Planning & Development Committee Meeting
Minutes of October 9, 2017
7:15 p.m.
James C. Lytle Council Chambers - Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center


STAFF PRESENT: J. Leonard, M. Masoncup, S. Flax

OTHERS PRESENT:

PRESIDING OFFICIAL: Ald. Wynne

I. CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF QUORUM: ALDERMAN RAINEY, CHAIR
A quorum being present, Ald. Wynne called the meeting to order at 7:48 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 25, 2017
Ald. Rue Simmons moved to approve the minutes of the September 25, 2017 meeting, seconded by Ald. Wilson.

The committee voted unanimously 7-0, to approve the September 25, 2017 minutes.

III. ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION

(P1) Granting Vacation Rental License to 2120 Madison Place
Staff recommends approval of a Vacation Rental License for the property located at 2120 Madison Place. The Vacation Rental meets all of the Standards and Procedures for license approval.

For Action

Residents of Madison Place expressed safety concerns. The neighbors also stated that the property was listed on the market, so how could a license be approved.

Ald. Rue Simmons requested staff explain the different regulations between various short term rentals.

At the request of Ald. Rainey, Michelle Masoncup, Deputy City Attorney, stated that the ordinance to allow vacation rental licenses was passed in 2013.

Ald. Rainey asked if the neighbors had noticed any problems related to crime with renters at the property in question. The neighbors had no knowledge that a bedroom was being rented until this meeting.
Ald. Wilson confirmed with Ms. Masoncup that the licenses must be renewed each year, and encouraged neighbors to report any problems with short term rentals in their neighborhood.

Ald. Fiske voiced support for holding the decision and encouraged neighbors to discuss concerns amongst themselves.

At the request of Ald. Rainey, the applicant explained that he started Airbnb at his property in June 2017. He called the City of Evanston to find out if there was a permitting process, and was informed of the 2013 vacation rental ordinance. He explained that he sent out a letter to 50 neighbors in advance of the September 25 Planning & Development Committee Meeting. Following a postponement, the City sent out a second round of public notices.

Ald. Wynne, on behalf of the Committee, asked that the applicant discuss his proposal with his neighbors before the next meeting, October 23, 2017.

Ald. Rainey moved to hold the item in committee, seconded by Ald. Rue Simmons. The item was held in committee until the next meeting, October 23, 2017.

(P2) Ordinance 88-O-17, Granting a Special Use for a Type 2 Restaurant, Nic's Organic Fast Food, a Drive-Through, Active Ground-Floor Use, & Major Zoning Relief at 2628 Gross Point Rd.

The Zoning Board of Appeals and City staff recommend adoption of Ordinance 88-O-17 granting special use approval for a Type 2 Restaurant, Nic’s Organic Fast Food, a Drive-Through facility, a Type 2 Restaurant as an Active Ground-Floor Use, and major zoning relief for a 20’ rear yard setback, reduced pedestrian areas fronting Crawford Ave. and Gross Point Rd., and reduced fenestration/sill height on the Crawford Ave. façade, at 2628 Gross Point Rd. The applicant has complied with all other zoning requirements, and meets all of the standards for special use and major variation in the B1a Business District and the oCSC Central Street Overlay District.

For Introduction

Joshua Huppert, 2630 Crawford, expressed concerns about parking. The neighbors are concerned that customers and employees will park on the street.

Ald. Wilson moved to introduce Ordinance 88-O-17, seconded by Ald. Fiske.

Ald. Suffredin echoed the concerns over parking, and stated that the applicant has not met the neighbors’ request. Without an enforceable parking agreement, he cannot support the ordinance.

Ald. Fiske expressed concern over the intensity of the use, loading spaces,
access, and impact on the neighborhood.

Ald. Wilson is aware of the parking issues and sees the business as primarily a drive thru restaurant.

Ald. Rainey asked if there were conditions under which an enforceable parking agreement could be crafted.

