MEETING MINUTES
PLAN COMMISSION
Wednesday, April 9, 2014
7:00 P.M.
Evanston Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, Council Chambers

Members Present: Scott Peters (Chair), Jim Ford, Colby Lewis, Carol Goddard, Terri Dubin, Richard Shure

Members Absent: Lenny Asaro, Andrew Pigozzi, Kwesi Steele,

Associate Members Present: Seth Freeman, Stuart Opdycke,

Associate Members Absent: David Galloway,

Staff Present: Damir Latinovic, Neighborhood and Land Use Planner
Mario Treto, Assistant City Attorney

Presiding Member: Scott Peters, Chairman

1. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chairman Peters called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M and explained the general meeting procedure, schedule, agenda items, time limits on public testimony and opportunities for cross examination of witnesses. Chairman Peters concluded the opening statement by saying that the Plan Commission forwards a recommendation to the City Council which makes the final determination on any matters discussed by the Plan Commission.

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: March 12, 2014
Commissioner Ford made a motion to approve the minutes as prepared. Commissioner Goddard seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved by voice call 6-0.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE 14PLND-0019
Consider a text amendment, pursuant to City Code Title 6 Zoning, to discuss the zoning definition and land use regulations for Micro-Breweries.

Mr. Damir Latinovic, Neighborhood and Land Use Planner for the City, provided a brief overview of the proposed text amendment and the staff report memo. Mr. Latinovic noted the proposal was approved by the Zoning Committee on February 19, 2014 and concluded by saying that staff believes the standards for approval of a text amendment have been met and therefore staff recommends approval of the proposal.
Commissioner Ford complemented staff on a good summary and inquired if anyone knows how much of lake water is City of Evanston permitted to pump annually. Chairman Peters said the US Supreme Court allocated the water to the states and individual states regulate the amount of water allocated to each municipality that is pumping the water from the lake based on the amount of population they supply.

Upon a question from Commissioner Ford, Mr. Latinovic stated the property at 825 Chicago Avenue is zoned C1a where the proposal calls for a Micro-brewery needs to receive a special use before it can open in that district. The use that is currently allowed but has not opened yet at that location is Common Culture, a nano-brewery that is allowed by right as a General Retail Goods Establishment because of the very small amount of beer that they brew and their operation is primarily retail sales of growlers. Mr. Latinovic stated he spoke with the owner of Common Culture and informed him that if they want to expand their production level they would need to obtain a Special Use to operate as a micro-brewery at that location, if the proposed text amendment is approved. Mr. Latinovic stated he informed the owner that there is no guarantee they would receive a special use for a micro-brewery at 825 Chicago. Staff and Plan Commission would have to evaluate the application at that time and determine if standards for special use approval are met.

Commissioner Shure asked if the water rates are the same for residents and commercial properties. Chairman Peters explained there are state limitations on charging properties different water rates. Mr. Latinovic explained there may be different size meters that are installed and those could be charged differently.

Richard Shure summarized his research that was provided in the packet to all Commission members. A micro-brewery uses 6-8 gallons of water to make one gallon of beer. Only one company in Oregon is able to reduce the water usage down to about 3 gallons of water per one gallon of beer.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Peters invited a motion.

Commissioner Ford made a motion to approve the proposed text amendment as proposed by staff.

Commissioner Shure seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved by voice call 6-0.

B. TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE 14PLND-0020
Consider a text amendment, pursuant to City Code Title 6 Zoning, to discuss the zoning definition and land use regulations for Aquaponics.

Mr. Latinovic provided a brief overview of the proposed text amendment and the staff report memo. Mr. Latinovic noted the proposal was presented and approved by the Zoning Committee and Plan Commission in spring and summer of 2012, but was never presented to the City Council. Because of the time lapse, staff is presenting the text amendment to the Plan Commission again without any changes to the proposal. Mr. Latinovic explained the process by which the plants and fish are cultivated in a symbiotic environment. Because the use is rather new and can vary significantly in type,
Approved May 14, 2014

and size, in 2012 staff and the Plan Commission recommended allowing the use only as a special use in B, C, M and I districts. Staff is not proposing any changes to that proposal and again recommends approval of the proposed text amendment.

Commissioner Lewis asked how such uses would not be allowed as a by-right permitted use in the industrial districts like any other light-manufacturing use. Mr. Latinovic stated that because of the unknowns on the size and type of the use, it was determined that such uses be best allowed as special uses in any district to have more control over how to regulate the use and evaluate any potential impact it may have on surrounding uses.

Commissioner Lewis asked what other types of activities take place at these facilities. Mr. Latinovic stated other activities such as processing and deliveries are most common but vary from place to place based on business model and scale. Through special use review, the City can evaluate truck access, food production (if any), parking requirement, hours of operation, etc.

Commissioner Shure commented that he had visited the largest aquaponic establishment in the US located in Wisconsin. That business did not have a license to process the fish on site but it did sell their products within a 60-mile radius. So there is a sustainable component of this type of use that is very important and beneficial to the City.

