

CITY OF PORTAGE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, March 2, 2023
7:00 PM Portage
Portage City Hall Council Chambers

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of March 2, 2023, was called to order by Chair Corradini at 7:00 p.m.

IN ATTENDANCE

- Biqi Zhao, Deputy Director of Planning and Zoning
- Jonathon Hallberg, Interim Director of Community Development
- Catherine Kaufman, City Attorney

ROLL CALL

Ms. Zhao called the roll: Chairman Corradini (yes); Vice Chair Joshi (yes); Fries (yes); Pezzoli (no); Baldwin (yes); Adams (yes); Youngs (yes); Kasper (yes); and Freiman (yes).

Motion by Commissioner Youngs, seconded by Commissioner Baldwin to excuse Commissioner Pezzoli. Motion carried 8-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Minutes dated February 16, 2023.

Motion by Commissioner Fries, seconded by Vice Chair Joshi to approve the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of February 16, 2023, as submitted. Motion carried 8-0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Rezoning application No. 22/23-8 to rezone 7438 Lovers Lane from R-1B One-Family Residential to R-1T Attached Residential for future duplex developments.

Ms. Zhao presented and summarized the proposed rezoning application, stated various elements of the subject site and neighborhood, showed various pictures of the site, and a survey of a recently-approved land division of the subject site. She showed a table indicating differences between the existing R-1B district and proposed R-1T district. Also, she showed required R-1T development standards. Ms. Zhao indicated that the proposed rezoning requires Planning Commission recommendation and City Council vote, both at public hearings. Ms. Zhao presented staff's analysis indicating consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, and alignment with the Council's goals of attracting residential development. Ms. Zhao stated that the City has not received any public comments on this proposal until the day of this meeting (3/2/23). She concluded with the recommended action: "If no additional public comment is requested and the Commission is supportive of the proposed rezone request, staff advises the Planning Commission to recommend to City Council the approval of rezoning application no. 22/23-8 to R-1T Attachment Residential to expand residential development opportunities."

The applicant, Mike West, presented and summarized the overall size and shape of the lot; indicated that the subject site has been divided; indicated that there are multiple utility leads serving the property from Lovers Lane. He stated a conceptual development of a future duplex with a density of 1.8 units per acre, less than the maximum density of R-1T district. Mr. West addressed that he believes the proposal is compatible with the City's Comprehensive Plan; it is adjacent to other similar attached housing proposal; and requests Planning Commission support.

Chair Corradini opened public hearing. Public testimonies are as follows:

- 1) Mike Ashby, 7416 Lovers Lane. Indicated concerns about size of lot to accommodate future housing, preservation of natural vegetation for wildlife, and opposes the rezoning.
- 2) George Gerth, 7426 Lovers Lane. Indicated concerns about perceived growth impact on open space around his property, concerns about lack of site maintenance of subject site, and opposes the rezoning.
- 3) Colleen Poot, 7402 Lovers Lane. Indicated concerns about aesthetics of street corner with future development, concerns about perceived increased traffic and headlight impact from the rezoning, concerns about perceived impact to wildlife in the area, concerns about perceived future redevelopment creep in the neighborhood, and opposes the rezoning.

Motion by Commissioner Adams, seconded by Vice Chair Joshi to close public hearing. Motion carried 8-0.

Chair Corradini clarified that the Planning Commission's action on the rezoning is a recommendation. And the rezoning proposal will be forwarded to the City Council where another public hearing will be provided, and the Council will vote on the rezoning proposal.

Motion by Vice Chair Joshi, seconded by Commissioner Fries to recommend to City Council the approval of rezoning application no. 22/23-8 to rezone 7438 Lovers Lane from R-1B One-Family Residential to R-1T Attachment Residential to expand residential development opportunities. Ms. Zhao called the roll for the motion: Chairman Corradini (yes); Vice Chair Joshi (yes); Fries (yes); Pezzoli (no); Baldwin (yes); Adams (yes); Youngs (yes); Kasper (yes); and Freiman (yes). Motion carried 8-0.

2. An additional accessory building space for a proposed pole barn at 10042 Terry Ln (parcel no: 04741-041-A) and 520 Bacon Ave. (parcel no: 04740-001-B).

Ms. Zhao presented and summarized the proposal, stated various elements of the subject site and neighborhood, showed various pictures of the site, provided a table of all existing and proposed buildings, and summarized the total existing accessory building space and proposed total accessory building space. She explained the applicable zoning code regulation for Planning Commission consideration. Ms. Zhao provided staff's analysis of the replacement of an existing accessory detached building with a proposed pole barn. She also stated that the project is consistent with the intent of the underlying zoning district and applicable sections of Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Zhao indicated that the City has received two recent public comments supporting the project, as well as the applicant's submittal of adjacent property owners' signatures of support. She concluded with the recommended action "If no additional public comment is requested and the Commission is supportive of the proposed project, staff recommends Planning Commission approval of the additional accessory building space of 1,799 square feet at 10042 Terry Lane and 520 Bacon Avenue with the following condition: Lots of 10042 Terry Lane and 520 Bacon Avenue be combined."

The applicant, Garth Whitehill, 10043 Terry Lane, presented and summarized the overall project, and stated that the project will help keep personal belongings inside a building, and spoke with adjacent neighbors about the project. He indicated that the lot combination application has been submitted to the City.

Commission Fries indicated support to streamline projects similar to this.

Chair Corradini supported the applicant's effort in contacting neighbors in the area.

