

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MINUTES
June 23, 2020

A regular meeting of the Hopkins Planning & Zoning Commission was held on June 23, 2020, at 6:30 p.m. by video conference call through Zoom in response to the COVID-19 emergency. Present were Commission Members Gerard Balan, Samuel Stiele, Nathan White, Laura Daly and Kristin Hanneman. Also present was City Planner Jason Lindahl.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Balan called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

ADOPT AGENDA

Commissioner Daly moved, Commissioner Hanneman seconded, to adopt the agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

OPEN AGENDA – PUBLIC COMMENTS/CONCERNS –

Recognition of Outgoing Planning & Zoning Commissioners Laura Daly and Kristin Hanneman by Mayor Jason Gadd.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Daly moved, Commissioner Hanneman seconded, to approve the minutes of the May 26, 2020 regular meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Planning Application 2020-14 Pawn America Variance

City Planner Lindahl gave an overview of this item stating that the applicant, Robin Franke with Pawn America, LLC, requests a variance from Ordinance Number 2017-1125 to allow a pawnshop use at 1409 & 1413 Mainstreet. Staff is recommending denial of the proposal based on two primary findings. The applicant is seeking a Use Variance, which is prohibited by state law. The applicant has also not demonstrated a practical difficulty as required under the law. Mr. Lindahl summarized staff's findings in a presentation to the Commission.

Chairperson Balan opened the public hearing.

Prior to the meeting, City staff has received 47 comments related to this item. One comment was in support and 46 voiced concerns or opposition to the variance proposal. Matt Nelson, who lives on 15th Avenue South, left a voice message and a follow up email in support of the variance.

Those who commented with concern or opposition to the variance:

1. Brian Beresford
2. Brian Hunker
3. Brian Kessler
4. Carey Bromander
5. Connie & Greg Olson
6. Deb Zeller
7. Doran Dolynchuk
8. Elyssa McIntyre
9. Emily & Erik Hageness
10. Francoise Shirley
11. Gary DeVaan
12. Herb Herch
13. Jean Ryan
14. Jeff & Megan Carriveau
15. Jean Nuss
16. Joyce Stein
17. Kathy Miller
18. Kelly Kempf & Jim Williams
19. Kevin & Amy Wolter
20. Laurel Lungstrom
21. Lee Drolet
22. Lisa Taylor
23. Loren Brown
24. Mark Dirnberger
25. Mark Weaver
26. Matt Laumann
27. Megan Lima
28. Megan Speers
29. Melissa Ziegler
30. Michele Maurer
31. Nicholas Miller
32. Pam Kollodge
33. Patty Salmon
34. Paul Johnson
35. Peter Leih
36. Rachel Owens
37. Stephen & Kathleen Esh
38. Sue Gallucci
39. Susan Owens
40. Svitlana Owens
41. Theresa Aleckson
42. Tina Zelinka
43. Tiphonie Dirnberger
44. Todd Brobst
45. Tomas Garcia
46. Tony Pohlen

Brad Rixsmann of Pawn America addressed the Commission and shared background on how the property was acquired by the Metropolitan Council for construction of the SWLRT Blake Road Station. Mr. Rixsmann expressed his desire to continue operating his business within the City of Hopkins, but is currently unable to find a new location due to the zoning ordinance prohibiting pawnshops and pay day loan facilities along Mainstreet or within 200 feet of a residential neighborhood. Marc Simpson, council for Pawn America, addressed the Commission and summarized the reasons they disagree with staff's findings and believe Pawn America should be granted the variance.

With no additional comments from the applicant or the public, Commissioner Hanneman moved and Commissioner White seconded to close the public hearing. The motion was approved unanimously.

While the Commission was generally sympathetic to the position of Pawn America, they agreed with staff's findings and recommendation to deny the variance request. Commissioner Hanneman moved and Commissioner Stiele seconded to adopt Planning & Zoning Commission Resolution 2020-03, recommending the City Council deny the variance request from Robin Franke with Pawn America, LLC for the properties located at 1409 and 1413 Mainstreet. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Lindahl stated this item will be presented to the City Council at their regular meeting on July 14 with the Planning Commission's recommendation for denial.

