

CITY OF PONTIAC
PLANNING COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2017
6:30 P.M.

Meeting before the Planning Commission, at
47450 Woodward Avenue, 2nd Floor, Council Chambers,
Pontiac, Michigan 48342.

BOARD COMMISSIONERS:

Dayne Thomas, Chairman
Ashley Fegley, Vice Chair
Mayor Deirdre Waterman, Commissioner
Mona Parlove, Commissioner
Christopher Northcross, Commissioner
Lucy Payne, Commissioner
Hazel Cadd, Commissioner

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Chip Smith, City Planner

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ADDRESSING THE PLANNING COMMISSION:

Gregory Harris
Blake Helppi
Kevin Stephens
Julia Ruffin
Roger Berent

MINUTES RECORDED BY:

Quentina R. Snowden, (CSR-5519)
Certified Shorthand Reporter

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Thomas called meeting to order at
6:30 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Dayne Thomas, Chair
Ashley Fegley, Vice Chair
Lucy Payne, Commissioner
Mona Parlove, Commissioner (Late)
Christopher Northcross, Commissioner
(Late)
Mayor Deirdre Waterman, Commissioner

EXCUSED: Hazel Cadd, Commissioner

Mr. Smith reported a quorum is present.

3. COMMUNICATIONS: (None.)

4. MINUTES FOR REVIEW: June 7, 2017.

Motion to approve by Fegley. Seconded by Payne.
(All ayes to approve the minutes.)

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

5.1 PF-17-29 Special Exception Permit - Proposed
Unlimited Outdoor Retail Sales & Used Automobile
Sales Lot

Location: 179 W. Montcalm Street, Pontiac, MI
Property is located on the south side
of W. Montcalm near the intersection
of Stanley.

Applicant: Gregory Harris

(Presentation of facts given by Mr. Smith.)

Applicant Gregory Harris, 179 W. Montcalm Street, Pontiac,
MI. He indicated he spoke with some neighbors about
erecting a privacy fence, and they agreed to it.

Chairman Thomas indicated the Commission would take
that under advisement.

(Commissioners Northcross and Parlove entered the meeting
room.)

Commissioner Northcross clarified that the applicant is just adding and expanding the business. His only question was the separation between the business and the residential area.

Mayor Waterman inquired if he was the owner/occupier of the site.

The applicant indicated he is leasing the building.

Mayor Waterman inquired as to how long he has been at that location. She also inquired into the auto sales.

The applicant indicated he's been there since February/March. He indicated he is adding on the auto sales with the intent of expanding the kinds of services.

Mayor Waterman inquired as to whether there is a market for this business.

The applicant indicated he used to work in this same type of business close by and that he knows there is a strong market for it in the area. He indicated he used to work at Lucky's, started off doing advertising, then sales, and then financing and then running the shop for a while.

Commissioner Payne expressed concerns in regards to doing some restoring the building a little bit or making it look a little bit more presentable.

The applicant indicated they have a lot to clean up, when they got the building it was a mess. He'd like to repaint the front, put his name and number up. He indicated in the back there was a bunch of trash, it was horrible when he got it, and yes, he's going to be cleaning it up.

Commissioner Payne wants to know when they will start the business.

The applicant stated he has to apply with the State in 30 days. So he's thinking 30 to 60 days to start to get all of the property up and nice not get other cars there.

Commissioner Payne asked if he was aware of the recommendations and in agreement with those recommendations.

The applicant answered affirmatively.

Chair Thomas asked to view an aerial. He indicated that he did a last-minute drive-by and noticed along Azteca Boxing Club that there's almost a de facto inventory of vehicles ready for sale. He inquired as to how many vehicle the applicant anticipates selling on average.

The applicant indicated he has space for 27 cars. He indicated he has to start slow.

(Public hearing was opened.)

Unknown person from the audience responded that she is in agreement with everything that has been said.

(Public comment was closed.)

Vice Chair Fegley inquired as to the privacy fence or screening. She stated she doesn't have an objection to doing a privacy fence over a masonry fence, because she understands a masonry wall can be quite costly for a startup business.

Chair Thomas indicated from his perspective a wall is what a wall is, it's a barricade and they're not exactly attractive; and if the neighbors are amenable to that. He inquired of Mr. Smith if they could do a conditional, so as long as Mr. Harris is there, he can operate with a privacy fence, and if for some reason he chooses to go to bigger site or facility they could change the next occupant.

