

**MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
FARMINGTON HILLS CITY HALL – COMMUNITY ROOM
September 8, 2016, 7:30 P.M.**

Chair Rae-O'Donnell called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. on September 8, 2016.

Commissioners Present: Blizman, Brickner, Fleischhacker, McRae, Orr, Rae-O'Donnell, Schwartz, Stimson

Commissioners Absent: Mantey

Others Present: Staff Planner Stec, City Attorney Saarela, Planning Consultants Arroyo and Tangari

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Fleischhacker, support by McRae, to approve the agenda as published.

Motion carried unanimously.

REGULAR MEETING

A. Discussion of Proposal to Amend PUD Plan 5, 1993, Located South of 12 Mile, Between Drake and Halsted Roads.

City Planner Stec introduced this discussion item. Tonight the Commission would hear a presentation from the owners of PUD Plan 5, 1993, regarding adding a food service amenity. City Planner Stec showed a schematic of the present development, and explained that the food service was proposed to be located at the northeast area of Investment Drive and 12 Mile Road, shown in yellow on the schematic. After studying the PUD agreement, staff had concluded that retail food uses would not be allowed under the current agreement. If this proposal were to move forward it would require a formal PUD amendment. The process would involve public hearings at the Planning Commission and City Council levels, just as if it were a new PUD agreement.

Tony Antone, Kojian Company, was present on behalf of this proposal. Mr. Antone described the current development on the site, noted developed and undeveloped parcels, and pointed out that the southeastern portion had been sold to the JST Company.

Mr. Antone explained that in order to be competitive with other development sites they felt they needed to have food amenities close by for their work force. The office park was beautiful, with many trees throughout and pathways utilized for walking by the tenants. However, not having food close by for lunch was having a real impact on their ability to market the property. Therefore they were considering developing the 2.5 acres just south of 12 Mile and east of Investment Drive as a food retail amenity with outdoor seating to help keep and attract tenants for this park. They had brought this idea to City planning staff, who had suggested having this study session with the Planning Commission regarding adding this use to the park.

Round table discussion included:

- Since whatever was built on this parcel would be hidden by trees, the developers would like to have a monument sign on 12 Mile Road to draw in customers from outside the park. Any food service retailers would need outside customers as well as park users to sustain their operations.
- There was a great need for more food service along this area of 12 Mile Road.
- Similar developments with food outlots were common throughout the Detroit metropolitan area.

- While the Mercedes building had a cafeteria many employees still ended up going out. Panasonic had a tiny cafeteria. The trend was for buildings not to have cafeterias.
- Food trucks were not a viable solution. These had been tried but often when there were events in areas with more people, such as downtown Detroit, the food trucks would not come.
- Walking distance to the retail food service building would impact how much it would be used.
- Breakfast and lunches were most important for this area.
- The area on Haggerty east of M-5 from 12 Mile to 14 Mile was discussed. That area had a Starbucks that serviced the workers there.
- The applicants wanted one drive thru restaurant to anchor the site.
- Regarding the proposed one story building as shown on the aerial, discussion centered around breaking up the single rectangular building into two buildings with a courtyard in between. The applicants were limited by the amount of space available, which was surrounded by wetlands, but breaking up the building was desirable.
- The proposed retail space would occupy approximately 10,000 square feet, with 5-6 businesses.
- Commissioner Fleischhacker expressed skepticism regarding this proposal. Mr. Antone was describing a food service amenity that was necessary in order for the park to continue to be successful, yet which could not itself be successful without outside customers. He did not like the look of a rectangular strip mall as shown in the drawing. He was concerned that this proposal mainly constituted a moneymaking opportunity.
- Mr. Antone again spoke to the need to offer fast casual food service close to the office uses within the park. He spoke about changes in the office space industry, which often did not include cafeterias but did include space sharing in ways not thought of in the recent past.
- Several commissioners liked the idea of food service in this area. Commissioner Brickner spoke about the benefit of having tenants in the park, such as Mercedes, who also did a lot of good within the community.
- City Planner Stec suggested bringing the proposed building forward closer to 12 Mile Road, with parking in the rear, with special attention given to the building's architecture. Bringing the building forward would give it visibility for east-bound traffic on 12 Mile Road without requiring the removal of any trees there.
- Commissioner McRae, however, was not sure pulling this building forward was the best idea for this site.
- Mr. Antone described the wetlands and the need to connect the proposed building to the nature around it and to walking paths generally.
- Commissioner Blizman said he wanted to see the trees on 12 Mile Road remain. Commissioner Fleischhacker emphasized that the original PUD had given priority to protecting those trees.
- Various developments throughout the Detroit area that had small or zero front yard setbacks were discussed.
- Commissioner Orr said that he felt the proposed building was too large. He would be willing to look at the proposed use at this location with a smaller footprint and with outdoor seating.
- Commissioner Stimson said he did feel there was a need for food service in this area. He also agreed that the building should be split in two.
- Mr. Antone said that he could return within 2-4 months with a more refined plan.
- In response to a comment by Commissioner Brickner, City Attorney Saarela said that retail restaurant uses would not be accessory uses, and therefore could not be decided by the Planning Commission without opening up the PUD agreement. The PUD would need to be amended as already described.
- Commissioner Stimson emphasized the need for any drive thru restaurant to have a good traffic flow. As shown the parking spaces on the north side would interrupt the traffic flow of the drive thru.
- Commissioner McRae emphasized that he did not want a generic strip mall for this location.