Ben Britton, the applicant and CEO of Nic’s Organic, explained that he has worked to obtain a parking agreement with the owner of Sarkis’ Café. However, Ald. Suffredin explained that that agreement is not legally binding because Sarkis’ does not own the lot.

**Ald. Rue Simmons moved to hold Ordinance 88-O-17, seconded by Ald. Wilson. Ordinance 88-O-17 was held in Committee until October 23, 2017.**

Ald. Wynne asked that Mr. Britton discuss with Ald. Suffredin the importance of having an enforceable parking agreement with the owner of the lot prior to the next meeting.

**(P3) Ordinance 103-O-17, Special Use Permit for Planned Development Located at 1450-1508 Sherman Avenue in the D4 Downtown Transition District**

The Plan Commission and staff recommend adoption of Ordinance 103-O-17 for approval of the Planned Development to construct a 16-story, 286-unit residential building with 9,321 square feet of ground floor commercial space, and 186 parking spaces located at 1450-1508 Sherman Avenue. The development includes six (6) site development allowances.

**For Introduction**

A representative of Interfaith Action of Evanston, expressed neither support for or against the development, but would like to see the affordable housing ordinance improved to encourage the construction of units opposed to paying the in lieu fee.

Steve Cohen, 1570 Elmwood, has experienced impact such as road closures due to recent construction. He is concerned that restaurants on Sherman will be negatively impacted during construction.

Jennifer Grandy, homeowner at the 1500 block of Maple, voiced support for the development in order to progress economic development. Others commented on the critical mass of foot traffic needed in order to create a walkable, vibrant downtown. A restaurant owner also supported the development. The owner of Tommy Nevin’s Pub stated the business is about to close. Another resident spoke to the potential increased business
opportunities.

The Mickelson’s, who live a couple hundred yards away, believe the development does not represent a transition and stands out too much. Another resident was concerned about new firefighting equipment that would be needed.

Brook Harper, a recent transplant, expressed concerned about bringing more cars into downtown.

Carl Lemaine, 822 Colfax, moved to Evanston with his wife because of the charming architecture, which he believes is Evanston’s strength. He believes that the Albion project is not aligned with this strength.

Sari Kadison-Shapiro, who lives at the corner of Lake and Elmwood, wants the City to follow the transitional zoning adopted in the 2009 Downtown Plan. And believes her home, not included in any historic district, is vulnerable to redevelopment.

Barbara White, who lives within 1000 feet, is worried that approving the project will set a precedent of overly-generous zoning variations. Another resident believed the variances were too extreme and too friendly to the developer, which could signal to the development community that Evanston’s planning and zoning lacks implementation.

Marilyn Ruiz, a downtown resident at Sherman and Davis, supports the project and looks forward to meeting new neighbors in her downtown neighborhood.

The owner of Prairie Moon expressed support for the project and plans to relocate into the new space on the ground floor.

Alan Ramsier, 1407 Elmwood, is concerned about the lack of parking and believes there will be overflow parking on his street.

Adam Chiss, resident of Ward 3, is concerned about the character of the neighborhood and opposes the development.

Public comment period closed.

Donna Pugh, of Foley and Lardner, the applicant’s attorney, introduced the development team. Jason Kane, the President of Albion, introduced the company. Andrew Yule, of Albion, explained the proposed development, including the need for variations related to height, FAR, and parking. He also discussed how he worked with the community and City staff to alter design. Paul Alessandro, of HPA, the architect, discussed the design, site plan, and floor plan of the building. Ted Wolff, of Wolff Landscape Architecture, discussed the pocket park, which will be a public park. He also discussed the
streetscape on Sherman Avenue, and how it meets Evanston’s streetscape standards.

Andrew Yule discussed affordable housing, and how a plan to opt for the fee in lieu transformed into providing units on site through the public process. As a long-term owner of the property Mr. Yule stated that Albion is committed to starting a conversation around the affordable housing crisis in Evanston. Mr. Yule further discussed other public benefits such as maintaining Harper Park and transit viaducts adjacent to the site.

