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

Members Present: Colby Lewis (Chair), Peter Isaac (Vice-Chair), Terri Dubin, Carol Goddard, George Halik, Jane Sloss

Members Absent: Jennifer Draper, Andrew Pigozzi

Staff Present: Scott Mangum, Planning and Zoning Manager
Meagan Jones, Neighborhood and Land Use Planner
Hugh DuBose, Assistant City Attorney

Presiding Member: Chairman Lewis

1. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM

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

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: July 24, 2019

Commissioner Isaac then made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Commissioner Goddard. The Commission voted, 5-0, with one abstention to approve the minutes of July 24, 2019.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Planned Development
1215 Church St.
YWCA Evanston/North Shore YWCA Evanston/North Shore submits for a Special Use for a Community Center - Public, and Recreation Center - Public, to allow for addition and expansion of the existing special use, and for a Planned Development to demolish two extant residential buildings and construct a 2-story entrance on the south facade of the existing administration center and pool building, construct a 4-story addition at the north end of the property, construct a 2nd-story addition to provide connection between the two structures, and to provide 78 parking spaces, in the R4 General Residential District. Site development allowances are requested for: 1) Parking located within the required 27’ front yard setback where parking is not permitted, 2) Parking (loading
zone) located within the required 10’ west interior side yard setback where parking is not permitted, 3) Impervious surface coverage of 75.5% where 55% is the maximum permitted, 4) Building height of 42.4’ and 4 stories where 35’ not to exceed 2.5 stories is permitted, and 5) Open loading zone located in the front yard where permitted to be located in rear yards. The applicant may seek and the Plan Commission may consider Site Development Allowances as may be necessary or desirable for the proposed development.

Mr. Mangum provided an overview of the proposed development and the allowances requested. Mr. Steve Bauer, attorney with Meltzer, Purtill and Stelle, then introduced the Karen Singer (President and CEO of YWCA), Shabnum Sanghvi (Vice-Chair Board of Directors for YWCA), Jim Kastenholz (The AT Group), Jack Schroeder (Landon Bone Baker Architects), Chris Hutchinson (Terra Engineering), Chris Neely (Terra Engineering), and Mimi McKay (McKay Landscaping). He then stated that the proposal had obtained a Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA) from the Preservation Commission and received a positive recommendation from the DAPR Committee. He then explained that the development includes a partial redevelopment of the site, certain elements will be removed and others will remain. Building height is the only site development allowance not associated with existing building constraints.

Ms. Shabnam explained the value of the YWCA and the proposed project. She gave a brief history of the site and stated that YWCA has served over 800 people yearly and over 2,000 students with a number of programs.

Karen Singer, CEO of YWCA, shared that the needs of the community have grown and changed and the YWCA has grown to meet those needs. The budget has also increased; however, the building footprint has not changed in 50 years. An assessment was done and feasibility study was done to determine whether or not the organization should remain in Evanston. The end result was a decision to remain and undertake improvements and expansion.

Mr. Kastenholz provided details on the proposed development. Parking is proposed in excess of the zoning requirements but is needed due to programming and events.

Jack Schroeder provided an overview of the site configurations and interior improvements. He emphasized that the family residential entry is now separate from general entry. There will be renovations to the aquatic space and classroom and office space added. Family living area will have shared laundry, kitchen and play area. He added that the glass area on the north façade is classroom space and intended to be more inviting. Lighting on site will be directed downward and mechanical equipment will be reviewed as it relates to noise.

Mr. Steve Bauer provided review of the building height and orientation. He stated that
seven community meetings have been held as well as meetings with individual residents. City staff was present for at least one of those meetings.

Chair Lewis opened the public hearing to questions from the Commission.

Commissioner Halik asked how neighbors will be shown improvements to the façade. Mr. Mangum stated that the proposed project will be in front of Planning & Development Committee and will be before DAPR prior to issuance of a building permit.

Commissioner Isaac asked if the removal of stairs leading to Ridge Avenue was at staff’s request. Mr. Mangum responded that staff made that request as Ridge is a busy street and having a mid-block crossing was not considered to be safe. Commissioner Isaac then asked for clarification on the lot orientation and setbacks. Mr. Mangum stated that staff considered Church Street to be the front yard and that the parking is within the 27 foot setback.

