Planning & Development Committee Meeting
Minutes of October 25, 2010
City Council Chambers – 7:00 p.m.
(or 15 minutes after the Administration & Public Works (A&PW) meeting adjourns)
Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center

ALDERMEN PRESENT: D. Holmes, L. Jean-Baptiste, A. Rainey, D. Wilson, M. Wynne


PRESIDING OFFICIAL: Ald. Rainey

DECLARATION OF QUORUM
A quorum being present, Chair Rainey called the meeting to order at 7:21 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 11, 2010 MEETING MINUTES
Ald. Wynne moved approval, seconded by Ald. Holmes.

The minutes of the October 11, 2010 meeting were approved unanimously, 5-0.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

(P1) Approval of Families in Transition (F.I.T.) Renewal Application
The Housing Commission and staff support approval of the renewal application for a Families in Transition household for a second year with a not to exceed amount of $6,251. Connections for the Homeless would like to renew a rental subsidy for the second and final year for an applicant family through the Families in Transition Program. Funding will be provided from the Affordable Housing Fund with an account balance of approximately $418,000. This item was held at the October 11, 2010 Planning and Development Committee meeting pending additional information and a request that a staff person from Connection for the Homeless be present for discussion.
Ald. Wynne moved approval, seconded by Ald. Jean-Baptiste.

Chair Rainey asked why there were 2 different amounts in the request for funding. Sarah Flax, Grants Administrator, explained that the reason for the range is that the requested amount is for the client if she gets the part time job at Macy’s, but if there is a change in her situation, she may need the higher amount, adding that in the current economy, people are losing jobs even if they are working very hard.

Chair Rainey said that unless you are among the chosen few with someone who is willing to be your sponsor, you are not going to receive funding from this program, and that 90% of the people in need of the program do not know about this.
The Committee discussed the family’s need and the fact that the client is working towards becoming an LPN.

Chair Rainey asked Ms. Flax for the complete rules of how the Affordable Housing fund can be used because she said she has some ideas on how to use it.

Ald. Wynne asked what message the Committee would be sending if, having the program, they deem that this family will not get the amount necessary because others don’t have the money they need. Ald. Jean-Baptiste asked Ms. Flax what difference the $800 to fund the full amount can make, to which Ms. Flax responded that it will be the amount needed to keep them housed if they lose (or don’t get) their jobs, and when asked, explained further that if it is not used it will not be spent.

Chair Rainey agreed to fund the full amount requested, adding that this will be their 4th year getting subsidized and it is time for them to move on.

The Committee voted unanimously 5-0 to approve the renewal application.

(P2) Ordinance 77-O-10, Amending Various Portions of the Zoning Ordinance Relating to Religious Institutions in the Business, Commercial, and Downtown Zoning Districts

The Plan Commission and staff recommend adoption of Ordinance 77-O-10, a text amendment to the zoning ordinance to change religious institutions from a permitted use to a special use where it so appears in the Business, Commercial, and Downtown zoning districts, and to remove religious institutions from the general exemption from the re-evaluation of off-street parking requirements for changes of use (Section 6-16-1-2) in those zoning districts.


Chair Rainey commented that in the 700 block of Howard, which is the smallest TIF district comprised of about 6-7 blocks, there are 7 churches, and that these churches are not open during the day when all the activity is taking place on the street. She said one of them had a sign that said services would be held from 11:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m., and you can’t see in. She said they do not contribute to business and that in a commercial/business district the majority of permitted uses are property-tax exempt, which raises questions. She said the Zoning Committee of the Plan Commission needs to investigate this. She noted that all of the churches on the Chicago side of Howard Street are illegal and they are all going to be noticed.

Ald. Holmes commented that between Greenbay and Brown, which is mainly commercial, there are 6 or 7 churches.

The Committee voted unanimously 5-0 to recommend introduction of Ordinance 77-O-10 at City Council.
(P3) Ordinance 78-O-10, a Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to allow Animal Hospitals as Special Uses in All Business and Commercial Districts

The Plan Commission and staff recommend adoption of Ordinance 78-O-10, a text amendment to the zoning code that allows animal hospitals to operate as a special use in all Business and Commercial zoning districts.


Ald. Jean-Baptiste recommended including animal-sitting services in the text amendment since there are many such businesses opening up and they will have a significant impact on the community.

Bill Dunkley, Zoning Administrator, in response to a question, said there is currently no definition of an animal-sitting business and that it has been treated as a retail business, but it would be good to have it defined.

Ald. Wilson noted that a full day dog-sitting service will have more impact on the surrounding area than an animal hospital and questioned whether it should be wrapped in with an animal hospital where the animals will come and go, and not be there all day, being walked, etc. Ald. Jean-Baptiste agreed and asked Mr. Dunkley to create special language for a dog-sitting service. The Committee also discussed including a pet-grooming business in the amended ordinance.

Chair Rainey said one of the most important businesses on Howard Street is the animal hospital. She asked Mr. Dunkley to have the Zoning Committee provide a definition of an animal-sitting business.

The Committee voted unanimously 5-0 to recommend introduction of Ordinance 78-O-10.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

(PD1) Update on 555 Howard Street (Marathon Gas Station)

Mr. Dunkley reminded the Committee that 6 months ago they heard the proprietor of the gas station/convenient store’s request to allow the convenient store to stay open 24 hours as it had been during the previous several years. He reminded the Committee that they had approved the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., 7 days a week. He reported that staff has observed the business in the last 6 months and the business has complied with the hours of operation as directed by the Committee. Staff has compared police calls from 4/1/10 through 10/15/10 to the last 44 months and found a dramatic difference in the amount of calls: in the earlier time period there were 9.9 police calls per month; in the last 6 months there were 4.2 calls per month.

Chair Rainey said the neighbors are satisfied with the results of the change in hours. She said she also learned that the gas station owners are on their best behavior and she has heard that they have directed employees not to call the police for some issues.
She said the City has extended the law on their behalf and the evidence is clear that when the convenience store is not open 24 hours, there is peace.

COMMUNICATIONS
There were no communications.

ADJOURNMENT
The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Bobbie Newman