City of Ashland – Plan Commission Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Ashland Plan Commission was held on **Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.** via GoToMeeting.

Committee Members Present: Katie Gellatly, John Beirl, Ella Syverson, Laurie Gregor, Matt Mackenzie, Mayor Lewis

Committee Members Absent: David Mettille

Staff Present: Megan McBride, Lucas Phillips

Mayor Lewis opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Agenda

1) Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by John Beirl, seconded by Matt Mackenzie. Passed unanimously.

2) Consent Agenda

John Beirl requested clarification regarding a second to a motion on the January 7, 2020 Plan Commission minutes, where the second appeared to be missing. Megan McBride stated that there was a second, and that it was accidentally left out of the minutes. This will be amended in the revised minutes.

Motion to approve the minutes from the January 7, 2020 Plan Commission meeting with this amendment by Matt Mackenzie. Seconded by John Beirl. Passed unanimously.

3) Public Comment (non-agenda items)

None

4) Projects/Discussions

a) Site Plan review and approval of an addition to existing structure and parking area to be constructed at 2301 Lakeshore Drive E, zoned Waterfront Mixed Residential/Commercial (W-MRC). Applicant: Ashland Honda/Toyota.

Megan McBride provided background and context regarding the proposed addition to the Ashland Honda/Toyota service department. She stated that this site plan has been in the works for around 6 months, and the design team has been meticulous in going through all aspects of its planning, including getting a stormwater report which conforms to DNR standards, when such stormwater standards are not required due to the area being disturbed.

Major points from the staff report included that an additional 71’ of frontage on the west side of their building would be added to expand their service department, which will allow them to hire an additional 10 FTE employees with an average annual salary of approximately $65,000. It will also expand their parking lot, and will add additional stormwater management features, including green infrastructure on the north side of the lot, to account for the additional impervious surface coverage.

Megan McBride explained that some aspects of the proposed addition do not conform to the comprehensive plan, which encourages preserving north-south view corridors for lake views. However, in the Comp Plan this view shed is already categorized as obstructed, and the proposed 71’ of additional building frontage would not block a substantial amount of the view shed beyond what is obscured by the existing building. She also pointed out that St. Luke’s Clinic was approved and constructed adjacent to the Honda/Toyota site since the passage of the Comp Plan, blocking a previously unobstructed view corridor.

John Beirl expressed concerns over setting a precedent for blocking viewsheds. He questioned if the owners of the building have considered expanding the business towards the east or north side of the existing building.

Richard Bierman, consultant for the project, advised that these options had been considered, but that it would not be efficient for workflow. Mr. Bierman stated that if they expanded to the north, they would likely lose service stalls due to accommodating additional space for moving vehicles.

Megan McBride explained that this was a significant consideration when writing the staff report, but explained that the building is already there, and it will not be going anywhere anytime soon, so the secondary concern should be another comprehensive plan goal of supporting businesses. She worked with the designers to evaluate alternatives, but the location of the public Waterfront Trail on Toyota’s private property on the north and east sides of the building makes this a unique lot and expansion considerations very limited.

Mayor Lewis explained that she had serious concerns about the water quality impacts of adding additional impervious surface coverage to the lot. She noted that the fact that the designers provided a Stormwater Management Report demonstrating that they will meet Wisconsin DNR stormwater management standards, though they are not required to based on the area being disturbed, also helped address her concerns for water quality impacts.

Laurie Gregor questioned what makes this site unique, in particular, how the Commission would be able to potentially deny future requests for blocking lake views on other lakefront sites.

Megan McBride explained that this site is constrained on two sides by the Waterfront Trail, and that the designers have considered all other options for expansion and found them to not be feasible.

Matt Mackenzie noted that the commission is in a difficult position – if the expansion is approved, the community may be upset over the loss of the viewshed, but if the expansion is denied, the commission may be criticized for stifling business expansion. He stated that at the end of the day, it is still a car lot and even if the expansion is denied, the City would not have the ability to change this existing use in the foreseeable future.

Laurie Gregor asked what impact this expansion will have on the city tax roll.

Richard Bierman stated that they are estimating construction costs will come in at about $1.5 million, and more precise valuation will be determined as construction bids are submitted in the coming weeks.

Motion to approve the site plan with the conditions set forth in the site plan by Matt Mackenzie. Seconded by Mayor Lewis. Passed 5-1, with Ella Syverson opposed.

b) Review and vote on proposed Unified Development Ordinance amendments related to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's)

Item tabled due to ambiguity in the agenda, which did not clearly state that this was meant to be a public hearing.

Motion to table this item until the next meeting by Matt Mackenzie. Seconded by John Beirl. Passed unanimously

5) Discussion Items

a) Discussion of 2020 Request for Proposals for Commercial Development on Timeless Timber Site

Megan McBride updated the commission on the history of the Request for Proposals process at the Timeless Timber site. In the past, this site had been marketed as one whole site (approximately 27 acres), and have received no proposals in the past. This time, as discussed with the Joint Finance Committee in 2019, the City is planning to split the site into two different portions – a commercial site towards the northern side adjacent to US Highway 2, and a residential redevelopment site on the southern portion of the site – in order to better market the site to developers. Megan explained that the City completed wetland delineation of the site in 2019, and has already received exemption of identified wetlands from wetland mitigation requirements by the Wisconsin DNR due to the wetlands being manmade, and is waiting on the Army Corps of Engineers approval. This will reduce overall development costs and make both sites more desirable for potential developers.

Megan McBride explained that the current goals for the site are fairly vague, due to it previously being marketed as one site, but with the proposed split, the City can be more specific in what it hopes to see at this site. She specifically requested feedback from the Plan Commission on the commercial redevelopment goals, as the City Housing Committee will work on the residential redevelopment goals at their next meeting.

Commission members brainstormed desirable potential uses for this site, including:

- health/fitness uses;
- restaurants;
- entertainment establishments (a bowling alley, arcade, possibly combined with a bar/restaurant use); and
- indoor year-round activities such as batting cages or driving ranges.

The Plan Commission expressed that they would like to see something other than a standalone fast food franchise in this location.

Megan McBride explained the timeline for this project, and that the Tax Incremental District in which the site is located in will close out expenditures after 2021. Therefore, it is important to market the site in 2020 with the hopes of late 2020 or summer 2021 construction. It is anticipated that a Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Idle Sites Grant will be utilized to assist with cost of utilities associated with the City-approved development.

6) Announcements/Reports/Questions

a) Update on City 2020 Main Street application

Megan McBride provided updates on the Main Street Community application. She stated that the City, in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, has submitted its application to become a Main Street Community. This was identified in the Comp Plan as a short-term goal. The City has an interview with WEDC on May 21st and acceptance into the program will be determined shortly thereafter.

Megan McBride also announced that the City has received a $15,000 grant from the Wisconsin Coastal Management Association to update the UDO in order to incentivize green infrastructure to improve stormwater management, and also implement some of the waterfront zoning recommendations identified in the City's recently completed Waterfront Development Plan.

7) Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by John Beirl. Seconded by Laurie Gregor. Passed unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm. Minutes done by Lucas Phillips.