MEETING MINUTES
PLAN COMMISSION
Wednesday, December 12, 2018
7:00 P.M.
Evanston Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, James C. Lytle Council Chambers

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

Members Absent:

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 7:00 P.M.

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: November 14, 2018

Commissioner Pigozzi made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Isaac. The Commission voted unanimously, 7-0, to approve the minutes of November 14, 2018.

3. NEW BUSINESS

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.

Mr. Mangum provided a brief overview of the proposed planned development including a proposed alley vacation and shared that staff is recommending denial of the proposal.

Mr. Paul Janicki provided additional information on the proposed development, explaining that the proposal is a response to a Request for Proposals issued by the City. He then described building characteristics, materials and the alley functionality, including the proposed alley vacation to accommodate loading and truck traffic. He explained that the required library parking spaces would be available in the evenings and on weekends when the office spaces are not in use. Mr. Greg Stec then added that the public benefits had been revised to include landscaping treatments on the west side of Chicago Avenue and on terraces, replacement of alley, new sidewalk along Chicago Ave adjacent to the property, new crosswalk and signage in the alley, outreach to grammar schools after completion of the project, and to provide signage directing drivers to available parking spaces within the building’s garage and nearby City garages.

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

- Commissioner Dubin inquired whether or not the traffic study takes short library visits into account when reviewing alley traffic. Additionally, what is the demand for office space in the City? Mr. Steve Corcharan responded that the study took traffic counts of the area and where vehicles enter and exit existing lots/garages. Class A office space is in demand in Evanston and there are various headquarters looking to relocate into the area.

- Commissioner Halik inquired about the planned absorption rate for the building and what the typical ratio of parking spaces to office space is. Mr. Stec stated that the plan is to have 50% of the building leased before breaking ground and 75% leased by the time the building is constructed. Typically parking is provided at rate of 1,000 square feet of leasable office space per parking space.

- Commissioner Goddard asked of the 74 required parking spaces for library use, how many will be available during the day? Mr. Janicki referenced the traffic study and stated that the existing lot typically has 21 used parking spaces during the day. Intend to use the proposed building garage as overflow parking for what is provided in the library garage during the day.

- Commissioner Goddard then inquired about the average setback on the block. Mr. Janicki responded that there is an approximate 34 foot setback on the block and 25 feet proposed for the building.
Commissioner Pigozzi asked for the applicant to explain the idea behind the building design. Mr. Janicki stated that he looked at the massing of adjacent and nearby buildings in the downtown area.

Commissioner Halik asked what the height in feet compared with the Whole Foods building is and what will the parking level “windows” be made of. Mr. Janicki stated that he is uncertain of Whole Foods building height in feet but in stories it is 25 stories versus 13 stories of the proposed development. The windows of the proposed building will be a punched opening of translucent etched glass and provide an obscured view.

Commissioner Draper inquired about how the side setbacks of the proposed building compare to the side setbacks of adjacent landmark buildings. Mr. Janicki stated that setback from the northern building to the proposed building is approximately 25 feet.

Commissioner Draper then asked if existing trees along Chicago Avenue are proposed to be kept. Mr. Janicki confirmed that they will be and additional trees are proposed within the parkway.

Commissioner Isaac asked for the applicant to explain project changes since Council approval the sale of the property and if those changes lead to change in the property sale price. Mr. Janicki stated that changes include additional floors to provide additional revenue and provide more parking. Mr. Stec stated that the cost to build the development has increased since the start of the approval process.

Commissioner Isaac then brought up concern of office use after 5:00pm and how many parking spaces will actually be available for the library visitors and the public if this occurs. Additionally, what vehicles would be able to use the compact parking spaces. 8 feet by 18 feet are the size of those spaces and are actually considered standard size in Chicago.

Is there a commitment from a tenant? Mr. Stec responded that there were tenants initially, however, the entitlement process took longer than anticipated and those tenants were lost. Will have at least 25% of the building leased and intend to have 50% of building leased by the time construction.

