MEETING MINUTES
PLAN COMMISSION
Wednesday, December 6, 2017
7:00 P.M.

Evanston Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, James C. Lytle Council Chambers

Members Present: Jim Ford (Chair), Simon Belisle, Terri Dubin, Peter Isaac, Colby Lewis, Jolene Saul

Members Absent: Patrick Brown, Carol Goddard, Andrew Pigozzi,

Associate Members Present: none

Associate Members Absent: Scott Peters

Staff Present: Meagan Jones, Neighborhood and Land Use Planner
Scott Mangum, Planning and Zoning Administrator

Presiding Member: Jim Ford, Chairman

1. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chairman Ford called the meeting to order at 7:03 P.M.

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: August 30, 2017 (Joint ZBA/Plan Commission Meeting)

Commissioner Goddard made a motion to approve the minutes from August 30, 2017. Commissioner Saul seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were unanimously approved, 6-0.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. TEXT AMENDMENT

17PLND-0102

C1a Zoning District
A Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment pursuant to City Code Title 6, Zoning to amend the requirements within the C1a Zoning District.

Ms. Jones provided a brief background on the C1a zoning district and the reasons behind the proposed text amendments. Commissioner Lewis provided additional
information on the discussions the Zoning Committee had over two meetings regarding the district. He mentioned that there was agreement that the C1a is a viable district and generally appears to be doing what it was created to do due to its location near transit. There were concerns regarding the number and size of dwelling units as well as consideration of the street level environment. More clarity was needed on the major issues which led to the referral. Mr. Mangum added that the proposed amendments could also apply to properties that may be rezoned to C1a. An Aldermanic request has been received for such a rezoning that is likely to be considered in the future.

Questions from the Commission:
● Whether or not Legal Department was consulted with what was proposed. There was general consulting on the ordinance, however, no in-depth analysis was done prior to the Commission meeting.
● What the goal of the text amendment would be. This amendment would begin to address the issues of density and walkability and the street level. The Zoning Committee looked at the broader number of issues and chose the proposed text amendments to begin to address those issues. This would not affect recently approved project at 831 Emerson.
● Issue with traffic or services. At this time there is only anecdotal information on those items and no additional data.
● Clarification on where the Zoning District is. There is a portion of the district (Main St. & Chicago Ave.) which is also within an overlay district.
● What sidewalk widths are at various points of Chicago Avenue.

Chair Ford opened up the public hearing to questions and testimony from the public. Two members of the public spoke including former Zoning Board of Appeals Chair, Matt Rodgers. Comments included:
● General concerns with changing the district. Some changes have already been made; imposing new rules may alter the face of the district.
● Suggestion to look at what is being proposed and the general goals of the district. The area could be rezoned to C1 with C1a zoning being used as an additional planning tool as needed.
● Likely possibility of uneven sidewalk widths due to the varying sizes of buildings.
● Limiting what existing owners of smaller buildings could do with their properties likely. Existing buildings should not be punished based of what larger developments have done.
● C1a zoning makes sense on Howard Street.

Chair Ford closed the public hearing and opened Commission discussion.
Commissioner Belisle inquired about how building setbacks would be addressed if it is not a planned development. Mr. Mangum explained since there would be no way to negotiate the setbacks and terms of a smaller development not meeting planned development thresholds that those buildings could still be built to the property line.

Chair Ford inquired about what the likelihood would be of a non-planned development project occurring. He stated that he does not believe that there would be many large developments in the near future within this area.

Commissioner Isaac stated that he was in favor of a lowered height with incentives provided to encourage wider sidewalks. He has a concern that a standard setback could be viewed as a taking or form of condemnation of a property. He believes that providing an incentive would be more acceptable.

Commissioner Lewis wondered if there was a precedent for a minimum sidewalk width. A brief description of the Central Street overlay and minimum pedestrian area requirements was given. He mentioned that during Zoning Committee meetings, the idea of voluntary trading of sidewalk width for building height brought about a concern for inconsistency and possibility for abuse in addition to creating legal nonconformities.

