

## PLANNING COMMISSION

### May 20, 2021 Virtual Meeting

The City of Portage Planning Commission virtual meeting of May 20, 2021 was called to order by Vice-Chairperson Joshi at 7:00 p.m.

#### IN REMOTE ATTENDANCE

Christopher Forth, Deputy Director of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Services; Catherine Kaufman, City Attorney; Kyle Mucha, Zoning & Codes Administrator; John Lovely, Plan Review Engineer.

#### ROLL CALL

Mr. Forth called the roll: Joshi (yes, Galesburg); Fries (yes, Portage); Pezzoli (yes, Portage); Baldwin (yes, Portage); Youngs (yes, Portage); Freiman (yes, Portage); Myer (yes, Portage).

A motion was made by Commissioner Fries, seconded by Commissioner Baldwin, to excuse Chairperson Corradini and Commissioner Fawley. Motion passed 7-0.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

None

#### NEW BUSINESS:

Site plan for Pfizer Corporation, Modular Aseptic Processing (MAP) expansion, 7000 & 7171 Portage Road: Deputy Director Forth summarized the staff report, dated May 14, 2021, relating to site plan submittal regarding construction of an approximate 400,000 square foot Modular Aseptic Processing (MAP) building expansion project and associated improvements. In conjunction with the building expansion at 7171 Portage Road, construction of a temporary parking lot and construction staging area at 7000 Portage Road was also submitted. Deputy Director Forth provided additional background to the Commission regarding three variances that were approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals during the March 8, 2021, as they pertained to front yard setback, building height and construction of a temporary off-street parking lot.

Josh Slater, representing Pfizer, provided an overview of the proposed project, including the off-street parking lot at 7000 Portage Road and further details on a proposed Portage Road pedestrian bridge for contractors working on the project. Mr. Slater also indicated a temporary traffic control signal will be installed with this project to assist with construction traffic from the staging area at 7000 Portage Road.

Commissioner Fries inquired with the applicant if the bridge over Portage Road would be required to meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) regulations. Mr. Slater responded that the bridge is not open to public access and thus not required to meet ADA compliance. Commissioner Pezzoli & Vice-Chairperson Joshi inquired if the bridge would be open to the public during construction and if the bridge would be retained after construction activity. Mr. Slater responded that the bridge is only for work personnel and will be gated on both sides. Mr. Slater also indicated that the bridge is not to serve the public due to this being an active construction site. Commissioner Baldwin inquired about the operation of the traffic signal timing. Mr. Slater responded that further details are still being coordinated with the City and final operation times have not been set. Commissioner Youngs requested clarification on the amount of parking on site. Mr. Slater responded that there will be adequate parking on the sites to handle construction activities.

There being no further discussion, Commissioner Youngs made a motion, supported by Commissioner Freiman, to approve the site plan for the Pfizer Corporation expansion project, 7000 Portage Road (temporary parking lot) and 7171 Portage Road (building expansion), subject to 1) removal of the temporary parking and associated site improvements and restoration to its original state within 30 days of completing construction of the MAP facility; 2) finalization of the storm water design and storm water agreement; and 3) finalization of the

pedestrian bridge design across Portage Road. Upon roll call vote: Joshi (yes); Fries (yes); Pezzoli (yes); Baldwin (yes); Freiman (yes); Youngs (yes); Myer (yes): The motion was approved 7-0.

Final Plan for Redwood Living, 7801 Garden Lane and 1203 East Centre Avenue: Deputy Director Forth summarized the staff report, dated May 14, 2021, related to the submission of a final plan by Redwood Living, requesting approval to construct a multi-family development project on the properties addressed as 7801 Garden Lane and 1203 East Centre Avenue.

Commissioner's Fries, Youngs and Baldwin inquired about the need for sidewalks along Lovers Lane and Garden Lane, due to a lack of existing sidewalks on adjacent properties. Deputy Director Forth responded that while there are no sidewalks on adjacent properties at this time, the Redwood project involves construction of 109 units with perhaps 200+ people living at this location upon full build-out. Installation of sidewalks along Lovers Lane and Garden lane will begin the network to connect people to places such as the commercial uses located at the intersection of East Centre Avenue and Lovers Lane and others further west including the new senior center now under construction. It is anticipated that residents of Redwood Living may request installation of sidewalks similar to the requests made by residents of Whisper Rock located near the southwest corner of Oakland Drive and West Centre.

Commissioner Youngs inquired about installing sidewalks to the north of the proposed project or south along the existing single-family residences. Deputy Director Forth responded that future sidewalk installation could be completed in conjunction with new development to the north and a possible Capital Improvement Program project to the south, towards East Centre Avenue. Commissioner Fries inquired about a development agreement in which the applicant could install the sidewalks at a later date. Deputy Director Forth responded that such agreements can be problematic due to a change in ownership of a subject parcel and the enforceability of the agreement. Further discussion ensued regarding feasibility of sidewalk installation for this project. Vice-chairperson Joshi indicated developers should take on the responsibility of adding public sidewalks as part of their project and not the taxpayers.

