

PLANNING COMMISSION

February 20, 2014

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of February 20, 2014 was called to order by Chairman Welch at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Approximately 12 citizens were in attendance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chairman Welch led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Christopher Forth, Deputy Director of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Services; Michael West, Assistant City Planner; Muhammad Arif, Traffic Engineer and Randy Brown, City Attorney.

ROLL CALL:

Mr. Forth called the roll and the following Commissioners were present: Patterson, Stoffer, Welch, Felicijan, Reiff, Dargitz and Somers.

Chairman Welch indicated Commissioners Bosch and Schimmel requested to be excused from the February 20, 2014 meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Felicijan, seconded by Commission Patterson, to approve the roll and excuse Commissioners Bosch and Schimmel. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Welch referred the Commission to the February 6, 2014 meeting minutes contained in the agenda packet. Commissioners Patterson and Somers both stated they were not present at the February 6th meeting and would not be voting on the minutes. A motion was made by Commissioner Dargitz, seconded by Commissioner Reiff, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was approved 5-0-2 with Commissioners Patterson and Somers abstaining.

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

1. Final Plan for Greenspire Apartments (Phase IV), 8380 Greenspire Drive- reapproval. Mr. West summarized the staff report dated February 14, 2014 regarding the final plan submitted by H&G II, Inc. to construct Phase IV of the Greenspire Apartments portion of the Greenspire Planned Development. Mr. West indicated Greenspire Apartments (Phase IV) proposes the construction of two, three-story apartment buildings, a one-story garage building and associated site improvements. Mr. West stated the final plan was previously reviewed by the Planning Commission and approved by City Council in 2010, but construction did not commence. Since this approval has expired, Mr. West indicated the applicant has resubmitted the final plan requesting reapproval with no changes from the previously approved 2010 final plan. Mr. West also referred the Commission to a February 20, 2014 letter from the applicant that included a revised phasing/construction schedule for remaining portions of the Greenspire Planned Development project.

Mr. Curt Aardema (applicant representative) was present to support the development project. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stoffer, to recommend to City Council that the Final Plan for Greenspire Apartments (Phase IV), 8380 Greenspire Drive, be re-approved. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Special Land Use Permit: Great Lakes Convenience, 710 and 732 East Centre Avenue. Chairman Welch discussed the request by the applicant to adjourn the agenda item to the March 6, 2014 meeting. Chairman Welch asked if there were any citizens present who wished to speak who were unable to attend the March 6th meeting. No citizens responded. A motion was then made by Commissioner Reiff, seconded by Commissioner Dargitz, to adjourn the public hearing for Great Lakes Convenience, 710 and 732 East Centre Avenue, to the March 6, 2014 meeting, at the request of the applicant. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0.

2. Special Land Use Permit: Gentry Auto Sales, 7940 South Sprinkle Road. Mr. West summarized the staff report dated February 14, 2014 regarding a request by Gentry Auto Sales to re-establish a new/used automobile dealership at 7940 South Sprinkle Road. Mr. West provided background information regarding past approvals and uses including Auto World of Portage that operated from the site from January 2011 to the Fall of 2012. Since the use ceased to operate for more than six months, Mr. West stated the previously approved special land use permit had expired. Mr. West indicated the applicant was requesting to re-establish the new/used automobile dealership at the site consistent with the Auto World of Portage approval and with no exterior site improvements proposed. Mr. West also referred the Commission to a letter from the property owner (James and Diann Murphy) contained in the final agenda packet indicating support for the proposed reuse of the site.

Ms. Brenda Gentry of Gentry Auto Sales (applicant) was present to support the application. Ms. Gentry stated her and her husband owned the auto dealership and would be relocating from their current Kalamazoo location. The public hearing was opened by Chairman Welch. No citizens spoke in regard to the special land use permit application. A motion was made by Commissioner Dargitz, seconded by Commissioner Stoffer, to close the public hearing. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Felicijan, seconded by Commissioner Patterson, to approve the Special Land Use Permit for Gentry Auto Sales, 7940 South Sprinkle Road. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0.

3. Final Report: Rezoning Application #14-1 and Conceptual Plan, 531 and 605 West Kilgore Road and 5024 and 5036 South Westnedge Avenue: Mr. Forth introduced the item and summarized the February 14, 2014 final staff report involving the CPD rezoning request and conceptual plan. Mr. Forth discussed the four properties involved in the CPD rezoning request, along with various elements of the conceptual plan including the first phase (23,760 square foot Earth Fare organic food store and 3,200 square foot attached retail building), future buildings/uses, storm water management and vehicular access. Mr. Forth also reviewed the three modifications involving building setbacks, minimum lot area size and parking also being requested by the applicant as part of the conceptual plan. Mr. Forth summarized the final staff analysis of the Traffic Impact Study performed by the applicant and the proposed access arrangement for the CPD site. Mr. Forth indicated staff was recommending approval of the CPD rezoning for the four properties and was also recommending approval of the conceptual plan subject to the three conditions listed in the Department of Community Development final staff report. The Commission and staff discussed aspects of the request including minimum lot area requirement in the CPD zone and the ownership of adjacent properties to the south and west.