Chair Lewis stated that a request for a continuance had been received and that if granted the hearing would be continued to the next scheduled Plan Commission meeting on January 9, 2019. Chair Lewis then opened up the public hearing to questions and comments from the Public. Questions included:

- Mr. Ben Shapiro asked what was the frequency and time of day for the traffic study. Special events could change demand and some delivery trucks may not fit through the alley as proposed. Mr. Corcharan stated that the study was done on March 14, 2018 from 8:00am to 6:00pm, looking at the existing lot and the Chicago Avenue parking garage. Deliveries were also considered with truck turning diagrams done for the library, the proposed building and firetrucks. Snow removal was mentioned with a suggestion that coordinated efforts be made if the development is approved.
• Ms. Chava Wu asked if 2-way traffic in the alley will remain. No changes are intended.
• Mr. Glen Madeja asked for clarification of items on the tree protection plan. Mr. Dennis Fogell stated that an arborist came out to the site and created a report for status of existing trees. He mentioned that there would be several trees that would be lost but those are intended to be replaced. Chair Lewis then raised a question regarding who would be responsible for tree root maintenance and damage. Commissioner Isaac stated that it is his understanding that it depends on where the tree comes out of the ground and if any portion is on more than one property, it is co-owned. Further information was requested.
• Ms. Sarah Schastok inquired about having a letter from the Evanston Fire Department included. Mr. Janicki provided a copy of the letter within the presentation. Ms. Schastok then asked how much involvement Northwestern University has had in review of the proposal with the McMannis Center being adjacent to the development. Alderman Fiske responded that she has reached out to adjacent neighbors of the site to provide information including Dave Davis of Northwestern University, some follow-up may be needed.
• Ms. Andrea Vantek voiced general opposition to the proposed zoning change.
• Ann Branning raised questions and concerns regarding when the library garage closes, if spaces will be reserved for building tenants and if that will affect the available parking spaces for the public, and whether or not the public spaces will be metered. Mr. Stec stated that charges for the public spaces would be determined by the City. Chair Lewis stated that there would seem to be implications for leasing spaces that need to be available for the public. Mr. Shapiro stated that the Library garage corresponds to Library operating hours.
• Ms. Lucia Guridi asked what security measures are proposed within the garage. Mr. Janicki stated that there would likely have to be someone available in the garage at all times
• Ms. Janet Steidl pointed out that additional detail was needed in order to be consistent within various parts of the development plan and diagrams, especially as they relate to the alley. She requested that centerlines be shown on all documents and added to drawings.

Commissioner Isaac made a motion to continue the public hearing to the January 9, 2019 Plan Commission meeting. Commissioner Dubin seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved, 7-0.

Ayes: Draper, Dubin, Goddard, Halik, Isaac, Pigozzi, Lewis.
Nays:

B. Text Amendment
oRD Redevelopment Overlay District 18PLND-0102
A Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment pursuant to City Code Title 6, Zoning, to Section 6-15-13 of the Zoning Ordinance, to revise the regulations of the
ORD Redevelopment Overlay District, including language regarding permitted and special uses.

Ms. Jones provided a brief overview of the proposed text amendment, explaining the reasoning behind it being to clarify the proposed and existing uses within the overlay district and provide consistency between the Zoning Code and staff interpretation. She provided the standards for text amendments and welcomed discussion and questions. Commissioner Isaac stated that the proposed amendment seemed straight forward.

Commissioner Goddard made a motion to recommend approval of the text amendment. Commissioner Halik seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion was approved, 7-0.

Ayes: Draper, Dubin, Goddard, Halik, Isaac, Pigozzi, Lewis.
Nays:

C. Text Amendment
Public Benefits for Planned Developments 18PLND-0103
A Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment pursuant to City Code Title 6, Zoning, to Section 6-3-6 of the Zoning Ordinance, to revise the regulations relating to Public Benefits of Planned Developments.

Ms. Jones reviewed the discussion that occurred during the November Plan Commission meeting and provided an overview of the proposed text amendment revising regulations relating to public benefits for planned developments.

Commissioner Halik Suggested removing items 4 and 5 from the goal list as they seem to be expected for any development and part of standard improvements, not public benefits. He then stated that the proposed standards are not tied to a quantitative measurement. He mentioned that Chicago eliminated public benefits and essentially added payment for increased allowances, using the funds towards City projects as it sees fit.

Chair Lewis asked if the Commission would recommend a complete overhaul of the public benefits section or do so incrementally. Mr. Mangum stated that there is some language that addresses the degree to which standards are met by public benefits but the point was taken regarding whether or not there should be a give and take with regards to benefits and development allowances.

