

MINUTES
WOODSTOCK PLAN COMMISSION
October 22, 2015
City Council Chambers

The regular meeting of the Woodstock Plan Commission was called to order at 7:00PM by Vice-Chairwoman Doreen Paluch on Thursday, October 22, 2015 in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

A roll call was taken.

PLAN COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: William Clow, Don Fortin, Robert Horrell, Doreen Paluch, and Erich Thurow.

PLAN COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Steve Gavers, Darrell Moore, Jack Porter, and Katherine Parkhurst.

STAFF PRESENT: Planning and Zoning Administrator James Kastner and City Attorney T.J. Clifton.

OTHERS PRESENT: City Clerk Cindy Smiley

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by E. Thurow, second by R. Horrell, to approve the Agenda of the October 22, 2015 Plan Commission Meeting as presented. Ayes: W. Clow, D. Fortin, R. Horrell, D. Paluch, and E. Thurow. Nays: none. Absentees: S. Gavers, D. Moore, J. Porter, and K. Parkhurst. Abstentions: none. Motion carried.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Motion by W. Clow, second by R. Horrell, to elect Doreen Paluch Vice-Chairwoman of the Woodstock Plan Commission. Ayes: W. Clow, D. Fortin, R. Horrell, D. Paluch, and E. Thurow. Nays: none. Absentees: S. Gavers, D. Moore, J. Porter, and K. Parkhurst. Abstentions: none. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by W. Clow, second by R. Horrell, to approve the minutes of the April 23, 2015 Plan Commission meeting as presented. Ayes: W. Clow, D. Paluch, and E. Thurow. Nays: none. Absentees: S. Gavers, D. Moore, J. Porter, and K. Parkhurst. Abstentions: R. Horrell and D. Fortin. Motion carried.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no Public Comment forthcoming.

2. OLD BUSINESS

No Old Business was discussed

3. NEW BUSINESS

There was no New Business discussed

4. DISCUSSION

Proposed Multi-family Age-restricted Development on East 4+ Acres of Property Identified as 1411 South Eastwood Drive

Noting this evening's discussion item is the redevelopment of part of 1411 South Eastwood Drive for adult residential apartments, Vice-Chairwoman D. Paluch invited the petitioner to the podium.

Lisa Waggoner, representing GC Housing Development LLC, stated they appreciate the opportunity to present their concept plan for this property. She noted present with her this evening are Jeffrey Crane, General Partner, and Brenden Goss, Project Manager, of GC Housing Development LLC and Kevin Waco of the architectural firm of Hooker DeJong, Inc.

Ms. Waggoner stated they have entered into a contract for 4.4+ acres of a 6-acre parcel which is east of Golf and Games and north of property owned by Chuck Ruth near Alliance Contractors. She noted this offer is contingent upon receiving approval of the development concept for a multi-story apartment building with 75-81 senior independent housing units. Ms. Waggoner stated there are similar senior independent living developments in Crystal Lake and one under development in Huntley and in Lake in the Hills. She noted families are trying to find places for seniors to live while remaining closer to home.

Ms. Waggoner noted this property would require a plat of subdivision to divide into two parcels. She stated it is currently zoned B3 Service & Retail District, with some similarly-zoned parcels nearby. She further noted that one nearby parcel is zoned AG and is located in the County, and it is their understanding that there are commercial and industrial uses in this area and also understand this must be a special use.

Ms. Waggoner introduced Jeffrey Crane, General Partner with GC Housing Development LLC.

Mr. Crane gave an overview of his education and experience and why he chose the construction industry. He also thanked the Commission for this opportunity to present their design concept and what they are proposing to construct in Woodstock.

