

PLANNING COMMISSION

March 5, 2020

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of March 5, 2020 was called to order by Chairman Corradini at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Nine citizens were in attendance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Corradini led the Commission, staff and citizens in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IN ATTENDANCE

Michael West, Senior City Planner and Randy Brown, City Attorney.

ROLL CALL

Mr. West called the roll: Meyer (yes); Pezzoli (yes); Baldwin (yes); Fries (yes); Schimmel (yes); Corradini (yes); Joshi (yes) and Patterson (yes). A motion was then made by Commissioner Myer, seconded by Commissioner Pezzoli, to approve the roll excusing Commissioner Harrell-Page. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Corradini referred the Commission to the February 20, 2020 meeting minutes contained in the agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Baldwin, seconded by Commissioner Fries, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

SITE/FINAL PLANS

None.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Special Land Use Permit: North Pines Church, 6051 Constitution Boulevard. Mr. West summarized the staff report dated February 28, 2020 regarding a special land use permit application submitted by North Pines Church to establish a religious institution within the existing 23,000 square foot building located at 6051 Constitution Boulevard. Mr. West stated the building/site was previously occupied by the Family Health & Fitness Center and the applicant was proposing interior/exterior building renovations to accommodate the proposed church and satisfy all applicable Building Code and Fire Code requirements. Mr. West stated no exterior site changes were proposed, however, the previously approved conflicting land use screening along the eastern portion of the site would be maintained and a further evaluation of the condition of this screening would be made by the Department of Community Development prior to occupancy of the building by the church. Mr. West also discussed the number of parking spaces available at the site (205 spaces) and the Zoning Code requirement for a religious institution (one parking space for every 3 seats in the main unit of worship) which would allow a maximum of 615 seats in the sanctuary/auditorium. Mr. West indicated the applicant is aware of this requirement and staff would review the seating capacity of the main unit of worship once building plans were submitted. Mr. West indicated the application fulfills the requirements for issuance of a special land use permit and was recommended for approval subject to the applicant receiving all necessary building related permits for interior building modifications and occupancy.

Nick Sellers of North Pines Church was present to support the application and explain the proposed church use at the site. The Commission and Mr. Sellers next discussed various aspects of the proposed reuse of the building/site by North Pines Church. Mr. Sellers summarized proposed improvements planned for the interior

and exterior of the building and stated that he understood the parking situation and the limitations on the seating capacity of the main unit of worship. Mr. Sellers stated that North Pines Church currently has approximately 90 members and 200-250 parishioners on a weekly basis and two Sunday services were planned. Mr. Sellers stated the church currently has a small staff of 5 people and indicated only small to mid-size groups (10-30 people) would meet at the church during the week. Mr. Sellers indicated that if the church congregation grew substantially, additional services would be added to accommodate the additional parishioners. Mr. Sellers stated the church would be a good neighbor to the adjacent residential neighborhood to the east and any missing or deficient screening would be replaced by the church.

The public hearing was then opened by Chairman Corradini. One citizen (Ed Berry, 6032 Peachtree Street) spoke regarding the proposed church. Mr. Berry asked if any large outdoor activities or annual "revival" would be conducted at the site and if any changes to the outdoor lighting were proposed. Mr. Berry also discussed the long standing arrangement that he and his neighbors have had with Meyer C. Weiner Company regarding use and maintenance of the eastern portion of 6051 Constitution Boulevard and whether the church would continue to honor this arrangement. Mr. Sellers stated that larger outdoor event like a "revival" would be held at an off-site location where it was more accommodating and conducive to larger crowds. Mr. Sellers stated that any outdoor activities at the site would be small in size and would comply with all city ordinances. Mr. Sellers also indicated that no changes to the outdoor lighting was proposed. No additional citizen spoke regarding the proposed special land use permit. A motion was then made by Commissioner Schimmel, seconded by Commissioner Joshi, to close the public hearing. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