Chair Ford stated that allowing for a trade-off would create the need to have an absolute maximum and minimum in order to avoid having a potential issue of extreme differences in height or setback. Commissioner Isaac stated that physical unevenness of the sidewalk is not a reason to avoid the incentive especially if the rule is kept long term.

Commissioner Dubin pointed out that liability could become an issue with increased sidewalk width going on to private property.

Chair Ford inquired about the intention of the minimum lot size per square footage and suggested that it may lead to greater building heights. Commissioner Lewis stated that Zoning Committee discussion lead to not amending the maximum FAR in order to allow building to the maximum allowed square footage on a lot while encourage larger units.

Commissioner Saul stated that the 12 foot sidewalk setback may create a burden to property owners and that the size of dwelling units is not a City responsibility but is more market driven.

Commissioner Belisle stated that the conversation goes back to the necessity of a text amendment for the C1a zoning district. Commissioner Lewis mentioned that the
earlier suggestion of rezoning the areas from C1a to C1 would be downzoning of those properties.

Commissioner Isaac stated that providing a standard required setback width could be an issue with a fully developed area. He believes looking into possible changes to the C1a to address stated issues is still a worthy endeavor.

Commissioners Dubin and Belisle mentioned that there should be more attention towards pedestrian behavior and uses within different areas.

Chair Ford suggested that the Commission vote the proposed amendments up or down and, if down, that further amendments be suggested.

Commissioner Isaac made a motion to adopt proposed amendment to Section 6-11-3-4(B) regarding minimum lot size per dwelling unit. Seconded by Commissioner Lewis. The Commission voted, 3-3, to recommend adoption of the proposed amendment. Due to a split vote, that motion failed.

Commissioner Lewis made a motion to adopt the proposed amendment to Sections 6-10-3-11 and 6-10-3-8 regarding minimum width of pedestrian area. Seconded by Commissioner Isaac. The Commission voted, 2-4, and the motion failed.

Commissioner Ford inquired about the possibility of asking for a distance back from the property line instead of the curb exchange for bonuses due to a curb lines having an easier ability to be altered and creating nonconformities.

Commissioner Dubin expressed concerns over details of request, especially details of a sidewalk width requirement, and did not believe the amendment should be included.

Commissioner Belisle inquired that if a trade-off is offered, if asking for additional public space for the incentive would diminish liability. Commissioner Isaac responded that the sidewalk width should stop short of a sidewalk dedication to the City. A brief discussion followed where the established definition of pedestrian area was provided. There was a question of whether or not additional research is needed, similar to what was done for the oCSC Central Street Overlay District.

There was agreement that clearer actions and concerns for the C1a district were needed in addition to more information that may be needed regarding street walkability.
Commissioner Saul made a motion to recommend that no change occur to the C1a zoning district regulations. Commissioner Dubin seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion was approved, 5-1.

Ayes: Belisle, Dubin, Lewis, Saul, Ford.
Nays: Isaac

4. OTHER BUSINESS

A. 2018 PLAN COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE

Commissioner Belisle suggested that an alternate date be chosen for the February meeting.

Commissioner Lewis made a motion to adopt the 2018 meeting schedule with the condition that an alternative February meeting date is looked into. Commissioner Saul seconded the motion. The Commission voted, 6-0, to adopt the proposed 2018 Meeting Calendar with the added condition.

B. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Commissioner Dubin made a motion to nominate Commissioner Lewis as Chair of the Plan Commission for 2018. Seconded by Commissioner Isaac. Commissioner Dubin moved to close the nominations for Chair. Seconded by Commissioner Isaac.

A voice vote was taken and the nomination was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Lewis nominated Commissioner Saul as Vice-Chair of the Plan Commission for 2018. Seconded by Commissioner Isaac. Commissioner Dubin moved to close nominations for Vice-Chair. Seconded by Commissioner Belisle.

A voice vote was taken and the nomination was approved unanimously.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.
6. CHAIR’S REMARKS

Chair Ford thanked the Commission and staff for the work done and recommended that Associate Members be removed from the Plan Commission By-Laws.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Isaac made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Dubin seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved by voice call 6-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Meagan Jones
Neighborhood and Land Use Planner
Community Development Department