MEETING MINUTES
PLAN COMMISSION
Wednesday, January 9, 2019
7:00 P.M.
Evanston Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, James C. Lytle Council Chambers

Members Present: Colby Lewis (Chair), Jennifer Draper, Carol Goddard, Peter Isaac, Andrew Pigozzi

Members Absent: Terri Dubin, George Halik

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

Presiding Member: Colby Lewis, Chairman

1. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Chairman Lewis called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M.

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: December 12, 2018

Commissioner Isaac made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Goddard. The Commission voted unanimously, 5-0, to approve the minutes of December 12, 2018.

3. OLD BUSINESS (Continued from December 12, 2018)

A. Planned Development
1714-1720 Chicago Avenue
18PLND-0053
Paul Janicki, architect, proposes to construct a 13-story office building with 112 on-site parking spaces. The applicant requests a Map Amendment to rezone the property from the R6 General Residential to the D3 Downtown Core Development District. The applicant seeks site development allowances for: 1) An FAR of 5.0, where the maximum permitted FAR in the D3 district is 4.5; 2) A building height of 127 feet to roof (excluding eligible parking levels), where the maximum permitted height of a building in D3 is 85 feet to roof; 3) 112 parking spaces with 22 compact stalls where the minimum required number of parking spaces is 213, in addition to a purchase-sale agreement to replace the 74 library parking spaces onsite, and where compact stalls are not allowed; 4) A front yard setback of 25-
feet, where 31.4 feet is required; 5) A north side yard setback of 5-feet proposed, where 15-feet is required; 6) A south side yard setback of 5-feet proposed, where 15-feet is required.; and 7) A canopy yard obstruction of 9.7 feet into the required front yard, where a maximum obstruction of 3.1 feet (10%) is allowed. In addition, the applicant may seek and the Plan Commission may consider additional Site Development Allowances as may be necessary or desirable for the proposed development.

Chair Lewis stated that the applicant will not be making a presentation and opened up the public hearing to testimony from the public. A total of 16 people spoke, including the following:

- Marcia Kuhr, who requested the continuance, stated that a petition was circulated and signed by neighbors in opposition to the project. Several concerns were mentioned, including the increased traffic in the alley, loss of parking despite applicant claims that the current lot is not fully used, the increase in people not being addressed with regards to garage space, and the bulk of the building itself negatively impacting nearby properties and adjacent landmarks.
- Kevin Russell stated that, from his residence, he can see that Clark Street is a major truck route and is concerned about the amount of traffic on the street, especially during rush hours. He also had concerns about a pedestrian count not being done due to a large amount of foot traffic in the area to and from Northwestern University. He then inquired about how much property tax the building is projected to create.
- Melanie Cody, President of the Women’s Club of Evanston, spoke in opposition to the project voicing concerns about the likely damage to the historic clubhouse and loss of revenue from fewer events being held in that space.
- Joan Safford read a letter from Lenore Weisman, a disabled resident who voiced concerns regarding the location, safety and amount of the proposed accessible parking spaces. Ms. Safford then stated she herself had concerns about the proposed Map Amendment being spot zoning that would not match the character of the block and stated that the petition mentioned earlier is specifically in opposition to the rezoning. She then questioned whether or not the market study included was still valid and sufficient.
- Margie Rogasner stated that there was no publicity regarding the proposed building and no mention of any interim parking plans during the construction of the building. She also inquired as to whether or not schools had been notified about the proposed development and stated that library will likely lose circulation which it uses to secure funding.
- Glen Madeja, of Center for Women’s History and Leadership and Frances Willard House, expressed concerns over security, adding a fence to prevent people cutting through the property from the parking lot, protection from water run-off that the building will increase, and the proposed building putting the Frances Willard house in shadows for most of the year. He also requested a written agreement for tree replacement for those trees that are unable to be preserved.
since the tree protection plan is not yet completed.