Mr. Crane noted his firm has been in construction for three generations, beginning in the late 1940s in the Chicago area, and has done many real estate developments through the course of its history, including serving as general contractor for over 50 to 60 projects. He then discussed his firm's most recent example of a similar project, a senior housing project in Glendale Heights which was financed using federal tax credits and offers affordable housing to seniors. He noted this project was built on a piece of property that was subdivided into commercial uses and was a very difficult piece of property on which to build their project. Mr. Crane offered slides of the building exterior which is a combination of masonry and cement fiber board. He noted these projects feature a great number of common areas as part of the property, including living rooms, billiard rooms, TV rooms, computer rooms, exercise rooms, and libraries, showing photos of these rooms and of the interiors of the individual units. Mr. Crane stated the residents are very appreciative of these features and feel these buildings are among the nicest places they have lived.

Mr. Crane noted one question is why did they choose Woodstock? He stated there is a desperate need to increase the housing stock for seniors. His firm did a study of many communities and one of the things found is that, per the last census, Woodstock has 1,468 seniors over the age of 65, which is 16% of the community. He stated the proposed development would be age restricted to 55 years and older and noted 25% of Woodstock's population is over the age of 55. He further noted there are 700 households in Woodstock that would be qualified to live in this facility. He stated there is a desperate need to increase the housing stock for seniors and knows there is a significant demand for this type of housing in Woodstock.

Mr. Crane then explained the affordability of an income-restricted property, stating a resident must have income below a certain level to qualify to live there. He stated a 1-bedroom, 776sf apartment, would rent for \$725 per month, while a 2-bedroom, 1,000sf apartment would rent for \$940 per month.

He noted a resident's income must be at 60% of the adjusted median income, which is a maximum of \$37,000 annually for a 2-bedroom apartment and \$32,000 annually for a 1-bedroom apartment. He again noted there are 700 families that would qualify in Woodstock.

Mr. Crane stated one of the major features of the proposed design is in the inclusion of indoor, secure, heated parking, with one spot per apartment. He stated the building would feature three floors of residential space with one floor of covered parking which will give seniors security and safety.

Kevin Waco of Hooker DeJong Architects stated his firm has been operating in the area for 60 years, with 60% of their business being in housing and one-half of that senior and multi-family. He described the building for the Commission, noting the construction, materials, and parking, and noting each unit will have a balcony. He stated the 1st floor will be masonry with stick frame above and will feature double-paned insulated windows.

Mr. Waco stated the site is a challenge, noting the building must be placed off the wetland area. He stated they propose constructing a single lane around the building to accommodate emergency vehicles. There will be two entrances into the building one from the northwest and one from the southeast. He stated there will be landscaping throughout and also landscaping between the building and the wetland. He noted the building will feature 9 ft. ceilings in the residential areas and will include 7,000sf of common space. He stated 75% of the units will be 1-bedroom with the remaining 25%, 2-bedroom, which is standard for the industry, with the 1-bedroom units having 1 bath and the 2-bedroom units having 2 baths. He stated there will be 40 parking spots outside in addition to the inside parking.

Vice-Chairwoman Paluch opened the floor to questions and comments from the Commission, asking that it be kept in mind this is a discussion item only.

E. Thurow stated one of his first concerns is the location being a commercial and industrial area. He noted the building would be in the middle of different types of operations and asked why this parcel and area was chose.

Ms. Waggoner stated that they realize some of the adjoining property is commercial and some is Ag but they were attracted to this parcel because of the size. Then, she noted, when looking at the parcel, they found it was near WalMart which is an advantage.

In response to Mr. Thurow's question, Mr. Crane stated when tax credits are allocated by the State of Illinois, there is a process which is followed, which includes the grading of sites. One factor in this grading is the proximity to certain amenities, which is one of the big advantages of this site. He stated that senior residences are evaluated based upon their proximity to services including grocery stores, pharmacies, physician's offices, and hospitals which may be needed by the seniors.

R. Horrell stated he is most concerned about the request for R4 zoning as he believes this would be out of place in the area in light of the surrounding uses. He noted he is also concerned about the lot coverage, noting 30% is required by ordinance and it looks to him that the project may be over that coverage. Mr. Horrell further noted the County has strong requirements for wetland setbacks and it looks like some of the development is not more than 10 feet from the boundary of the wetland. In addition, he feels access is a problem, noting a 30 ft. easement does not comply with the normal requirements. He stated he understands they are seeking a variance for this, but it is one he is reluctant to yield.