Vice Chair Fegley inquired if they should specify a specific privacy fence as far as materials?

Mr. Smith indicated the conversation that he had with the applicant last week was as long as he has sign-off of two adjacent neighbors, that he is comfortable with what they would like, that they're the ones that have to look at it.

Mr. Harris indicated the neighbor indicated she wanted the pretty side facing her property, and he agreed to that.

Mayor Waterman moved to approve the Special Exception Permit and Site Plan Review for 179 W. Montcalm, PF-17-29 Gregory Harris/dba Discount Auto, subject to the following conditions listed:

1. Compliance with Section 4.305 standards for double striping of parking spaces and parking space size of 9' x 20'.
2. Compliance with Section 2.514(b)(2) retail Auto Sales Standards, for screening from adjacent residential districts for the fence along the south property line.
3. Compliance with Engineering Department Standards.
4. Compliance with all building code, fire code and City of Pontiac business licensing requirements.

Seconded by Commissioner Parlove.

Vice Chair Fegley inquired of Mr. Smith as to whether what was discussed about was going to be compliant with the Section 2.514(b).

Mr. Smith indicated it is not and he would amend that to say privacy fence as discussed and agreed with by the neighbors.

Mayor Waterman indicated that's what she wants the motion to state.

AYES: Thomas, Fegley, Parlove, Payne,
Waterman, Northcross.

NAYS: (None.)

ABSTAIN: (None.)

MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0

- 5.2 PF-17-22 Special Exception Permit Use - Lodging House for Proposed Dormitory Style Facility
Location: 258 Orchard Lake Road, Pontiac, Michigan
Property is located along the north side of Orchard Lake near the intersection of Franklin Boulevard.
Applicant: Blake Helppi

(Presentation of facts given by Mr. Smith.)

Blake Helppi, 6101 Beach Road, Troy, Michigan. He stated he hates the term "boarding house" because it's not what it really is. He indicated it's student co-living or dormitory facility that will be geared toward two student populations only, Cranbrook

Art Academy students who are graduate-age students.

Chair Thomas indicated that the Commission is not here to parse words about semantics of a boarding house, not a boarding house. He stated that the applicant cannot just limit it to Cranbrook and can't say it is just for Latinos, or Whites or Blacks.

The applicant indicated there are legal ways to do that, that he has consulted with an attorney to ensure that they're not being discriminatory in limiting the property to full-time four-year university students and Cranbrook Art Academy students. He indicated there are ways in doing that.

He indicated the average dorm room itself is over 140 square feet, which is about 30 percent larger than the Cranbrook Academy dormitory rooms today, and substantially larger than the rooms in the OU fraternity house, which is located just a few blocks from his property.

Chair Thomas asked the applicant to explain how he sees that pipeline working, and also reminded the applicant to be cognizant of the time this evening.

The applicant indicated he has other rental properties in other cities and was getting inquiries into availability for student housing. He indicated that was kind of the origin of the conversation, as there clearly is a demand.

Commissioner Northcross inquired as to the max occupancy per room and for the building.

The Applicant indicated that they are single-occupancy rooms, and therefore, the theoretical occupancy of the building will be 12 students. He indicated the OU fraternity house, the maximum capacity is 26 and there current there are 19 students living there.

He indicated he is extremely comfortable with limiting it in any way that the City can. He stated he's open to whatever proposal they have.

Commissioner Northcross commented that he's interested in hearing how the neighbors feel.

Mayor Waterman inquired as to how the applicant could

assure that it's student-caliber, graduate school-caliber people who were going to be attracted to this particular facility. She indicated she is interested in seeing more about ways he proposes to do that. She stated they are uncomfortable with the boarding house concept.

The applicant indicated the home will be beautiful inside. He stated the reason he's had to explore this kind of alternative use for the property is that after acquiring the property in October of 2016, he discovered pretty significant structure deficiencies in the building which would require significant remediation, reframing portions of the house, inserting structural beams, a lot of things that make it not viable for what he had originally planned, which was to basically rehab the four individual living units in the building. He stated it will be very high-quality housing. He stated there are very substantial common areas on the main floor that will include a lounge and dining area with a large screen TV and high-speed Wi-Fi throughout the entire building. He believes it's a place where people are going to want to live.

Commissioner Parlove stated that the supplemental information that the applicant has now provided is helpful, however, she has more questions now than before.

