

PLANNING COMMISSION

April 16, 2015

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of April 16, 2015 was called to order by Chairman Welch at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Approximately 25 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 & Neighborhood Services; Michael West, Senior City Planner; and Randy Brown, City Attorney.

ROLL CALL:

Mr. Forth called the role and the following Commissioners were present: Patterson (yes), Stoffer (yes), Welch (yes), Bosch (yes), Dargitz (yes), Somers (arrived at approximately 7:10pm) and Schimmel (yes). A motion was made by Commissioner Stoffer, seconded by Commissioner Bosch, to approve the role excusing Commissioners Richmond and Felicijan. The motion was unanimously approved 6-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Welch referred the Commission to the March 19, 2015 meeting minutes contained in the agenda packet. A motion was made by Commissioner Dargitz, seconded by Commissioner Bosch, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was unanimously approved 6-0.

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Special Land Use Permit: Deals Unlimited, 10509 Shaver Road and 2419 West Osterhout Avenue. Mr. West summarized the staff report dated April 10, 2015 regarding an application to re-establish a vehicle dealership for used automobiles at the southeast corner of Shaver Road and West Osterhout Avenue. Mr. West discussed the history of the property and the 1999 special land use permit approval that allowed David Rice Auto Sales to establish the vehicle dealership at the site. Mr. West indicated David Rice Auto Sales operated from the site for approximately 10 years, however, the site has remained vacant for the past approximate five years. Mr. West discussed existing site conditions and recommended improvements that the applicant has agreed to in conjunction with re-establishing the use at the site. Mr. West stated staff was recommending approval of the special land use permit subject to the three conditions identified in the staff report.

Mr. Jeff Arms of Deals Unlimited, Inc. was present to support the application. The public hearing was opened by Chairman Welch. No citizens spoke regarding the proposal to re-establish the vehicle dealership. A motion was then made by Commissioner Stoffer, seconded by Commission Patterson, to close the public hearing. The motion was unanimously approved. After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Dargitz, to approve the Special Land Use Permit for Deals Unlimited, 10509 Shaver Road and 2419 West Osterhout Avenue, subject to the following conditions: 1) Removal of asphalt along the western and northwestern portions of the site and establishment of a 10-foot wide landscaped greenstrip with tree and shrub plantings consistent with ordinance requirements; 2) Submittal of a revised site plan that identifies the above site improvements, along with the parking lot striping and adjustments to vehicle display areas, for administrative review and approval; and 3) Submittal of a lighting plan and related details for existing and any new outdoor lighting units at the site, for administrative review and approval. The motion was unanimously approved 6-0.

2. Preliminary Report: Tentative Plan Amendment for The Homestead Planned Development (Story Point Senior Living Facility), 3821 West Milham Avenue. Mr. Forth summarized the staff report dated April 10, 2015 regarding an application submitted by Mr. Patrick Lynch and Triple M Investment to amend the previously approved tentative plan for The Homestead Planned Development. Mr. Forth indicated the amendment proposes to replace the cottage office land use designation located along the northwest portion of the site (17.31 acres), adjacent US-131, with an independent/assisted senior living facility. Mr. Forth stated the amendment also proposes to retain the Van Riper historic homestead site (3.70 acres) as either a themed restaurant, office or as a single family residential use. Mr. Forth then summarized the history of The Homestead Planned Development since the original 1999 PD rezoning, along with previously approved amendments involving the project. Mr. Forth reviewed various aspects of the proposed 180,000 square foot Story Point Senior Living facility including the height and number of stories of various sections of the building, setback distances and elevation differences between the site and existing single family residences located to the east and south. Mr. Forth also referred the Commission to letters received from area residents that were included in the final agenda packet

Mr. Mark Murphy of Triple M Investments was present to support the application and explain the senior living facility development project. Mr. Murphy discussed the changing demographics in the United States and Portage/Kalamazoo marketplace with a growing senior citizen population and increasing demand to provide housing options for this segment of the population. Mr. Murphy summarized the concept of the Story Point Senior Living facility that will offer four levels of senior living/care (assisted living, enhanced living, assisted living, memory care living) along with related amenities that will allow senior citizens to “age in place” without having to be relocate to different off-site facilities. Mr. Murphy discussed previous meetings and discussions with residents of The Homestead and American Village Builders (AVB) and modifications that were made to the facility layout plan to help address concerns and comments received. Mr. Murphy reviewed the proposed height of the building with the three story portion of the building being located along the northern portion of the site, adjacent West Milham Avenue and US-131, and also discussed noise and traffic generation associated with the project. Mr. Murphy then presented an elevation perspective that showed the height of the facility compared to the height of existing single family homes located to the east, along McGillicuddy Lane (approximately 450-foot separation). Mr. Murphy indicated there were no immediate plans for development of the Van Riper historic homestead site (3.70 acres) and this portion of the property would be maintained. The Commission and Mr. Murphy next briefly discussed the proposed development project.