Chair Lewis stated that the parking would be considered an existing condition that cannot be expanded. Commissioner Halik responded that one could argue a different front yard setback.

Commissioner Goddard asked if there is a dire need for more domestic violence victim space, why is it limited to just the 3rd and 4th floors? Ms. Singer stated that the YWCA was hoping to keep a balance that is non-institutional and that would also require more staffing. Chair Lewis confirmed that what is proposed meets the need. Ms. Singer responded that is does.

Commissioner Sloss inquired about the distance from the building to the closest adjacent building. Mr. Schroeder responded that he did not know for certain. Mr. Mangum responded that the distance is approximately 60 feet.

Chair Lewis stated that the building is in an historic district and that demolition of the existing house was approved by the Preservation Commission. He then asked how that relates to the proposed building and how far back is it from Church Street? Mr. Bauer responded with clarification on where the historic district boundary is and compared the existing conditions to what is proposed.

Chair Lewis then inquired about the material palette. Mr. Bauer responded that there will be metal paneling on the addition and at the entry that is painted white. The overall façade of the development will be revisited.

Commissioner Halik stated that he has an issue with the site plan and mentioned the loading and trash being located next to adjacent homes. He also expressed concerns about the mechanical equipment. Mr. Bauer responded that placing the trash in the north lot does not make sense and that the building does not really have a backyard. He
added that he has tried to figure out how the trucks could best maneuver on the site.

Mr. Bauer added that the site plan is presented differently from what is in the meeting packet. He mentioned that staff had concerns with access being off of Ridge and that currently the trash bins have no enclosure. Commissioner Isaac asked how many more bins are anticipated. Mr. Bauer responded that a 50% increase in bins is anticipated. There are currently 2 trash bins and 2 recycling bins.

Chair Lewis then made an announcement for the ability of homeowners within 1,000 feet of the proposed development to request a continuance. He then opened the hearing up to questions from the public. A total of 4 people asked questions, including the following:

- Dave Brannigan asked if the intent of the proposed fence to replace the brick wall and fence of the neighbor, if the current location of the trash will remain, and why his property does not have any landscaping relief. Mr. Bauer responded that all changes are intended to be on YWCA property and that additional trees and landscaping can be added. YWCA is working to confirm the trash location but it will likely be where it currently exists.

- Elizabeth Rack asked how the proposed development helps the historic district, how does the development not impact the surroundings as a planned development, and if it is possible to see renderings of other buildings along the Ridge and Asbury corridors. Mr. Bauer provided clarification on the district boundary and stated that the new entry is more welcoming. He added that the Preservation Commission had concluded that enough change had taken place to the house on the south lot that demolition had little impact. He then explained that there will be new landscaping, stormwater retention, new buildings and improved parking circulation. Renderings would need to be commissioned by the owner. Chair Lewis added that the mission of the YWCA could be considered a benefit of the proposed plans to the wider community.

- Tom Roland stated he appreciates movement of the trash enclosure and the Commission and staff working on the façade then asked what specifically will be changed, what the height of the separating wall will be, if there will be a study done to show renderings and impact, and studies regarding building orientation. Mr. Bauer explained that possible impact to the neighbors will be addressed. He added that the programming will not shrink and that as mentioned previously the team will be looking at materials and will revisit the wall height and various building orientations were looked at and considered.

Chair Lewis then asked for testimony from the public. A total of 6 people spoke and included the following comments:

- Mary McWilliams stated that the proposed addition lacks context with 1970's addition or the surrounding properties and that it looks more like a correctional facility. She also expressed disappointment in the approval for the house demolition and that there are other buildings constructed that respect
surrounding properties. She supports further work on the façade.

- Mr. Brannigan expressed that he is bothered by early trash pick-ups and that increased bins are a negative impact.
- Ms. Rack stated that she echoes Ms. McWilliams’ thoughts and added concerns regarding lighting levels and noise from the mechanical equipment, asking for clarification on how it will be mitigated.
- Mr. Roland stated that he appreciates the comments provided so far and that with the 19% increase in building space, an enhanced landscaping plan would be a good solution.
- Evelyn McGowan stated that she is happy that circulation is being addressed and that the existing house does not serve the shelter well. She added that echoing nearby historic structures does not always work and that a modern look works for new buildings that will stay for years.
- Joan Safford expressed concerns with the aesthetics of the rear building and tunneling connecting the buildings. She added that the district has lost contributing buildings and that changes can be made to better integrate the building into what exists.