She discussed how the applicant said it wasn't financially feasible for him to turn this into a 4-unit, that he'd have to turn it into a 12-unit based on the rehab that he discovered.

The Applicant indicated if there are four units, there are four individual gas meters, and also he'd need to make major investment in terms of individual utilities, as well as four kitchens as opposed to one. He stated there are a number of reasons why it's more economically viable and feasible to turn it into this type of student co-living property.

Commissioner Parlove inquired as to the layout, and stated there are no dimensions on any of the rooms. She stated there are square footages noted, but from her experience, how people measure a room, they'll incorporate space into the room that is potentially a walkway. She indicated toilet number 1 is 152 square feet, and bedroom number 6 is 126 square feet. She indicated having dimensions on the drawings would be

a big help.

She also indicated she is troubled with the common areas in the basement.

The applicant directed Commission Parlove to look at the elevations of the plans to see the property is above grade and the basement is dry, that he's been down there many times during major rainstorms and it's bone dry.

Commissioner Parlove stated she does not believe having common area in the basement is realistic. She also indicated she doesn't think having another boarding house is a good idea for the City.

Commissioner Payne inquired of Mr. Smith if there are any government guidelines or procedures since the applicant is linking this project to Cranbrook Art Academy.

Mr. Smith indicated that there is no official relationship with Cranbrook, as far as he understands it. He indicated the City cannot tie any conditions as to who this gets rented to or where they're from or whether they go to school or not. He stated that's in violation of the Fair Housing Act.

Commissioner Payne discussed the exterior look of the home, that she believes a lot more work needs to be done on the exterior.

The applicant indicated the home has been abandoned for 20 years and there clearly is a lot of work that has to be done inside and out.

Vice Chair Fegley inquired as to whether the plans they have been provided depict walls that are currently framed out or if they are just a conceptual floor plan of what he would like to build.

The applicant indicated some of them are existing, but the vast majority are not.

Vice Chair Fegley inquired as to the location of the existing bathrooms.

The applicant indicated two are, and two would actually be placed in new locations. He indicated there is no plumbing in the property at all.

Vice Chair Fegley explained that have had concerns with

the size of rooms with other recent projects that have come before the Commission. She indicated she scaled the drawings and room 3 is only 7 feet wide; and room 2 is only 7 foot wide, as well, from the closet to the other side; and rooms 5 and 4 are only 9 feet wide.

The applicant wanted to consult with his architect on the phone to get direction in this regard, because he doesn't believe the drawings are reflecting what the true layout is.

Chair Thomas indicated that they didn't need to do phone conversations again, and that perhaps the architect should be present at the meeting if he wants to participate.

Vice Chair Fegley continued to discuss the square footage and indicated that at least four of the rooms are too small.

Chair Thomas inquired as to whether the applicant has a contract with Cranbrook.

The applicant indicated it would be considered unaffiliated off-campus housing, and there is no contract with Cranbrook.

Chair Thomas indicated there are two homes immediately to the east of this project and a home to the west of the project. He asked if any neighbors from those homes were present. Kevin Stephens from the audience identified himself. His mother occupies the unit to the right as you're facing the property, 252 Orchard Lake Road.

He stated the Commission has worked diligently to eradicate blight with regard to problematic landlord scenarios.

(Public hearing was opened.)

Kevin Stephens, 1690 Ledbury Drive, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. He stated his main concern at the last meeting was getting undesirable people living next to his mom. He stated since then that he's had a chance to speak with the applicant and he stated he likes the applicant's vision. He stated that the applicant has agreed to erecting a privacy fence to eliminate people from crossing over into his mother's property. He indicated that while he did appreciate the resistance that the Commission had at the last meeting, he would request that the Commission nod their heads on this project. He indicated he doesn't want

his mother to have to deal with the type of people that have been showing up in these houses; and that at least what the applicant is looking to do is better for an 85-year-old woman to have to deal with. He stated his mother is now in agreement with the applicant's plan.

Julia Ruffin, 239 West Pike, Pontiac, Michigan. She stated she is in support of the applicant's vision. She stated she is concerned about opening Pandora's Box. She stated in order for the City to turn a corner, that the Commission needs to give the applicant an opportunity. She indicated she has had to opportunity to speak to OU students, and those she spoke to stated great reasons as to why they like living in the neighborhood. She believes it should be open to any student population.

