pine tower shown in the Saber Tower brochure, which staff is recommending. Attorney Crane stated the Bloomfield Hills, MI mono-pine tower is precisely what is proposed for the Oakland/West Centre location. Commissioner Reiff noted the trees limbs of the tower shown on the Saber Towers brochure extend much closer to the ground than those shown on the Bloomfield Hills tower and asked Attorney Crane to explain the difference since staff is recommending the tower as shown in the Saber Tower brochure. Attorney Crane indicated he would provide an answer during the site plan review stage. Commissioner Patterson indicated he agrees with the applicant

and staff and believes the proposed tower location has the least impact on surrounding properties and future development with the PD. Commissioner Stoffer expressed concerns about the two letters received from Attorney Marquardt and the setback of the tower from the north property line and related impacts. Commissioner Stoffer suggested that the setback of the mono-pine tower be at least 50% of the tower height and the applicant be given flexibility to either lower the tower height or determine an alternative location. Commissioner Bosch stated he agrees with Commissioner Patterson and indicated the revised location of the tower is almost five times the minimum setback established in the Zoning Code. Commissioner Welch indicated that he concurs with Commissioners Patterson and Bosch and stated that moving the tower an additional 20-feet to the south would have a negligible impact on external affects of the structure and would adversely impact future development within the PD. Commissioner Dargitz disagreed and stated that Commissioner Stoffer's attempt to balance the concerns of the applicant and adjacent property owner was appropriate. Commissioner Dargitz indicated she would like to see a further analysis of the cellular coverage and impacts on the residential portion of the PD and vehicular visibility if the mono-pine tower was to be relocated further west, near the Cole-Gavlas building.

The public hearing was reconvened by Chairman Cheesebro. No citizens were present to speak in regards to the proposed tentative plan amendment and mono-pine tower. A motion was made by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Felicijan, to close the public hearing. The motion was unanimously approved. After additional discussion, a motion was then made by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commissioner Reiff, to recommend to City Council that the Tentative Plan Amendment for Oakland Hills at Centre Planned Development, 2275, 2301 and 2401 West Centre Avenue and 8080 Oakland Drive, be approved subject to the following:

1. The 150-foot tall mono-pine tower be constructed with a minimum capacity to carry four co-locations and the mono-pine tower design include significant branches and appropriate camouflaging as identified in the Sabre Towers and Poles brochure provided by the applicant. Furthermore, the mono-pine tower shall be constructed with a minimum 55-foot setback from the north property line and a minimum 90-foot setback from the east property line.
2. The fenced area around the mono-pine tower (50-feet by 70-feet lease area) be fully enclosed by a minimum six-foot tall solid, vinyl fence (in lieu of the proposed vinyl clad chain link fence) and supplemental evergreen tree plantings (minimum 10-foot tall, spaced 10 feet on-center) be installed along the north side of the enclosure.
3. The applicant preserve the large Oak tree located west of the mono-pine tower and the existing mature tree line located along Oakland Drive to the greatest extent possible in an effort to ensure the mono-pine tower blends in with the surrounding area and to minimize the visual impact on nearby property owners, motorists and pedestrians.

Upon a roll call vote: Patterson (yes), Bosch (yes), Stoffer (no), Cheesebro (yes), Welch (yes), Dargitz (no), Reiff (yes), Siegfried (yes), Felicijan (yes), the motion was approved 7-2.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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