Patricia Rakoci, Todd Foley, Ian Graham and Emily Engelhart representing Redwood Living were present virtually to discuss the project in further detail. Mr. Foley stated the proposed units, because of the construction type and single story design, are required to meet FHA accessibility guidelines, which is consistent with the marketing efforts and target demographics. As a result, Redwood Living is required by FHA to have sidewalks that extend to the public right-of-way. Mr. Foley stated he was hopeful there would be in the future a more regional pedestrian connectivity in this area. Mr. Foley also noted an eight unit building has been changed to two, four-unit buildings and open space has slightly increased, which is an enhancement.

Commissioner Pezzoli made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Baldwin, to recommend to City Council approval of the Final Plan for Redwood Living, 7801 Garden Lane and 1203 East Centre Avenue, subject to the execution of a development agreement between the City of Portage and Redwood Living that would outline measures implemented by Redwood Living during the construction phase of the project to minimize impacts on adjacent residents. Upon roll call vote: Joshi (yes); Fries (yes); Pezzoli (yes); Baldwin (yes); Freiman (yes); Youngs (yes); Myer (yes). The motion was approved 7-0.

## **PUBLIC HEARING:**

Special Land Use Permit: Steinspark Biergarten, 2603 East Milham Avenue. Deputy Director Forth summarized the staff report, dated May 14, 2021, related to the special land use permit for 2603 East Milham Avenue regarding the establishment of an outdoor beer garden and mobile food vendor. The applicant, Norbert Gimmler, was present to provide additional background on the proposed special land use permit application.

Commissioner's Pezzoli, Fries and Youngs commended the applicant on the proposed site development and business model. Commissioner Baldwin, responding to the potential concern as it pertained to noise, opined that the adjacent airport would be more impactful than the proposed project. Commissioner Fries indicated that the current standard regarding the Portage Noise Ordinance seems restrictive and should be reviewed. Deputy Director Forth responded by indicating that should a noise concern/complaint be received regarding the activities

at the property, city staff would bring those concerns to the applicant/property owner and facilitate a discussion on how best to address the concern. Commissioner Pezzoli stated that the proposed setup of the site would limit the possible noise concerns. In response to the discussion concerning noise, Mr. Gimmler informed the Commission that the current development plan calls for retaining existing trees on site, which would diminish any adverse noise impact on adjacent neighbors. Mr. Gimmler also indicated that a traditional beer garden has a relaxed atmosphere and is intended for light conversation and not for large, noisy outdoor events.

Vice-Chairperson Joshi opened the public hearing. Laura Isaacs, 2711 East Milham, spoke regarding concerns with safety from the type of use; proposal of a sidewalk along the north of East Milham. Deputy Director Forth responded to Ms. Isaacs that further engineering design would be conducted regarding the potential for sidewalk installation to connect the property with the Air Zoo and the two multi-use trails located along Portage Road and East Milham Avenue. There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Baldwin, seconded by Commissioner Pezzoli, to close the public hearing. Upon roll call vote: Joshi (yes); Fries (yes); Pezzoli (yes); Baldwin (yes); Freiman (yes); Youngs (yes); Myer (yes). The motion was approved 7-0.

There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Fries, seconded by Commissioner Freiman, to approve the Special Land Use Permit for 2603 East Milham Avenue, subject to the following conditions: 1) if a shared parking agreement for overflow purposes with the Kalamazoo Air Zoo is executed, a five-foot wide sidewalk along East Milham Avenue from the subject property to the entrance drive of the Kalamazoo Air Zoo needs to be installed. Installation of this sidewalk supports a safer pedestrian environment while walking to and from the Steinspark Biergarten. Parking along East Milham Avenue will not be permitted; 2) if it is determined noise levels are negatively impacting the existing residential dwellings to the north/northwest, actions be taken by the applicant to reduce the level consistent with Chapter 24, Article 4 (Noise); 3) appropriate building related permits be obtained for construction of the outdoor beer garden and associated features (e.g., outdoor bar, gazebos, fire pit, etc.). Upon roll call vote: Joshi (yes); Fries (yes); Pezzoli (yes); Baldwin (yes); Freiman (yes); Youngs (yes); Myer (yes). The motion was approved 7-0.

#### **STATEMENT OF CITIZENS/COMMISSIONERS**

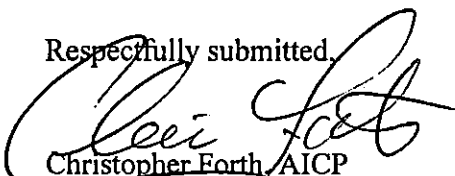
Commissioner Fries encouraged other Commissioners to download a noise meter application to their smart phones.

Vice-Chairperson Joshi wished Commissioner Myer well on his new adventure and expressed her encouragement with the type of applications the Planning Commission is seeing.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Vice-Chairperson Joshi adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Christopher Forth, AICP  
Deputy Director