- Virginia Beatty voiced concerns regarding the number of parking spaces and how the building may affect entry into the library garage and McManus buildings. She added that the 2-way alley is only 20 feet wide and that the size and bulk of the building is 4 times higher than adjacent buildings on the block, reiterating the importance of the landmark buildings on either side of the development. She finished by stating that the developer did a good job of gathering information, however, this is not the best location for the proposed development.

- Sara Schastok inquired about inconsistencies with the proposed job creation numbers.

- Janet Steidl stated that the traffic volume projection does not include pedestrian and bicycle traffic and that with the projected number of employees traveling to the building there will be various modes of transportation, increasing alley use. Projection should include pedestrian and bicycle usage.

- Austin Sherer stated that there are dangerous blind turns proposed in the alley and difficult turns into the alley from fast moving Church St. traffic. He also expressed that the building is disproportionate to the adjacent buildings and would tower over them and lead to faster deterioration of the landmark buildings. He added that the diagrams are well done but do not appear to have an accurate scale.

- Libby Hill, with Bird Friendly Evanston, explained that Evanston is part of a major flyway for birds and she commends the developer for taking bird friendliness into consideration in the building design. She expressed concern over the lobby, suggesting that the clear glass be changed. The project is a 17.8 on a scale where 15 points is optimal for the LEED 55 Pilot Credit.

- Vickie Burke, speaking on behalf of Sarah Ward and the Women’s History Center stated that the Frances Willard House is ranked #2 on the list of places Illinoisans should visit and they have stated their opposition to the building on this lot. She added that no one has reached out to various groups about their concerns over the proposed development. Ms. Burke then asked for clarification on whether or not there will be a scale model created and if it could be on display in the library for residents to view. She inquired about the educational internship proposed and stated that she liked the idea behind that public benefit. Ms. Burke then asked for clarification on the proposed public/501c3 bike room, stating that this it is not really needed and not a true public benefit.

- Ben Shapiro, with the Evanston Library Board, stated that there is an average of 1700 daily visitors to the library and that the proposed parking is insufficient, would not be available when needed and hinder the library’s ability to serve the public. He also expressed concern about the dog-legged alley, vehicles using the garage entry area as a cut-through to get to the building and inquired about a snow removal plan.

- Bruce Garenbach stated the Commission should deny the project; there are multiple items that the proposed building has changed from what the City initially approved including going above 11 stories, not providing 75 parking spaces, and
needing an alley vacation. He added that the loading zones being directly across the alley from each other could cause the alley to be blocked. Mr. Garenbach then stated that the DAPR recommendation of denial should hold weight and that the proposed rezoning is an instance of spot zoning.

- Kim Stanton clarified that the agreement that the Women’s Club has been said to have signed has not been, was just received that day, and was not acceptable.
- Alderman Fiske made a statement to correct the record regarding comments from Sarah Ward. She read a correspondence which asked that future communication go to Glen Madeja and Vickie Burke who are aware of the process and meetings have occurred with representatives from the entities each represents.

Mr. Janicki made closing statements. He explained that the Fire Department did come out to the site and adjustments to the building setback were made. The alley is also standard width, currently has no crosswalks for pedestrians and that the vehicles used in diagrams for the proposed building are the size of Suburbans. He added that there will be 112 parking spaces available after 5:00pm and on weekends which leads to a net increase of spaces for the public when the demand is highest. After calculations, it is projected that roughly 40% of office workers will stay late and the garage will have a full time security guard. He then stated that there were 4 days of parking counts that were observed and yielded similar results. He added that the development team elected not to add the 74 spaces back but that there are 38 more cars projected with the new building.

Mr. Janicki then stated that the projected property tax revenue will exceed $1million. He added that the concern for the historic structures is not needed due to the proposed setback and proposed seismic monitoring. He used the recently constructed Hyatt building as an example of protecting an adjacent historic structure. He then stated that the market feasibility study is based on City of Evanston’s request for proposals. Mr. Janicki added that the centerline of existing trees are on Frances Willard House property and that the goal is to preserve as many trees as possible, replace trees and add new trees in the parkway, and explained that the diagrams provided and building itself are to scale.