Mr. Bauer responded to the comments saying that there is a repeated theme as it relates to aesthetics of the projects and that the YWCA intends to work with staff on the façade as well as the trash enclosure location and landscaping. A considerable amount of thought was put into the site and building orientation so it will likely not be changes.

Chair Lewis closed the public hearing and the Commission began deliberation.

Commissioner Isaac stated that he believes the project is a net positive but there are also some items that need more thought including landscaping to the west and trash pick-up. A condition should be added that trash pickup not before a certain time to address current issues and make sure there is no increase.

Commissioner Halik asked if the enclosure could be moved. He then stated that sound is an issue as our lighting issues but those can be mitigated. He added that the view from Asbury Ave, is important and the relationship between the two buildings is important. He suggested that the building be stepped back and that both color and materiality are important. He then expressed concerns that some zoning issues are being left to other committees, wondering if the group should come back to the Commission to present their changes.

Chair Lewis stated that the purpose of the Commission review is to provide a recommendation to the Council and there will be other opportunities to see the changes YWCA makes to the project.

Commissioner Goddard stated that Evanston is lucky to have the organization and that she supports the development but wishes it did not look as institutional.
Chair Lewis stated that he does not think the building should mimic what exists but should be sympathetic. He referenced the addition done by the Catholic School on Ridge Ave. and encouraged something similar to be the goal. He agreed that the front entry could be more sympathetic. He cannot see many deliveries being an issue but stated that the commission cannot see there will be no detrimental effects if neighbors will be affected.

The Commission then reviewed the relevant standards for approval for the planned development and found that it met most applicable standards, however, there was disagreement on #4 for Special Use and #7 regarding the demolition of the historic house.

Commissioner Halik expressed concern of meetings being close together with little change able to occur between. Plan Commission seemed to be doing the same thing. He believes the architects are good but should also listen to the neighbors. Commissioner Isaac stated that Council may approve the development even if the Commission votes to recommend approval.

Commissioner Dubin asked who determines when enough changes have been made and if the applicant will take comments made into account. She added that specific comments can be configured into conditions.

Commissioner Isaac stated that it is not uncommon to put authority into staff’s hands for more minor changes. He then inquired about the property to the north having a curb cut, stating that left turns do occur. Commissioner Sloss mentioned that a porkchop had been added at that curb cut to discourage that movement.

Commissioner Isaac made a motion to accept staff’s recommendation of the planned development as presented with modification to the 1st condition to add “to the satisfaction of City staff” and the addition of the following conditions: Increasing landscaping on the west to the satisfaction of City staff and that the applicant be prohibited from scheduling trash pick-up before 9:00 AM. Commissioner Goddard seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed, 5-1.

Ayes: Dubin, Goddard, Isaac, Lewis, Sloss
Nays: Halik

A brief recess was taken and the next agenda item’s hearing began at 9:32 PM

A. Text Amendment
   Special Events in the U2 District 19PLND-0032
   A Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment pursuant to City Code Title 6,
Ms. Jones provided an overview of the proposed text amendment, including the 2 year sunset provision that was added from the original submittal.

Commissioner Sloss inquired about the Special Events Committees specific standards. Ms. Jones replied that the group reviews a number of items similar to the Design and Project Review Committee with representation from several City Departments to ensure that events have proper logistics and safety or security measures that may affect City resources.

Commissioner Halik asked if any events had been held under the current wording. Ms. Jones responded that no events had been held under the current wording. However, there have been events in the past in the 70s, including a Bears game and, she believed, a concert had been held as well that did not have City permission. Concerts could be permitted with the conditions stated.

Commissioner Isaac stated that with the 7,000 attendee cap, events would likely not be in Ryan Field but in Welsh-Ryan Arena or at one of the baseball fields. Ms. Jones responded that is essentially the case. He then inquired about the current events held and confirmed that those events are considered permitted under the current regulations.