Commissioner Lewis made a motion to approve the proposal as presented by staff.

Commissioner Ford seconded the motion.

Chairman Peters proceeded to read and evaluate the standards for approval of a text amendment for the case and confirmed with all members that all standards have been met.

A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved by voice call 6-0.

Commissioner Peters then proceeded to read and evaluate the standards for approval of a text amendment for the micro-brewery case and confirmed with the rest of the members that all standards have also been met for the first case.

Commissioner Peters asked if there is anybody from the public that wishes to speak on either of the two cases heard already. He stated that if necessary, based on any testimony presented, the Commission reserves the right to reopen either of the first two cases even though the Commission already voted on the matters.

Jon Gareth Proctor, 1013 Darrow Avenue, stated that he has been running an aquaponics system on his property for the last 23 years so if the Commission has any specific questions on that topic he would be happy to try and answer them. Mr. Proctor also asked why the use is being proposed only as a special use in certain districts and why not as a permitted use in industrial districts.

Commissioner Lewis explained that just like the agriculture use it is not permitted.
Chairman Peters stated that the use has many different types, sizes and neighbors and all of those can be better analyzed as a special use.

Mr. Proctor stated in Chicago in industrial areas the use is permitted as a permitted use, so some businesses might just locate in Chicago where it may be easier and faster to open.

Commissioner Opdycke stated that the use is a new and uncharted territory so the special use is the way to go in this case at this time. In 20 years perhaps it maybe be allowed as a permitted use in certain districts but not right away.

Mr. Proctor stated there are several residential properties that have this as an accessory use.

Commissioner Freeman asked Mr. Proctor if he knows of some businesses that would rather chose to locate in Chicago because it is easier and faster approved, to which Mr. Proctor clarified he does not know at this point if any investors feel that way.

Commissioner Freeman stated he would love to see a use like this in Evanston and would hate to see a business go to Chicago because the use is only allowed as a special use in Evanston.

Commissioner Lewis agreed that it would be beneficial to the City in many ways, but through special use the City has the ability to evaluate all conditions of the use and the property. He feels he speaks for all Commissioners, this type of use is generally seen very favorably by everyone.

Chairman Peters asked staff to summarize the Commission’s discussion on this in the report to the City Council.

C. MAIN STREET STATION
TRANSPORT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) PLAN AND STUDY

The TOD Plan is focusing on the CTA (Purple Line) and Metra Main Street Stations in Evanston. The plan is intended to enhance multi-modal mobility between the Main Street Stations, the Main Street Business District and surrounding neighborhoods. The proposed improvements for the Main Street station and the study area will be presented.

Mr. Latinovic summarized the Main St. Station TOD Study memo. He explained the Study was initiated in early 2013 in anticipation of the Red and Purple Line Modernization Plan. The RTA and the City partnered, with the RTA financing 80% of the Study, and hired a TOD consultant Parsons Brinckerhoff to prepare the Study. Mr. Latinovic provided the study area map and summarized the initial goals of the Study. The stakeholders (RTA, Metra, CTA, UPRR, the City of Evanston) were identified and included in the review of all technical reports, summaries, draft findings and recommendations. Three public meetings were organized to gather public input and comments and the consultant also created a website where information about the project and the meetings was provided and periodically updated.
Mr. Latinovic then proceeded to explain how during the process, it was identified that major changes to the uses and bulk restrictions are not necessary in this area, something that is typically summarized in a TOD Plan. Evanston's zoning ordinance already allows for high density and mix of uses that are preferred around a transit stop. The Study therefore focused more on creating a vision how the stations can be improved to provide enhanced connection between the transit stop and surrounding areas as well as between different modes of travel.

Mr. Latinovic showed a slide that indicated major overall improvements to the station area. Subsequently items that could be done by the City of Evanston were specified, such as the reduction of Custer Avenue near Washington Street for the construction of a new sidewalk on the east side of Custer Avenue between Washington Street and Main Street, new way-finding signage to better direct all transit users, additional stop signs on Main Street at the intersection with Custer Ave and on Chicago Ave at the intersection with Washington Street, additional bike parking throughout the station area, etc…

Mr. Latinovic then showed several before and after images where the changes are proposed. The discussion followed on federal and local programs to implement the recommended changes. Mr. Latinovic concluded by stating staff recommends Plan Commission make a positive recommendation to the City Council regarding the Main St. TOD Study.

Chairman Peters clarified that resolving the parking issues in the area was not in the scope of work for the consultant and the Study. He also pointed out that the rendering and images are not to be misinterpreted as planned improvements, those merely reflect a vision for possible improvements.

Commissioner Freeman asked about a cost estimate. Chairman Peters stated that the report does include some preliminary cost estimate for all improvements, approximately $35 mil.