Chair Corradini opened public hearing. No public hearing received. Vice Joshi made the motion, and Commissioner Baldwin supported a motion to close public hearing. Motion carried 8-0.

Commissioner Fries motioned, supported by Commissioner Adams approval of the additional accessory building space of 1,799 square feet at 10042 Terry Lane and 520 Bacon Avenue with the following condition: Lots of 10042 Terry Lane and 520 Bacon Avenue be combined. Motion carried 8-0.

SITE/FINAL PLANS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

1. A Tentative Plan and Rezoning Application (#22/23-7), from Commercial Planned Development (CPD) to Planned Development (PD) for a proposed mixed-use development at 412 W. Centre Avenue and 7860 Shaver Road.

Ms. Zhao stated that the project was continued from the January 19, 2023 Planning Commission meeting. She summarized the project site layout, conceptual building elevations, and overall number of dwelling units. Ms. Zhao explained applicable zoning regulations of the 'Planned Development' standards, applicable Comprehensive Plan elements, and relevant City Council's housing goals. She addressed the applicant's additional project request of seeking a lower parking plan and higher density. Ms. Zhao showed a chart of other proposed, existing high density residential developments throughout Portage. She addressed the Commission's pending items from the January 19, 2023, meeting and pending traffic study review and recommendation; indicating that the traffic study has been accepted by the City; and that no significant project changes were recommended. Ms. Zhao concluded with the recommended action "Staff advises the Planning Commission to recommend to City Council the approval of the Tentative Plan and Rezoning Application #22/23-7, from Commercial Planned Development (CPD) to Planned Development (PD) for a proposed mixed-use development at 412 W. Centre Avenue and 7860 Shaver Road with the following conditions:

- 1) a written confirmation of rights to use the condominium common parcels for potential parking and access, which shall be submitted to the city prior to the Final PD Site Plan review and approval.
- 2) if the proposed parking on the common area is not allowed, to approve the submitted alternative plan for contingency parking.
- 3) the proposed 'live/ work' units shall be consistent with the requirements of Building Code Section 419 'Live/ Work Units' and Zoning Code Sec. 42-137 'Work/ Live Accommodations'.
- 4) An updated site plan shall be submitted for Final PD Site Plan review showing the northern driveway along Shaver Road be designed with a dedicated left-turn and right-turn egress lanes."

Commissioner Freiman expressed concerns about the development impacting wetlands and perceived impacts from the adjacent Fire Department and its operational uses. He did state support of the development, including creating a need for housing, the development being located close to amenities, and having walkable, bikeable elements.

The applicant (attended virtually), John McGraw, stated that a wetlands delineation was established in 2006 which showed no mapped wetlands within the developing area. However, current wetland map shows an increase in wetland area which stretches in the area of proposed buildings. Mr. McGraw indicated this development plan is tentative, and discussions with the State Environmental Great Lakes and Energy Department (EGLE) are underway.

Chair Corradini stated concerns about traffic increase and turning movements at access points along W. Centre Avenue and Shaver Road; indicated concerns about reducing parking allowance; stated concerns about impact to the mapped floodplain and raising flood waters encroaching onto the subject site; indicated concerns about the adjacent Fire Department operations and access impacting the proposed development and vice versa; and stated concerns about the project's considerable higher density than what is allowed under the 'Planned Development' regulation and its effect on traffic levels. He also stated the City should examine a comprehensive pedestrian network for the underlying City Centre Plan; needed sidewalk improvements along Centre Street; and add public improvements to the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Commissioner Baldwin expressed concerns about the Fire Department operations impacting the development; concerns about internal traffic circulation between the proposed development and existing development in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Kasper stated that she shares concerns about parking and desired more parking to be provided but indicating that the development would meet the needs of the area.

Vice Chair Joshi stated that she is not fully convinced of the walkability of the site and had concerns about flooding.

Commissioner Youngs expressed concerns about the high density, parking, and access points.

Commissioner Fries stated that other development in the greater neighborhood were required to install sidewalks and shared concerns about needing a plan for addressing pedestrian network in the area.

Commissioner Fries motioned, seconded by Commissioner Adams the Planning Commission to recommend to City Council the approval of the Tentative Plan and Rezoning Application #22/23-7, from Commercial Planned Development (CPD) to Planned Development (PD) for a proposed mixed-use development at 412 W. Centre Avenue and 7860 Shaver Road with the following conditions:

- 1) a written confirmation of rights to use the condominium common parcels for potential parking and access, which shall be submitted to the city prior to the Final PD Site Plan review and approval.
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Motion carried 8-0

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS

George Gerth recalled historic road conditions in Portage and land ownership around 7438 Lovers Lane.

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONERS/ STAFF

Commissioner Freiman expressed sympathetic concerns with public testimony regarding the rezoning of 7438 Lovers Lane on the agenda, stated the rezoning process and the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, and indicated a growing demand for housing for the community. He also stated that many wildlife and trees are located on private property and can be development as allowed under City processes. Further, he indicated that those natural settings could be generally preserved if purchased for non-development purposes.

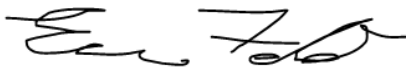
Chair Corradini commended local and regional staff response during the recent ice storm.

Ms. Zhao reminded the public and Commission about the City's Master Plan visioning workshop on Monday, March 20th at 5:30pm at the Portage Zhang Senior Center.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Corradini adjourned the meeting at 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Eric Feldt, AICP, CFM
Senior City Planner