(Public hearing closed.)

Commissioner Parlove indicated that she knows for a fact that the opportunity for Cranbrook students to live in the Pontiac area exists already where units are available, where there are bathrooms attached to the bedrooms. She stated these units have not been filled. She stated these type of properties are not going to help the City.

Commissioner Payne indicated that the concept is great, but unfortunately the presentation in regards to spacing and everything is not what she would want a child of hers living in.

Commissioner Northcross requested clarification as to the Special Exception Permit. He stated his understanding is if the ownership changes, that the Special Exception Permit has to be revisited.

Mr. Smith answered affirmatively.

Commissioner Northcross stated he finds the plans problematic, as well. He stated he does like the idea of an used property being put back into service.

The applicant asked to see the plans, as he believes they might have been printed incorrectly.

Mayor Waterman offered her set for him to view, as she has questions. She stated that the City has so many concerns because the State of Michigan has no regulations for boarding houses. She recognized Julia Ruffin as being familiar with investigating ways to getting standards put

in place for boarding houses.

She indicated that the applicant didn't really answer her previous question in regards to ensuring that this would be used for student housing, and she gave him a second chance to respond. She indicated she is in favor of rehabbing homes, especially historic homes. She indicated, as well, that the site plans fail to depict the kind of materials being used for the rehab, and she would like to see that information provided.

The applicant indicated that the interior spaces will be all new construction grade. He indicated that they would end up using commercial grade carpet and stainless steel appliances, granite countertops. He addressed the room sizes again. He indicated he was unaware of what Mr. Smith spoke of, as far as attaching language to the use exception. He was under the impression from Mr. Sabo that he could. He indicated the plan is to add something that is viable and add to the community in a positive way. He indicated he is shocked that there is so much resistance to the project, and he feels like he wants to give up before he even starts.

Chair Thomas stated he wants the applicant to address the Mayor's question and not dance around the issue.

Mayor Waterman indicated if that's the way the applicant chooses to answer the question, then that's fine.

Chair Thomas indicated that he feels the applicant has come back with basically no homework. He indicated if maybe the applicant brought pictures, that would help them understand what his vision is. He indicated he doesn't feel the applicant has done a very good job selling his case.

He proposed to the Commission to open this up one more time to try to correct the drawings, to allow the applicant to bring in some photos, provide samples of materials that will be used.

Commissioner Parlove indicated she doesn't have a problem with giving the applicant another chance to bring forth more information, but she does have a problem with the size of the rooms and the number of people the applicant is trying to house in the building. She asked why 12 is such a magic number.

Vice Chair Fegley indicated she would like to see no rooms smaller than 11 feet in width in any direction, not including the closet.

Commissioner Parlove clarified that that would be for the bedrooms, and common spaces should be larger.

Vice Chair Fegley indicated common spaces should be nothing less than 14. She indicated she would like to see dimensions on the drawings.

Chair Thomas inquired of Mr. Smith how to word the motion.

Mr. Smith indicated his recommendation would be to ask for a motion to postpone, with the instruction that the applicant meet with Mr. Smith on Tuesday to help him pull together the information that he needs to present.

The applicant inquired if he has to postpone to a specific future date.

Mr. Smith indicated it could be postponed indefinitely if that's okay.

The applicant indicated he would rather postpone indefinitely as he needs to reconsider the project at this point. He indicated he appreciates the offer to meet with him, but he won't be able to sit down with him on Tuesday.

Mayor Waterman made a motion to postpone indefinitely.

(Seconded by Commissioner Northcross.)

AYES: Thomas, Fegley, Waterman, Northcross,
Payne, Parlove.

NAYS: (None.)

ABSTAIN: (None.)

MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0

6. SITE PLAN REVIEWS

- 6.1 PF-17-30 Site Plan Review - Proposed Multi-Family Residential 46006 Woodward Avenue
Property is located at the NE intersection of
Location: Woodward Avenue and Osmun Street.
Applicant: ELKI, LLC

(Presentation of facts given by Mr. Smith.)

Roger Berent, Roger Berent Architects, 6435 Apple Orchard Lane, Rochester Hills, Michigan. He indicated he is present on behalf of the owners and developers of the proposed project. He stated the property meets the zoning and they're not asking for any variances. He indicated they do meet the parking variances. He indicated they are trying to do an interesting project. He indicated it's a primary site on Woodward, and the clients expressed the desire to do something interesting and fun with the project. He indicated they are one-bedroom loft apartments, 600-700 square feet. He indicated it's a unique site.