Commissioner Isaac then asked if Northwestern University sells tickets to their events, if the City sees any amusement tax from those sales. Mr. DuBose replied that sporting events do not qualify as amusements, there is a separate sporting event ticketing tax. Mr. Isaac asked if the City expects to obtain amusement tax from new events. Mr. DuBose replied that if the event is a concert then yes, however, he would need to review the event to see what tax, if any would be obtained.

Commissioner Isaac then asked about the phrase “intended primarily for residents of the City” and how that threshold would be met. Ms. Jones responded that there have not been conversations specific to that item but could be discussed in the future.

Mr. Mike Polisky, Deputy Athletic Director for Northwestern stated that Northwestern University could open presale tickets to Evanston residents. Have done some general activities and is very excited to do something specific. There will be a limited number of events over a 2 year time frame. Northwestern University met with staff, the alderman, and residents and has added a sunset provision to the original request. Northwestern would like a chance to show the ability to hold the events.

Mr. Dave Davis, Executive Director of Neighborhood and Community Relations for Northwestern University, stated that Northwestern has worked with residents and will continue to do so. Northwestern has been empathetic to concerns and has made
changes. He added that they are respectfully requesting a favorable recommendation from the Plan Commission.

Chair Lewis opened up the hearing to questions from the Plan Commission.

Commissioner Goddard stated that with the reduction in maximum number of attendees permitted will parking be able to be contained within the existing parking lot. Mr. Polisky stated that in Welsh Ryan Arena, there will likely be less than 7,000 attendees due to stage setup. There are roughly 2,000 parking spaces between the east and west lots. Basketball games have sold out before. There are also Uber and Lyft services available. Northwestern would be willing to open lots for free to ease neighborhood parking issues. There is a 12% ticket tax that Northwestern pays and 4% amusement tax. Would be open to amending that to be beneficial for the City.

Chair Lewis stated that there is currently shuttle service offered for football games and asked if Northwestern would be open to providing that service for this use. Mr. Polisky responded that they would be open to trying that if it would alleviate concerns.

Commissioner Halik inquired if additional events would be added. Mr. Polisky stated beyond current events, 6 single day events and one multi-day event would be permitted. A tennis tournament was the impetus for the request.

Commissioner Sloss asked if there is any data based on previous events on the economic impact to local businesses. Mr. Polisky replied that the impact would be different with different events. He cannot confirm what specific acts would be secured and it is difficult to obtain exact data on attendees who visit businesses or stay in local hotels.

Chair Lewis stated that the request for a liquor license at the arena is not an issue reviewed by this body.

Commissioner Isaac asked how many events are currently at Ryan Field. Mr. Polisky responded that in addition to the 7 home football games, there is a “Meet the Team” event, Randy Walker 5K Memorial Run, and a community movie night.

Commissioner Halik asked if this doubles the amount of permitted events that have more than the number of available parking spaces. Mr. Polisky responded that there are roughly 18 basketball games held in Welsh –Ryan.

Chair Lewis confirmed that the proposed amendment does not discriminate against facility with regards to maximum number of attendees. Mr. Mangum responded that this applies to events within facilities in the U2 District.

Commissioner Dubin asked if the applicant had talked to the Parking Division regarding
metering in the neighborhood. Mr. Polisky responded that Northwestern staff has been speaking with City staff as well as with the Hospital, Northwestern Police, Fire Department and Emergency Services to ensure right ways of traffic mitigation. He added that the City recently initiated changes to the meters for some adjacent streets.

Commissioner Isaac asked how often does more than one event with more than 500 people occur in one day and if the applicant had contemplated that multiple events may happen in one day. Mr. Polisky responded that Northwestern typically does not have the staffing to hold multiple events in one day. Typically avoid multiple events on football game days. Some sporting events may happen on the same day but not to the extent that causes a lot of traffic. Men’s basketball games (held in Welsh-Ryan Arena) are the most traffic generating games. As a possible example, Northwestern may have a Friday night event, have that taken down, and then prepare for an event the next day.

Commissioner Halik inquired if Northwestern has considered a parking garage on the west parking lot. Mr. Polisky responded that he is not sure the neighbors would like that option. Have worked with Canal Shores to find additional parking; do provide shuttle service from other campus parking garages.