Claire Kelly, representing over 1800 petitioners opposed to the development, expressed concern related to zoning issues, housing segregation, environmental LEED concerns, and incompatible design and scale.

Seth Weinberger, former Chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals, expressed concerns with the ziggurat setback, particularly on the south part of the site, and the FAR allowance related to the narrowness of the site. He also questioned the value of the community benefits received in return.

Greg Williams, a local architect and planning specialist, expressed concerns with circulation and loading of retail spaces, and proposed an alternative design and floor plan.

Seth Friedman, a former Evanston Plan Commissioner, who helped adopt the Downtown Plan in 2009, opposed the project due to the scale.

Darlene Cannon discussed fair housing issues. Ms. Cannon stated that Evanston has enough small luxury units, and adding more of such units will increase rents and cause the community to become less diverse.

Ms. Pugh stated that numerous people who signed the petition do not live in Evanston. Andrew Yule stated that there was never a comment of race as to who could live in the building.

Ald. Rainey asked Sarah Flax, Housing & Grants Administrator, to clarify whether this development would be in violation of the Fair Housing Act. Ms. Flax confirmed that approval of this project would not violate the Fair Housing Act.

**Ald. Wynne moved to introduce Ordinance 103-O-17, seconded by Ald. Rainey.**

Ald. Wilson stated solutions to affordability crisis include increasing the supply of housing and reducing lengthy regulatory restrictions. The proposed building accomplishes this, and does not seem to affect Evanston’s segregation problem. He also encouraged residents to back up claims with evidence.
Ald. Fiske expressed concerns over the public accessibility of the pocket park competing with the restaurant seating. Andrew Yule explained that the intent is for the public, and the restaurant seating will only be allowed on a restricted area with a planter separating the uses. Ald. Fiske was also concerned with the ziggurat setback on the south of the site. She was also concerned with retail vacancies in Evanston, and does not wish to see empty retail spaces on the ground floor of this project. Moreover, she is concerned with community character of the downtown and not asking enough of the development community.

Ald. Rainey stated that some of the public comments expressed were false. She believes that 15 units of affordable housing in Evanston is a historical opportunity. She also stated that the merchants are in favor, and this is the only way to remediate the environmental contamination. Ald. Rainey believes the change in Evanston’s character is inevitable and for the better, and that foot traffic is necessary to sustain local businesses.

Ald. Rue Simmons stated that the affordable housing goals have been met by providing 15 units. She also stated the $60,000 Divvy Station could be used for something more beneficial. She would like to see local hires, minority and women hires, and an opportunity, if possible, for current Evanston residents to live in the affordable units.

Sarah Flax confirmed that priority will be given to people who currently live and work in Evanston for renting affordable units.

Ald. Revelle believes the area does need redevelopment and appreciates the construction of new affordable units. She expressed excitement over the partnership with ETHS benefit. However, she is concerned about the scale of the building as it relates to the transition of downtown development, as well as the ziggurat setback on the south end of the site.

Ald. Wilson stated that the character of Evanston relates more to its people than its buildings, and would like a copy of the petition. He believes that more supply will help the affordability issue.

Ald. Wynne expressed concern with the mix of the affordable units, and believes the scale is too large for the site. She believes the narrowness and length of the site will create an imposing structure. She expressed concern about the precedent an approval might set for future development. Ald. Wynne challenged the community to present accurate information.

Ald. Wynne moved to hold Ordinance 103-O-17 in committee, seconded by Ald. Fiske. The Committee voted unanimously to hold Ordinance 103-O-17 until October 23, 2017.

IV. ITEM FOR DISCUSSION
There were no items for discussion.
V. COMMUNICATIONS
There were no communications.

VI. ADJOURNMENT
Ald. Wilson moved to adjourn, seconded by Ald. Rue Simmons.

The committee voted unanimously 7-0 to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Janusek