Chair Lewis opened up the hearing to questions from the Commission. These included:

- Commissioner Pigozzi inquired how people will access the east terrace and that the proposed dumpster appears to be large. Mr. Janicki stated that there are elevators that will go up to the north and south terrace levels, but the east would not be accessed, and that the dumpster area includes loading. Chair Lewis confirmed that the terraces will only be accessible to building tenants.
- Commissioner Draper inquired about the existing trees and what is proposed to be replaced in the parkway. Mr. Janicki explained that the existing trees are small and the development is proposing to put 10 inch caliper trees in their place.
- Commissioner Draper asked how parking will be handled during construction. Mr.
Stec stated that there will be a plan laid out for the Construction Management Plan which will have to be approved by staff.

- Mr. Stec stated that the proposed internship will be structured by Shelly Gates at Evanston Township High School. He then stated that with regards to the public/private bike parking proposed came about from a conversation with the Evanston Bike Club President who made the suggestion. He added that with regards to the adjacent buildings, the development does not want to interrupt the history of those buildings and that business interruption insurance will be in place to protect them and that information was in the letter referenced by Ms. Stanton.

- Chair Lewis asked about the discrepancy in the full time employee numbers. Mr. Stec stated that the real estate broker expects a higher number of employees and the 500 employee standard is fluid.

- Commissioner Isaac mentioned the brief talk regarding the contract to sell the property and pointed out the change in what has been proposed. He asked if that should be taken into consideration and added that if the lot were not owned by Evanston, that they may not be having the same conversation. Mr. Mario Treto, Deputy City Attorney, stated that those considerations are under the jurisdiction of the City Council and that Plan Commission should just look at the standards stated within the Zoning Code.

Chair Lewis closed the public hearing and the Commission began its deliberations.

Commissioner Pigozzi stated that he has tried to understand the form and is not convinced that there is a precedent for this building. He added that the developer is asking a lot with regards to building height and setback allowances and that there is no rhythm to the building and the façade does not fit with the surrounding buildings. He is not convinced that the design works and is sufficient to justify the ask. Therefore, he cannot support the project.

Commissioner Goddard stated that she knows that the City wants a building at this site but that the requested development allowances are not offset by the public benefits.

Commissioner Draper stated that the developer made a good case for the fire truck passage and parking but that she has concerns regarding the building design and size not fitting in with the adjacent buildings. She added that the building setbacks are too small, the trees are not likely to be saved and she is struggling to see how the project would work.

Commissioner Isaac stated that initially, the main concern was the parking. In the past, the Commission has looked unfavorably at a reduction in parking but overall, that will not be as big an issue due to the building being an office use. He added that he has a concern with the loss of the open air lot having an effect on the library and adjacent buildings. This is a tough case with pros and cons on either side and he is conflicted.
Chair Lewis stated that his initial thought is concern for the rezoning. R6 is appropriate even though it is adjacent to the D3 district and feels the rezoning would be spot zoning considering the transition at that location. He added that office space is needed but is not sure that the proposed site is the best location for it.

The Commission then reviewed the standards for Special Use, Map Amendments and Planned Developments in the proposed D3 District and found that not all of the standards had been met.

Commissioner Isaac added that a major issue is whether or not the downtown should be extended to this street and the biggest issue is rezoning of the lot from R6 to D3. Commissioner Goddard responded that the rezoning is one of the issues but not the guiding issue.

Commissioner Pigozzi made a motion to recommend denial of proposed development. Commissioner Goddard seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed, 4-1.

Ayes: Draper, Goddard, Isaac, Pigozzi
Nays: Lewis

4. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

6. ADJOURNMENT

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

A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved by voice vote 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 pm.

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