After a brief discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Pezzoli, to approve the Special Land Use Permit for North Pines Church, 6051 Constitution Boulevard, subject to the applicant obtaining all necessary building related permits for interior building modifications and any other Building/Fire Code requirements. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS/COMMISSIONERS

April Wilson (10732 Biltmore Lane) spoke about the recent bi-level homes constructed in the Austin Shores subdivision and her belief that these homes did not meet up to the standards and value of some of the other homes constructed in the neighborhood. Ms. Wilson also indicated that these homes were being constructed as rental homes with lower quality construction standards that were adversely impacting the value of the other homes within the subdivision. Ms. Wilson discussed the original home owners association and the higher standards that were included within the Master Deed and bylaws, however, stated the association has essentially been inactive when it comes to enforcement of these standards. Ms. Wilson stated the expectation of many of the early home owners within the subdivision was for higher standards, above the city minimum requirements.

Mr. West provided a brief history of the Austin Shores subdivision development and subsequent bankruptcy/foreclosure by the original developer. Mr. West indicated that the city does not enforce private homeowner association requirements and/or plat restrictions and that was up to the home owners association to enforce and regulate. Mr. West stated all the recent homes constructed within the subdivision meet minimum square footage requirements which are 1,600 square feet for a ranch home and 2,000 square feet for a bi-level or two-story home. Commissioners Fries and Patterson understood the frustration of some of the home owners and suggested that a real estate attorney be consulted to determine how to proceed or resurrect the original standards and requirements of the association. Attorney Brown briefly discussed the difference between city ordinance and code requirements, and private home owner association requirements, and also suggested that the concerned home owners contact a real estate attorney for additional assistance.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. FY 2020-2030 DRAFT Capital Improvement Program (preliminary). Chairman Corradini asked if the Commission had any additional follow-up questions from the February 20th review of the preliminary CIP document and whether the Commission desired to adjourn the meeting to Conference Room No. 2 for further discussion. The Commission did not have any further questions regarding the preliminary CIP.

Mr. West stated that prior to the March 19th meeting, the Commission would be provided a final bound draft copy of the FY2020-2030 CIP document. Mr. West indicated the Commission would then review the document at the March 19th meeting prior to making a formal recommendation to City Council. If additional time was needed (beyond the March 19th meeting), Mr. West stated a special meeting could be scheduled for March 26th. Mr. West indicated a recommendation from the Planning Commission was needed by the end of the month and again requested that Commissioners email staff any additional questions and/or comments between now and the March 19th meeting.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS/COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Baldwin indicated she would not be present at the March 19th meeting.

Commissioner Joshi and Chairman Corradini stated they would not be present at the April 2nd meeting.

Commissioner Schimmel stated next Tuesday, March 10th was election day for both the presidential primary and the Kalamazoo County Metro Transit millage. Commissioner Schimmel indicated the Metro Transit millage was extremely important to provide public transportation for people with disabilities and encourage citizens to support the millage request.

Commissioner Joshi stated that Kalamazoo County Clerk Tim Snow has announced that he will not be running for re-election this November. Given her background and experience in the County Clerk Office as an Elections Specialist, Commissioner Joshi indicated that she will be running for the County Clerk position in November and requested the support of the citizens of Kalamazoo County.

Chairman Corradini expressed his appreciation and thanks to Deputy City Manager Adam Herringa and City Clerk Erica Eklov for an excellent election training session that he recently attended.

Chairman Corradini stated that road construction season is just around the corner and asked citizens and visitors of Portage to be patient and cautious when traveling around the city.

Chairman Corradini indicated that he attended the last Portage Public School Board meeting where another possible bond proposal was discussed to construct several new elementary schools including a new Central Elementary School on the 20 acre vacant property located off South Westnedge Avenue, between Cherryview Drive and Montague Drive. Chairman Corradini stated it was a significant investment, however, much needed to solidify the long-term viability of the school district. Chairman Corradini stated there was a citizen survey on the Portage Public School web site and he encouraged citizens to complete the on-line survey.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the regularly scheduled meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael West, AICP
Senior City Planner