

PLANNING COMMISSION

July 9, 2020

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of July 9, 2020 was called to order by Chairman Corradini at 7:00 p.m. Pursuant to Michigan Governor Whitmer's Executive Order 2020-129, this meeting was held in-person with the continued option for Commissioners, staff and the public to participate remotely via a phone-in option.

IN ATTENDANCE

Michael West, Senior City Planner and Randy Brown, City Attorney (phone-in participation).

ROLL CALL

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Corradini referred the Commission to the June 4, 2020 meeting minutes contained in the agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Joshi, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Preliminary Report: Rezoning Application #19/20-4, Redwood Planned Development, 7801 Garden Lane and 1203 East Centre Avenue. Mr. West summarized the preliminary staff report dated July 2, 2020 regarding a request received from Redwood Living to rezone 7801 Garden Lane and the north 660-feet of 1203 East Centre from R-1B, one family residential to PD, planned development. Mr. West provided a brief overview of the Redwood Living PD project which proposes a total of 109 single story apartment units in several attached, multi-unit buildings (3-unit, 4-unit, 5-unit, 6-unit and 8-unit) and an interior network of private streets. Mr. West stated that individual apartment homes will range between 1,300-1,600 square feet of living space with 2-bedrooms, 2-bathrooms, a patio, sunroom and/or screened porch and private attached 2-car garage. Mr. West indicated that open space areas would be provided around the perimeter of the property and within two interior courtyards. Mr. West then discussed other aspects of the project including vehicular access, storm water management, proposals for sidewalks, walking paths, benches, pavilions/shelters, water feature/fountain and extensive site landscaping. Mr. West stated the overall development density for the proposed Redwood Living residential community would be 5.9 units per acre (109 units on 18.4 acres). Mr. West next discussed the Comprehensive Plan/Future Land Use Map designation for the property, the suitability of the existing R-1B zoning designation, natural tree preservation and site landscaping and traffic generation associated with the project. Finally, Mr. West referred to the Commission to the final agenda packet that included an email communication in support of the proposed PD rezoning from Bill Koopsen (7612 Garden Lane), along with several citizen petitions in opposition to the proposed PD rezoning.

Emily Englehart (Redwood Living), Todd Foley (planner – Redwood Living), James Keyes (architect – Redwood Living) and Ian Graham (engineer – Redwood Living) were all present to provide a detailed overview of the proposed Redwood Living PD project. Ms. Englehart stated that Redwood Living has constructed over 10,000 high quality apartment homes in eight states since 1999 with a 98% lease rate. Ms. Englehart indicated that Redwood Living is not your typical apartment developer and that their residential communities all consist of single-story attached apartment homes with between 1,300-1,600 square feet of living space, 2-bedrooms, 2-bathrooms and an attached 2-car garage. Ms. Englehart stated rents for the proposed Portage Redwood development would range between \$1,700-\$2,100/month with the average tenant being 52 years old and the

average stay being 5 years. Ms. Englehart indicated the Redwood development team has been working with city staff since October 2019 and there have been four different revisions to the development plan to address staff concerns and to improve the overall design. Mr. Foley discussed the various design elements of the project including upgraded building elevations and construction materials, variations in building orientation, interior street design, storm water management, open space and natural areas, walkability features and extensive landscaping across the project. Mr. Foley also discussed the site challenges and limitations presented by the property. Mr. Keyes stated the Redwood PD is more like a townhome project, rather than a typical apartment project, with the “feel” of single family home. Mr. Keyes discussed the architectural upgrades made to the buildings and the variations in building design, color and orientation that will provide a very nice visual appeal for the neighborhood. Mr. Keyes also discussed the various interior amenities associated with each apartment home. Mr. Graham discussed the significant amount of preliminary engineering which has already occurred for this project and reviewed the proposals for public utility connection and storm water management across the site.

Chairman Corradini next opened the public hearing. Five citizens were present at the meeting to speak regarding the proposed PD zoning change and residential development proposal: 1) Katie Fairbanks (820 Drury Lane); 2) Leonard Munn (7723 Garden Lane); 3) Stuart Wilson (820 Chateau Drive); 4) Linda Trayer (9199 S. 12th Street) and 5) Michele McNeese (7910 Lovers Lane). Ms. Fairbanks read a prepared statement into the record in opposition to the proposed PD rezoning and also acknowledged into the record several petitions signed by area residents also in opposition to the proposed PD rezoning. Concerns expressed by Ms. Fairbanks and the citizen petitions include increase traffic, noise, loss of trees, displacement of wildlife and impact on property values. Mr. Munn expressed concerns over the proposed location of the storm water basin in the northwest corner of the property, immediately adjacent his property, and potential flooding of his basement. Mr. Wilson asked several questions including the proposed emergency vehicle access to Garden Lane, proposed sidewalks to Lovers Lane and Garden Lane, and rental rates compared to other area apartment complexes. Ms. Trayer spoke in support of the proposed PD rezoning stating the 7801 Garden Lane property has been in her family for over 100 years. Mr. Trayer stated that she approached local businesses and other potential local buyers of the property and no one expressed any interest in purchasing the land. Mr. Trayer stated the proposed Redwood Living project would be a welcome addition to the city of Portage. Ms. McNeese also spoke in opposition to the proposed PD rezoning and asked questions about the difference between a traditional rezoning request and a PD rezoning request.

After additional discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Joshi, seconded by Commissioner Baldwin, to adjourn the public hearing for Rezoning Application #19/20-4 (Redwood Living PD) to the July 23, 2020 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0.

SITE/FINAL PLANS

None.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Resolution Honoring Commissioner Bill Patterson. Vice-Chairman Joshi read a Resolution honoring Commissioner Patterson for his ten years of service to the Planning Commission. A motion was then made by Commissioner Fries, seconded by Commissioner Joshi, to approve the Resolution. The motion was unanimously approved 8-0. Commissioner Patterson thanked staff, Attorney Brown and his fellow Commissioners for their assistance and support over the years and stated it has been an honor serving on the Planning Commission.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS/COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Joshi thanked Commissioner Patterson for his leadership, experience, knowledge and for his assistance provided to new Commissioners.

Commissioner Fries also thanked Commissioner Patterson for his service to the Planning Commission and for his tremendous knowledge in the areas of planning and building construction.

Chairman Corradini stated it was an honor to serve with Commissioner Patterson and he will miss the knowledge and experience. Chairman Corradini indicated that over the past two years, with the departure of Commissioner Patterson and previous Commissioners Stoffer and Bosch, the Planning Commission has lost almost 30 years of experience and knowledge.

Chairman Corradini stated city work crews have been working extremely hard to get caught up on all the pandemic related delays and asked citizens to be patient and careful when driving nears these work crews.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the regularly scheduled meeting was adjourned at 8:35p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael West, AICP
Senior City Planner