Planning & Development Committee
Minutes of March 12, 2007
Council Chambers – 6:30 p.m.
Evanston Civic Center


Aldermen Absent: A. Rainey, C. Wollin

Staff Present: J. Wolinski, C. Brzezinski, K. Cox, S. Janusz, D. Marino, Mayor Morton, Bobbie Newman, Donna Spicuzza

Presiding Official: Alderman Jean-Baptiste

DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Ald. Jean-Baptiste called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 26, 2007

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the February 26, 2007 minutes.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

(P1) Ordinance 32-O-07 – Inclusionary Housing Ordinance
Ald. Tisdahl suggested the Committee re-evaluate financial revenue and expenses in one year. Ald. Bernstein elaborated on the need to do so. The Committee voted unanimously to APPROVE.

(P2) Ordinance 33-O-07 – Extending the Moratorium on the Issuance of Building Permits for Construction in the West Evanston TIF District by 30-Days
Mr. Wolinski stated that the West Evanston Plan was held by the Committee in order for staff to review, adding that staff will be ready to report by April 10, 2007. The Committee voted unanimously to APPROVE extension.

(P3) Ordinance 30-O-07 – Major Variation Request for 2045 Brown
The variation would allow parking on the street in lieu of the required 29 additional parking spaces required to be provided by the property. Mr. Wolinski stated that staff heartily supports this recommendation because the building has been under construction since 1992 and completing construction is essential to the community. He believes the enhancement to the building and community services they are offering will be a positive addition to the community. He added that the building is at the gateway into the City. Ald. Holmes stated that the Faith Temple Church would lend parking places for the mosque. Mayor Morton stated that they may have competition for parking spaces in the summer as people using the park across the street will be parking there also. Ms. Betty Ester, citizen, stated that the Over the Rainbow organization serves people in wheelchairs that use the street instead of the sidewalk and extra parking on the street may push them closer to the middle of the street.

Asad Hussain, architect, presented elevations and explained plans for renovation and use of the building. He stated that they are not adding on to the building. They are fixing the areas that do not comply with zoning regulations: moving condensers out of existing parking places and on to
roof, virtually out of sight. They will be restoring original windows and openings. They are putting a dome where the existing tower is, using a stone base and tile to enhance the cement block face and ultimately bringing proportion and aesthetic value to the building. They are adding lush landscaping with evergreens, black eyed susan, juniper, gravel, paving and four birch trees. They will be renovating the outside of the building and doing landscaping first. Inside, they will start on the basement. Mayor Morton asked about the frequency of services/activities. Mr. Mohammad Saiduzzaman, also representing the project, stated that services are held on Fridays, early morning at around 7:00 a.m. and afternoon from noon to 2:00 p.m., and congregants come at various times during the day for short prayers. They hope to have a Sunday school. They would like to offer a soup kitchen, health screening services and computer/vocational training to members of the community as well as the congregation. They want to be an integral part of the community. There have been no complaints from the neighbors. They hope to begin construction this summer. The Committee voted unanimously to APPROVE.

(P4) Request for up to $5,950 in Families in Transition Funds for One Year from Connections for the Homeless

The Committee voted unanimously to APPROVE the request.

COMMUNICATIONS

(PD1) Boarded Building Update
Ald. Wynne stated that 910 Hinman was not on the list of boarded buildings. Mr. Janusz confirmed that it has been boarded and will be added to the list. Ald. Bernstein asked if 1816 Lyons, which is owned by HUD is acquirable by the City to use for affordable housing. Mr. Janusz replied that HUD is trying to sell it. He will investigate further. The Committee discussed the difficulty in locating owners of the neglected buildings and collecting fines from them. Mr. Wolinski pointed out that 18 of 66 cases have been closed, but it is very time-consuming to track down owners. Ald. Bernstein suggested that amending the ordinance to give the City the ability to demolish neglected/condemned buildings within a designated time frame would afford the City more leverage in dealing with the owners to expedite collecting fines, sales and/or renovation of the buildings. Ald. Wynne suggested finding out what other municipalities do in these instances. Mr. Janusz stated that the Property Standards division is working with the Water Department to have water turned off when a building is vacant and requiring a certificate of occupancy to have it turned back on. Mayor Morton stated that we should investigate all of the agencies in the area that provide housing, and even citizens in foreclosure, and help them financially from the City’s funds and from CDBG funds. Mr. Ron Fleckman, a developer with ECDC, offered that he has the resources to take on 10 empty building and renovate them to be put back on the market at affordable prices. Mr. Cox of the Legal Department stated that he would draft a memorandum addressing this issue for the Committee’s review.

(PD2) Change in Chairmanship
Ald. Tisdahl confirmed that she will take over the Chairmanship of the Committee, succeeding Ald. Jean-Baptiste.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bobbie Newman
Exec. Secretary, Planning Division