Chair Lewis then explained that neighbors within a certain radius of the site are able to submit a request for continuance of this agenda item and reasons why a request could be submitted.

Ms. Judy Berg stated her request for a continuance and presented her written request. Several other people expressed intention to submit requests.

Mr. DuBose stated that it would be beneficial to gather all of the requests to be submitted.

Gary Kull stated his request for a continuance explaining that he did not receive notice and did not have adequate time to prepare a response to Northwestern’s presentation.

Laurie McFarland stated that many residents did not see the revised proposal as it was presented two days before the meeting and were told there may be additional revisions. Residents wish to show effects on businesses and the surrounding community.

Mr. DuBose then cited Article 13 (E) of the Plan Commission’s Rules and Procedures regarding who is able to request continuances and the purpose of them. He confirmed that the distance requirement applies to residents north of Isabella. He asked that residents state that they wish to rebut testimony that has been presented.

Chair Lewis confirmed that the item would be heard at the August 28, 2019 meeting. Ms. Jones stated that the regular meeting is scheduled on September 11, 2019; the August 28th meeting is a special meeting that will occur at the same time and location.
Chair Lewis opened the hearing up to comments from the public. A total of 6 people spoke with the following comments:

- Lynn Troutman stated there has been conflation of events and locations, that there will be 6 or 7 events of a different nature which potentially changes effects. She also does not want the risk of events changed from Welsh-Ryan Arena to Ryan Field and asked why the property is being rezoned. Chair Lewis stated that the property is not being rezoned.
- Mark Sloane of the Central Street Neighbors Association stated that the Alderman should be here on behalf of residents and that when he was on a City Committee, no items were heard in August. Asked if information could be provided on the special events and that it is clear they could be anywhere in the U2. He then asked what the Special Events Committee is and if only the multi-day event would be approved by Council. Ms. Jones stated that the Committee is a staff Committee not an elected Committee. The special events could be reviewed by Council or the Special Events Committee. Mr. DuBose added that the Council approves many special events. He will include the list of events that the Council approves. Mr. Sloane expressed that the proposed change is changing the nature of events, not the number of events.
- Andy Berman asked for clarification on how many additional events have been put on under the current code, why Welsh-Ryan Arena is not named instead of 7,000 attendees and if legal counsel was used in that decision. Mr. Polisky responded that there is usually one additional event. There was a recent student run concert with Carly Rae Jepsen. Dave Davis added that using 7,000 attendees was more consistent with the current language within the code and did not want to create any issues with stating a specific event, would be open to amending code to read as an indoor event as mentioned by Commissioner Isaac.
- Yvi Russell inquired if there would be notice for the August 28th meeting. Chair Lewis responded that since this item is being continued there would not be additional notice sent out for the next meeting.
- Matthew Grayson asked if any income would be obtained from television rights and if any effort would be made to ensure no conflicts with City events. Mr. Polisky stated that he was unsure about the additional revenue streams and television rights and it would likely depend on the type of the event. Would expect revenue from ticket and concession sales. Northwestern would like to coordinate as much as possible with the City and do whatever they can.
- Joyce Weinzbizki asked if Northwestern would host their own type of food as a lot of money is not seen by local businesses. Mr. Polisky stated that concessions would be sold as is currently done and he has heard from local businesses that many attendees patronize the area restaurants.
- Andrea Verseny asked if there would be any restrictions placed on set up and cleaning. Mr. Polisky stated that the University would abide by the 11:00pm noise ordinance and that an area has been carved out for additional storage. The University would work to coordinate and ask that clean-up and set-up
happen at more appropriate times. Chair Lewis then stated that the noise ordinance does reference a morning time.

Commissioner Isaac made a motion to continue this item to the August 28, 2019 Plan Commission meeting. Commissioner Goddard seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed, 6-0.

Ayes: Dubin, Goddard, Halik, Isaac, Lewis, Sloss
Nays:

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

5. ADJOURNMENT

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

A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved by voice vote 6-0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:48 pm.

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

**Please note a Scrivener’s error made on page 10 was corrected on 9/6/19 after the Plan Commission approved the minutes on 8/28/19.**