Chair Rae-O'Donnell summarized the discussion as follows: The Commission in general was not opposed to the idea of adding food service to this location, but the retail footprint needed to be smaller than shown, with the building split in two, with high end architectural details and a drive thru that flowed well.

Mr. Antone thanked the Commission for the discussion.

B. Window Perimeter Lighting Regulations.

City Planner Stec said that City Council had a public hearing regarding the proposed language for window perimeter lighting. The Council had some concerns and tabled action on the language to their October 24, 2016 meeting. Their concerns, as listed on a handout provided to the Commission this evening, included:

- Council did not want to limit business' ability to implement creative lighting displays.
- Council wanted to make sure holiday/seasonal displays were not limited.
- Council felt the lighting along Orchard Lake Road wasn't a big issue since the buildings were set far back.
- Council agreed with limiting flashing and brightness, though these things were already regulated in the ordinance.
- How was it possible to shield the light source and still give the ability to have the light?
- Enforcement was an issue, though Council deferred to staff to enforce if the language was added.

Commissioner Orr clarified that Section 17-106 a. *No direct light source shall be visible from any street or adjacent residential property* was the only thing Council did not want. The rest of the proposed language was acceptable to them.

Round table discussion included:

- The Planning Commission wanted 17-106 a. included. Indeed, this was the main concern of the Commission.
- Unregulated window perimeter lighting cheapened the area.
- The Commission requested that staff provide to City Council a presentation showing photos, videos, etc., such as the Commission had seen when the new language was being drafted.
- Planning Consultant Tangari directed the Commission's attention to new proposed language on page 2 of the handout, which defined strip lighting, and then changed the language in 17-106 from perimeter lighting to strip lighting. The new language also included *any strip lighting designed for or having the effect of illuminating the exterior of a building or structure*, thus not limiting the regulation to window perimeter lighting.
- This proposed ordinance should provide a clear distinction between perimeter/strip lighting and signs. However, the definition of sign included *any devices . . . for the purpose of making anything known*, and this would include strip lighting. The definition of sign also excluded holiday lights.
- The proposed ordinance should clearly state that it should not be construed to limit temporary holiday displays.
- Tinted window film over the strip lighting would meet the requirement of *no direct light source shall be visible*, but still allow the glow of color to remain.
- Discussion was had regarding Sec. 17-106. c. *Lights shall not change color*. While there might be instances where gradual color changes would be effective, regulating light change was very difficult.

City Attorney Saarela said that a variance process could be written into this section of the Code. City Council would be the deciding body.

Planning Consultant Arroyo said they could have new language available for the September 15, 2016 Planning Commission meeting.

The public hearing on the general sign ordinance would be in October. Therefore it might be possible for City Council to hear both the sign ordinance and the strip lighting/window perimeter ordinance on October 24.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS:

Commissioner Fleischhacker asked if anything was happening at the vacant Kmart location. City Planner Stec said nothing had come to the City.

Commissioner Schwartz said that after Nate Geinzer left the City, no one in the City seemed to know he was the Planning Commission liaison to the Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA), and he had missed some meetings. Activity surrounding the CIA Authority seemed to have lost momentum.

City Planner Stec said that the plan was to adopt the Corridor Improvement Authority guidelines as part of the Master Plan; this would be before the Commission this coming fall and winter.

Commissioner Stimson asked about the construction activity at the old Jean's Hardware location. City Planner Stec said the owners of Bella Vino were doing a façade renovation at that location. They were not currently adding a second floor.

Commissioner Stimson said construction had begun on the 2nd hotel at the old Hamilton Insurance site. City Planner Stec said that in order to construct the open ballroom on the first floor of that hotel, huge metal trusses were utilized and two rooms were lost on each floor. Therefore the number of rooms in the hotel had been reduced from 143 to 133.

October meetings were set for October 13 (study session) and 20 (public hearing).

ADJOURNMENT

Seeing that there was no further discussion, Chair Rae-O'Donnell adjourned the meeting at 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven J. Stimson
Planning Commission Secretary

/cem