Andy Wenzel of The Hinman Company (applicant representative) was present to support the application and explain the development project. Mr. Wenzel discussed the adjustments made to the conceptual plan since the February 6, 2014 meeting including the elimination of left-turn movement into Lowes driveway from South Westnedge Avenue, the addition of a 3,200 square foot retail building attached to the south side of the Earth Fare building as part of Phase I and further sidewalk extensions into the development from West Kilgore Road and South Westnedge Avenue. Mr. Wenzel also reviewed the three ordinance modifications identified as part of the conceptual plan and the rationale for the requests. The Commission and Mr. Wenzel briefly discussed aspects of the proposed development including truck deliveries, retention of the existing Riveria Maya driveway from South Westnedge Avenue and planned sidewalk installation along West Kilgore Road.

The public hearing was reconvened by Chairman Welch. No citizens spoke regarding the proposed CPD rezoning or conceptual plan. A motion was then offered by Commissioner Felicijan, seconded by Commissioner Patterson, to close the public hearing. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0.

Commissioners Reiff, Stoffer and Felicijan expressed concern regarding retention of the full-service driveway at the Riviera Maya site and increased left-turns associated with the CPD project. Mr. Forth summarized previous conversations with the applicant regarding this matter and the results of the Traffic Impact Study that indicates very few motorists are using this existing driveway during peak periods, which suggests they are seeking alternative routes. Mr. Forth referred to the Alternative Access Routes Map in the Planning Commission agenda that shows several alternatives to enter or exit Riviera Maya without making a left turn at the existing South Westledge Avenue driveway. Mr. Forth summarized the potential business impacts on the existing Riviera Maya restaurant with either closure or conversion of the driveway to a right-in/right-out access. Mr. Forth also discussed the internal site design of the conceptual plan, which will minimize cut-through traffic from this driveway while not completely isolating the Riviera Maya site from the remaining project area. Although the traffic study indicates left turn movements at the South Westledge Avenue Riviera Maya driveway can be safely accommodated, Mr. Forth indicated staff will monitor the function of this driveway and if problems associated with vehicular congestion and/or crashes are identified, restrictions on turning movements will be evaluated and implemented as may be necessary. Mr. Arif summarized the internal review of this access by staff and an upcoming project which will include further evaluation of the section of South Westledge Avenue situated between Kilgore Road and Old Kilgore Road. Mr. Arif stated there were several factors to consider with the staff review of this existing driveway and continued monitoring was determined to be the best course of action with future access modifications to be made, if warranted.

Mr. Rich McDonald of The Hinman Company discussed the tenant history at the site, the challenges endured during past roadway construction projects and stated closure or modification to the driveway would be very problematic to Riviera Maya. Mr. McDonald indicated he was supportive of staff's recommendation to continue monitoring the driveway to see if any future access modifications were necessary. Additional discussion between the Commission, staff and applicant continued regarding access related issues.

There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Felicijan, to recommend to City Council that Rezoning Application #14-1 be approved and 531 and 605 West Kilgore Road and 5024 and 5036 South Westledge Avenue be rezoned to CPD, commercial planned development. The proposed CPD zone is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Map and surrounding land use/zoning pattern and will provide the applicant development flexibility while ensuring an unified and integrated commercial development project. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0. A second motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stoffer, to recommend to City Council approval of the Conceptual Plan for 531 and 605 West Kilgore Road and 5024 and 5036 South Westledge Avenue subject to the three conditions identified in the February 14, 2014 Department of Community Development staff report. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

8:35 p.m. - The Commission took a short recess.

8:45 p.m. - The Commission reconvened the meeting in City Hall Conference Room No. 1

NEW BUSINESS:

1. 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update, Introduction and Lake Centre Subarea Plan: Mr. Forth referred the Commission to draft versions of the Introduction and Lake Centre Subarea Plan chapters of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update which were included in the agenda packet. Mr. Forth provided a summary of the Introduction chapter including the purpose of a comprehensive plan, differences between the plan and zoning ordinance, an overview of the plan update process, how to use the plan and the vision for the plan. The Commission did not have any comments on the Introduction chapter of the plan.

Mr. Forth then reviewed various sections of the Lake Centre Subarea Plan including the goals and objectives for the area, market strategy summary, design guidelines and implementation strategies. Commissioner Dargitz asked if a road diet project could be done on a trial or experimental basis along Portage Road. Mr. Forth stated a project could be initiated on the non-curbed section of Portage Road south of Lakeview Drive; however, modification to curbed sections of the roadway would involve a more permanent and costly project. Commissioner Dargitz stated that some business owners were concerned about the possible loss of traffic along Portage Road with any road diet project. Commissioners Reiff and Felicijan indicated branding was very important to distinguish the Lake Centre Subarea from other areas of the city. Commissioner Dargitz stated initial thoughts from the Business Association were to implement more boardwalks, canoe/kayak rentals and/or a swimming area at Lakeview Park with pedestrian connectors to the business areas. Commissioner Dargitz stated she was impressed and pleased with the Lake Centre Subarea Plan and further comments may be provided following the next Business Association meeting on March 4th. Mr. Forth indicated a mass email was sent to Lake Centre businesses and any additional comments from business owners, citizens and/or the Commission can be forwarded to the Community Development Department.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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