The public hearing was opened by Chairman Welch. Ten citizens spoke in regards to the proposed amendment: 1) Jack Gesmundo, representing AVB (4200 West Centre); 2) Daniel Scheid (6151 McGillicuddy Lane); 3) Dennis Groom (6070 McGillicuddy Lane); 4) Brian Gallagher (6090 McGillicuddy Lane); 5) Brenda Morren (1622 Bacon); 6) Julie Bossch (6286 McGillicuddy Lane); 7) Shabnam Ahmad (6110 McGillicuddy Lane); 8) Louis Cherico (6130 McGillicuddy Lane); 9) Shawn Sullivan (6441 Cully’s Trail); and 10) Kent Alleman (6061 McGillicuddy Lane). Mr. Gesmundo stated that AVB and Mr. Lynch were the original applicants of The Homestead Planned Development in 2001 and that AVB has built and sold more than 60 single family homes so far with an average value in excess of \$500,000. Mr. Gesmundo indicated the senior living facility was a good use for the property and that AVB and the homeowners supported the project subject to three considerations: 1) A significant landscaped berm with large evergreen trees being installed along the south side of the property (adjacent the Consumers Energy Company electrical transmission lines) and along the east side of the Van Riper historic homestead site, as previously proposed with the 2006 Villas at Secret Garden condominiums and themed restaurant project (Mr. Gesmundo presented copies of previously approved plans for the landscaped berm along the east side of the Van Riper historic homestead site); 2) The senior living facility building being constructed consistent with the architectural character and materials identified on the building elevation drawing included in the Planning Commission agenda; and 3) A more natural design and configuration to the storm water basin proposed along the southwest portion of the site and provisions to ensure the southern portion of the property be retained as open spaces with no future buildings or structures allowed. Mr. Scheid stated he concurs with the statements of Mr. Gesmundo and also asked that any approval include long term maintenance responsibilities for landscaping, proper soil erosion controls to protect existing trees and no access/traffic be permitted from McGillicuddy Lane. Mr. Groom expressed concerns with the entry drive location from West Milham Avenue (shift further west to be centered in building) and stated a trail connection to

McGillicuddy Lane should also be required. Mr. Gallagher stated that retention of the mature trees on the Van Riper historic homestead site and installation of the landscaped berm and evergreen trees is critical to screen the 3-story senior living facility from the McGillicuddy Lane residents. Mr. Gallagher also expressed concerns about outdoor lighting and noise associated with deliveries along the east side of the facility. Ms. Morren discussed the need for more historic markers across the city. Ms. Bossch stated she lives directly south of the development, at the corner of McGillicuddy Lane and Tullymore Court, and will have a direct view of the senior living facility. Ms. Bossch stated she supports the use, however, believes a significant berm with large evergreen trees needs to be constructed along the southern portion of the property. Mr. Ahmad, Mr. Cherico and Mr. Alleman stated they also support the senior living facility use with the concerns previously voiced by Mr. Gesmundo and the other neighbors. Mr. Sullivan indicated the 3-story structure was inconsistent with the adjacent residential neighborhood.

After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Bosch, seconded by Commission Somers, to adjourn the public hearing for Tentative Plan Amendment for The Homestead Planned Development (Story Point Senior Living Facility), 3821 West Milham Avenue, to the May 7, 2015 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Ordinance Amendment 14/15-B, Site Plan Review. Mr. Forth summarized the staff report dated March 27, 2015 regarding proposed changes to Zoning Code regulations pertaining to site plan review that would increase the square footage of industrial site plans that can be administratively reviewed/approved from 20,000 square feet to 50,000 square feet, eliminate the two acre maximum requirement and subject the northeast corner of Portage Road and Romence Road to site plan review. Mr. Forth indicated the proposed changes were intended to streamline the development review process and improve “speed to permitting”. Mr. Forth asked if the Commission had any questions prior to scheduling the public hearing.

Commissioner Bosch asked what the connection is between the 20,000 square feet of building area and the two acre provisions. Mr. Forth stated 20,000 square feet is approximately 25% lot coverage on a two acre parcel. Mr. Forth indicated that since the intensity of the use is driven by the size of the development project and not the size of the overall property, staff is recommending eliminating the two acre zoning lot reference. Commissioner Bosch stated he did not have any issue with the proposed 50,000 square foot limit for administrative review/approval of industrial developments, but asked if the 20,000 square foot limit for administrative review/approval of commercial development was too high. Mr. Forth stated the 20,000 square foot limit has been in place since the 2003 Zoning Code update and there haven’t been any issues with administrative site plan reviews. Mr. Forth indicated the ordinance allows the Director of Community Development to refer site plans to the Planning Commission for review/approval where significant development issues or circumstances may exist. Mr. West indicated the proposed ordinance change involving elimination of the two acre provision was based on staff experiences during the past 12 years of administratively reviewing site plans (e.g., a 15,000 square foot new development on two acres could be administratively approved, while a 2,000 square foot new development on three acres could not).

After additional discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Dargitz, seconded by Commissioner Schimmel, to set a public hearing for May 7, 2015 to formerly consider Ordinance Amendment 14/15-B, Site Plan Review. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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