In response to a question from Mr. Horrell as to how they will ensure the tenants are age 55 and over, Mr. Crane stated because the federal government has certified these projects, there is a complex process involved to ensure the residents are age- and income-qualified. In response to a question from Mr. Horrell concerning a resident sub-letting to someone not qualified, Mr. Crane stated sub-letting is not permitted. He further stated there will be on-site, full-time management, with one of the apartments designated for the manager who will live on the property; and if it appears there are people who do not belong, they will be asked to leave.

Mr. Crane asked to address the access road. He stated the group has had several meetings with Mr. Ruth to discuss the idea of the 30 ft. easement. He stated at the last meeting, Mr. Ruth stated he wants a full right-of-way, which would be 50 ft., so the concept of a 30ft. easement off Lake Avenue has changed. Lake would be the main entrance, with Rt. 47 being an emergency entrance.

Concerning the wetlands, Mr. Crane stated they have retained a civil engineer to determine what the setback would be. He stated there is a possibility that what was designed meets what is required but that has not been determined. He stated, if needed, the design could be modified.

Ms. Paluch thanked the petitioners for their interest in the community and believes there is a need for this type of housing but stated she shares the concerns expressed by Mr. Thurow and Mr. Horrell. She stated her biggest issue with the project is its 4-story height, feeling it is out of place. She stated she understands the economy of scale and the indoor parking, but doesn't believe there is another 4-story structure in the city. Ms. Paluch then expressed great concern about the ingress and egress and asked about the right-of-way to Lake Avenue, noting there will be 350 feet from the edge of the property to Lake Avenue with a 305 ft. easement on the west side. She noted both of these numbers concern her, especially for emergency vehicles in a senior community. She stated if this is the only means of access, it is a significant concern.

Mr. Crane replied there is no question this site presents a significant number of obstacles. He further stated they have vetted the property and if they felt they could not build and operate in a way that is good for the community, the residents, and their company, they would drop the project. He acknowledged there are several issues but given the need for this in the community, they are trying to work together to find solutions to these issues. He stated a project like this in this location could stimulate additional commercial growth around this project, citing a medical office building as an example. He noted that Mr. Ruth expressed the opinion that this project would increase the value of his property as well. Mr. Crane stated it is good for the community for someone to come in and do a \$20 million project.

Mr. Crane expressed his appreciation to City staff and Mr. Kastner for working with them to discuss these issues and get them to where they are today. He stated they are willing to continue to spend money to find solutions to these issues and get the project done. It is their opinion that Woodstock is a great community and a place where they want to invest their capital.

W. Clow stated this is a very nice project but, in his opinion, not the right location. He, too, questioned the change in zoning in an area where there is currently no residential zoning. He feels this could be problematic down the road. He stated residents may not like the noise and other nuisances that could come from the surrounding area. Mr. Clow stated he also shares some of the concerns expressed by other Commission members about the length of the access points. He also noted his concern with people walking to the shopping and other areas discussed earlier, stating there must be sidewalks and questioned whether these can be put in the right-of way. He stated he does not know whether he can support this project, and that his quick answer would be no.

D. Fortin expressed his appreciation to the petitioner for considering Woodstock and stated he is opened minded to creativity and brainstorming. He stated he does not question the concept or the need but does question the location and its consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. He stated his opinion that the site would be awkward for anything with no frontage. He also questioned whether this area would be good for residential, considering the surrounding uses. Mr. Fortin expressed concerns with the number of variances requested, stating this may be an indication this is not the right site for this development.

Mr. Crane thanked the Commission for their time and input.

ADJOURN

Motion by W. Clow, second by R. Horrell, to adjourn this meeting of the Woodstock Plan Commission. Ayes: W. Clow, D. Fortin, R. Horrell, D. Paluch, and E. Thurow. Nays: None. Absentees: S. Gavers, D. Moore, J. Porter, and K. Parkhurst. Abstentions: None. Meeting adjourned at 8:15PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Smiley
City Clerk