OLD BUSINESS – None.

NEW BUSINESS –

1. Planning Application 2020-15 Blake Road Station Concept Plan Review

City Planner Lindahl gave an overview of this item stating the applicant, Trilogy Real Estate Group, requests concept plan review of Blake Road Station, a 3 phase mixed use residential and commercial development proposed at the corner of Excelsior Boulevard and Blake Road just south of the future Blake Road light rail transit station. As proposed, Blake Road Station would redevelop the existing Hopkins Commerce Center strip commercial development into 3 separate 7-story buildings totaling 752 residential units and 11,035 square feet of commercial space. Mr. Lindahl also stated that as a concept review, this application does not require formal action by the City. The applicant seeks feedback on the proposal before submitting a formal application.

Mr. Lindahl then presented a summary of the potential review process, comments received during the neighborhood meeting hosted by Trilogy, and the comments and recommendations from the City Council who reviewed this item ahead of the Planning Commission.

Bryan Farquhar from Trilogy addressed the Commission and presented background on Trilogy and their excitement for the opportunity to develop in Hopkins. Gretchen Camp with ESG provided a summary of ESG's experiences with developments in other communities. Alyssa Jagdfeld with ESG followed with a detailed presentation of the proposed master plan for the Blake Road Station project. Trisha Sieh with Kimley Horn addressed parking, green space and storm water management.

Some of the comments/questions from the Planning Commission discussion were:

- Commissioner White agreed with the City Council's recommendation of focusing on sustainability and renewable energy conservation in exchange for the PUD. Commissioner White also questioned the decision to provide only up to 2 bedroom units. Mr. Farquhar replied that the feedback received would be taken into consideration when drafting the final plans.
- Chairperson Balan was generally supportive of the development concept and asked about financing for the project and whether there would be a request for financial assistance from the City, such as tax increment financing (TIF). Mr. Farquhar responded that at this point, it is too preliminary to comment, but they have not asked for any assistance at this time although the option is still on the table.

- Commissioner Hanneman voiced concern over displacement of the businesses that currently occupy the site, and the lack of retail shown in the plans. Mr. Farquhar replied that the plans are still conceptual and that the retail component could be evaluated further.
- Discussion of the change in building code which allows for 2 stories of concrete with 6 stories of wood construction above and
- Commissioner Daly seconded Commissioner Hanneman's concerns over the retail aspect of the development and whether it was adequate, and possibly increasing the setback of the building to allow more sidewalk space for outdoor seating areas. Commissioner Daly also had questions on the affordability of the units. Ms. Camp responded that the next step will be to get a landscape architect involved and work on creating the outdoor space. Mr. Farquhar responded that they would continue to look into unit pricing and will come back with more information in the next phase.
- Commissioner White questioned if there had been discussions with the owners of the area marked future use. Mr. Farquhar responded that Trilogy has reached out but has not had recent contact with the owner of that land.

With no further discussion from the Commission, Chairperson Balan thanked the applicants for their presentation.

2. Election of Planning & Zoning Commission Officers for 2020/2021

City Planner Lindahl shared an overview for the nomination and election process of officers. The newly elected officers will take their positions at the July 28, 2020 Planning & Zoning Commission meeting.

Chairperson Balan asked the Commission for nominations for the position of Chairperson. Commissioner Stiele nominated Chairperson Balan. After a roll call vote, Gerard Balan was unanimously elected to the position of Chairperson.

Chairperson Balan asked the Commission for nominations for the position of Vice-Chairperson. Commissioner White nominated Commissioner Stiele. After a roll call vote, Sam Stiele was unanimously elected to the position of Vice-Chairperson.

ANNOUNCEMENTS –

City Planner Lindahl updated the Commission on the following items.

- Planning Application 2020-10 227 Homedale Road Variance was approved by the City Council at their June 3 regular meeting and the applicant has moved forward with building permits.
- Three new Planning Commission members will start July 28. Mr. Lindahl thanked Laura Daly and Kristin Hanneman for their four years of dedicated service to the Planning & Zoning Commission.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Daly moved, Commissioner Hanneman seconded, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Courtney Pearsall
Administrative Assistant