Commissioner Freeman asked if the City will be doing a study on Davis Street station and Commissioner Shure also stated that other train stations in the City do not have the capability for eight cars, so there would be a concern if only this station is upgraded but others are not.

Tom Coleman, the project manager from Parsons Brinkerhoff, the consultant on the project, explained the focus of the study was to create a vision for possible improvements. The images are conceptual for a reason. Such is also the proposed connection between the CTA and the Metra stations through the CTA embankment. Mr. Coleman summarized other improvements to make both stations fully compliant with the ADA Code. He stated further studies and analysis would be needed as they are required for any of the federal grants that the CTA or Metra is awarded. One important element that came out of this Study was a need for a connection through the CTA embankment.

Mr. Coleman explained the cost estimate for all improvements listed is approximately $35 mil. Major improvements to the Metra station were not needed except for the two staircases on Custer Avenue which could improve access to the west side neighborhoods and could create more foot traffic.
Jay Ciavarella, from the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) explained the funding for the project came from the Community Development grant from the RTA. RTA also funded a 1999 study of the Davis Street stations which was completed in 2001.

Mr. Ciavarella thanked Mr. Latinovic for his efforts since he joined the City saying he has been instrumental in bringing the project to close. Mr. Ciavarella stated RTA’s efforts do not end when such study is completed. They have other programs that urge the communities to implement incremental steps from such studies and he will be providing more information on those to the staff.

Mr. Ryan Richter, from Metra, stated this rail line is leased by Metra from the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and any improvements within their corridor would have to be approved by the UPRR.

Commissioner Ford asked if there is any information on how many people take advantage of the cross-access between the CTA and Metra Stations at Davis Street, and what are the advantages of providing the same access again at Main Street station.

Mr. Coleman explained the Main Street Station is a local station serving the surrounding neighborhoods. The City does not want to create the same type of station as Davis Street. The cost of doing the pass-through connection is in some ways not warranted, but the additional investment needed to do it is not that significant when done as part of the larger station improvement.

Commissioner Lewis asked what amount of analysis was undertaken to come up with the proposed vision shown in renderings. Mr. Coleman explained that the amount of ridership and traffic did not warrant significant reconstruction to the area to create a multi-modal transfer station facility with bus stops underneath a large common train platform or something similar. This is why the focus is a number of small improvements and a pass-through connection for pedestrians only and creating a plaza on the north side of the alley between the CTA and Metra stations.

Commissioner Lewis asked where are the limits between what the City controls, what CTA and what Metra controls. Chairman Peters explained no matter what is done, cooperation will have to be done between all three agencies. Mr. Coleman explained the technical advisory committee was staffed with representatives from all agencies and during all meetings discussions followed on cooperation and who will do what.

Mr. Latinovic explained that the intent of the memo in the packet and that of the presentation was to provide an overview of the large scale improvements to the stations and the vision for the stations, but also to take out and point to the specific small scale improvements the City could have to do as some of the recommendations do fall within the City’s rights-of-way.

Commissioner Dubin asked if there is any kind of timeline for completing the improvements. Mr. Coleman stated the CTA is in the process of applying for federal grant to complete the Red and Purple line modernization plan and most of the large-scale improvements to the station would be done then, but there are other small scale improvements that each agency will be implementing from time to time.
Commissioner Goddard asked if there was any thought put into providing more commuter parking for CTA and Metra. Mr. Coleman explained there is not much opportunity to provide additional parking because all properties have been developed.

Commissioner Lewis asked if there is a critical project within the whole scheme that most of the improvements will wait on or will they and can they be implemented incrementally. Mr. Coleman stated that it depends on the type of the improvement. You do not want to make certain improvements that could get in the way of making other improvements.

Commissioner Ford asked if anybody knows why the park was called St. Paul Park. Mr. Coleman stated he does not have the exact information.

Upon a question, Mr. Coleman stated part of the scope of work was also to evaluate the feasibility of constructing a bike trail between the CTA and Metra rights-of-way, but it was determined that such endeavor would be very expensive, but it could be done.

Chairman Peters thanked Mr. Coleman for extensive amount of information in the report. He said the report may have to be modified to be adopted as a neighborhood plan that could ultimately be part of a Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Ford asked what the next steps are. Chairman Peters said he would anticipate the members of the Commission to review the information and provide comments to staff if there are any, and then at the next meeting the Commission and staff can discuss the Plan and possible changes again.

Commissioner Ford asked if this then is the First Reading of the Study and would the Commission then look to approve it at the next meeting to which Chairman Peters confirmed.

Commissioner Goddard made a motion to continue the discussion of Main St. Station TOD Study.

Commissioner Ford seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved by voice call 6-0.

Commissioner Shure provided a summary from the ADA meeting that he attended. He pointed out that for Planned Developments the Commission should be aware of the fact that 20% of the units need to be accessible.

4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further discussion, Commissioner Shure motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Commissioner Goddard seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Damir Latinovic
Neighborhood and Land Use Planner
Community Development Department