He stated that the broadness of the proposed amendment allows for innovation. Commissioner Halik stated that he believes that developers will satisfy the proposed goals in the least financially impactful way possible. He added that the Chicago program has been successful and the City decides how the money is spent.
Commissioner Isaac expressed that, based on previous Commission discussion, he is happy with what has been drafted. It is narrowed but broad enough to not have to be revisited next year.

Commissioner Draper inquired about whether Green Building regulations will be updated as they relate to LEED and if the amendment should be revised to address that. Mr. Mangum responded that the Green Building Ordinance Requirements may be revised in the near future to incorporate alternate green building rating systems and that regulations could be revised to not directly reference LEED standards.

Commissioner Pigozzi stated that it would help to streamline regulations to do as Commissioner Halik suggested. Regulations could be simplified and quantified. The Inclusionary Housing Ordinance does this to a certain extent. Commissioner Goddard asked if he was suggesting monetizing public benefit in exchange for development allowances to which Commissioner Pigozzi responded yes.

Commissioner Isaac expressed concern that that process would diminish the ability of the City to deny certain aspects of a project if developers can simply “purchase” allowances. Commissioner Halik responded that there would still be the ability to enforce zoning regulations while establishing monetary levels to pay for certain development allowances. Chair Lewis pointed out that there would also need to a mechanism set up to decide how money that is obtained from payments is spent.

Commissioner Goddard stated she is not comfortable with a system that appears to be “pay to play”. Commissioner Halik reiterated that there could still be a check and balance for the projects and not automatic approval with payment.

Commissioner Draper suggested that a certain percentage of a project budget could go towards public benefits.

Commissioner Dubin asked if developers discuss with staff what public benefits may help to grant site development allowances or a general idea of what needs to be provided. Ms. Jones stated that there are generally a number of meetings that occur before a project comes before Design and Project Review Committee. It can be subjective based on a number of items such as where a project is located, the type of development and what may be happening in the immediate area surrounding the proposed development. There is also some discussion that occurs with regards to funding amounts for benefits such as traffic signal improvements or payments to the public art fund. Those amounts may change over time based on items such as changing construction costs.

Discussion continued with suggestions for how cost could be associated with various benefits, how a more prescriptive list would work and how, if at all, the proposed language of the amendment should be revised. Ms. Jones reiterated that the proposed
language is meant to both list possible public benefits and evaluate how they may mitigate impacts of a proposed development. Mr. Mangum stated that the proposed standards would, in the future, likely be addressed within the staff report and listed for the Commission to review.

Commissioner Halik made a motion to recommend approval of the text amendment as proposed. Commissioner Goddard seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion was approved, 7-0.

Ayes: Draper, Dubin, Goddard, Halik, Isaac, Pigozzi, Lewis.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

A. 2019 Plan Commission Meeting Schedule

Ms. Jones provided an overview of the proposed dates for 2019 and pointed out that the Zoning Committee meetings are reserved for the 3rd Wednesdays of each month.

Commissioner Isaac pointed out that Yom Kippur may pose a conflict with the October 9th meeting.

Isaac made motion to approve the proposed 2019 Meeting Schedule with understanding that the October meeting date may be changed to accommodate Yom Kippur. Commissioner Pigozzi seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken and the 2019 Plan Commission meeting schedule was approved unanimously with the note provided.

B. Election of Officers and Assignment of Liaisons and Committee Members

Commissioner Goddard made a motion to elect Colby Lewis as Chair and Peter Isaac as Vice-Chair of the Plan Commission for 2019. Seconded by Commissioner Halik. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Mr. Mangum pointed out that the Housing and Community Development Act Committee no longer has a Plan Commission liaison.

Commissioner Draper and Chair Lewis were appointed to the Zoning Committee with Commissioners Dubin, Goddard and Isaac remaining for 2019. Commissioner Isaac was elected Chair of the Committee. There was no change to the members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee for 2019. There was no change to the Rules Committee for 2019. The Committee liaisons for 2019 are as follows - Economic Development Committee – Commissioner
5. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

6. ADJOURNMENT

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

A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved by voice vote 7-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Meagan Jones
Neighborhood and Land Use Planner
Community Development Department