Chair Thomas gave some historical background of the site.

Commissioner Northcross asked for clarification from the applicant as to the loft floor plan and first floor plan.

The applicant indicated the lofts are proposed to be added on the first floor.

Commissioner Northcross clarified the square footage with the applicant. He inquired as to whether any soils work has been done yet.

The applicant indicated they are working with a structural engineer, but they do not have any soil borings at this point.

Mayor Waterman indicated she is excited about this project and finds the architectural elements to be very interesting.

Commissioner Parlove believes this project will be extremely well received once it comes to fruition. She questioned as to whether there are going to be metal supports coming from below, or what the material will be.

The applicant indicated he has not decided yet, that they could be precast concrete, but he's unsure. That that will be something to discuss with the structural engineer as to what is feasible.

Commissioner Payne indicated she is excited about the project, as well. She inquired as to how many residents are being planned for.

The applicant indicated there are 12, one-bedroom units.

Commissioner Payne inquired as to the rental cost.

The applicant indicated she does not believe the owner/developer has determined that yet.

Vice Chair Fegley indicated it's a great project.

Chair Thomas indicated if this project comes to fruition, it will be a big statement on the City of Pontiac on the gateway. He indicated it's well-done, creative and beautiful.

Commissioner Parlove made a motion for 46006 Woodward Avenue, to conditionally approve the Site Plan Review application for PF-17-30 for the proposed conversion of the Elks Lodge Building to multiple-family residential subject to the following conditions:

1. Compliance with Departmental requirements and compliance standards for Engineering, Fire, Building Code and Water Resource Commission
2. Submission of grading plan for administrative approval by Planning and Engineering Departments.
3. Submission of detailed landscape plan with plant materials list per Section 4.411 for administrative approval
4. Submission of detailed lighting plan for administrative approval.
5. Provision of one additional handicap parking space.

Seconded by Mayor Waterman.

AYES: Thomas, Fegley, Parlove, Payne,
Waterman, Northcross.

NAYS: (None.)

ABSTAIN: (None.)

MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0

6.2 PF-17-31 Site Plan Review - Proposed Lobby and Elevator Tower addition

Location: 65 E. Huron Street, Pontiac, Michigan
Property is located at the NE
intersection of E. Huron Street and N.
Mill Street.

Applicant: Grace Gospel Fellowship.

The applicant did not appear for the meeting.

Commissioner Parlove inquired as to the square
footage for the entrance out towards the parking lot.

Mr. Smith indicated that it is an entry only for the
elevator.

Commissioner Parlove made a motion to approve the
Site Plan Review application for PF-17-31 for the
proposed new lobby and elevator tower addition and
subject to the following conditions:

1. Compliance with Departmental requirements and
compliance with standards for Engineering,
Fire, Building Code and Water Resource
Commission.
2. Subject to the submission of colored
architectural rendering showing the color of
proposed brick or material samples for
administrative approval.

Chair Thomas and Mayor Waterman expressed their
support for the project.

Seconded by Commissioner Northcross.

AYES: Thomas, Northcross, Fegley, Parlove,
Waterman, Payne.

NAYS: (None.)

ABSTAIN: (None.)

MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: (None.)

8. NEW BUSINESS:

Commissioner Northcross discussed whether Saylor
Construction Company does in fact exist.

Mr. Smith indicated he did investigate whether Saylor
Construction Company does in fact exist. He

indicated it does not appear they have done any projects in Pontiac, but he did find a Facebook page for the company and it appears they have done projects in southeast Michigan.

9. OTHER ITEMS: (None.)

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Commissioner Northcross indicated July 22nd, 2017 there is a golf outing. On July 27th, 2017 there is a follow-up meeting on odor at the Martin Luther King Sewerage Treatment Plant. On August 4th, St. George's there will be a fellowship praise worship service which will include a fashion show and various speakers. On August 6th, **Newmann is celebrating its 156th Anniversary.

Mayor Waterman indicated the Silverdome will be coming down soon.

11. ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Parlove made a motion for adjournment; Commissioner Northcross seconded.

(All ayes to adjourn.)

ADJOURNMENT: 8:32 p.m.

Minutes certified by:



/s/ Quentina Rochelle Snowden, CSR-5519
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