



Watertown Planning Commission Minutes

Donald Hendricks
Elizabeth Schulze
Jennifer O'Connell
James Rivord
Jim Sandquist
Jim Kasheimer
Ali Parsons-Towle
Mike Walters

7/23/2020 - Minutes

1. Call To Order & Roll Call:

Chairman Jim Rivord called the Watertown Planning Commission meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. on Thursday, July 23, 2020. Commission Members Present: Rivord, Donald Hendricks, Jennifer O'Connell, Jim Sandquist, Jim Kasheimer, and Ali Parsons Towle. City Staff Present: City Planner Mark Kaltsas, Building Official Scott Dornfeld, Clerk/Treasurer Lynn Tschudi, Council Liason Mike Walters. Those who signed in were: James Ertelt, Kathy Havlik, Kevin Lindquist, Dave Peterson, Andy Lundgren, Cheryl Titchener, Doug Roy, and Sam Deleo.

2. Adopt Agenda:

HENDRICKS MOVED, KASHEIMER SECONDED A MOTION TO ADOPT THE AGENDA. ALL PRESENT VOTED AYE. MOTION CARRIED.

3. New Business

3.A. Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes Of June 25, 2020

HENDRICKS MOVED, TOWLE SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM JUNE 25, 2020. ALL PRESENT VOTED AYE. MOTION CARRIED.

3.B. 600 Paul Avenue Site Plan, Variance, And Public Hearing

Commission Chair Jim Rivord reminded the attending residents the role of the Planning Commission and their job to make recommendations to City Council based on the City zoning code.

City Planner Mark Kaltsas stated the City is in receipt of a request for site plan review and two variances for the property located at 600 Paul Avenue. The site is zone PUD-FH: planned unit development – Forest Hills, Subzone H, a neighborhood commercial subzone. The subject property is approximately 1.62 acres and is vacant of any structures.

Kaltsas said the applicant, Dollar General, is asking for a retail building larger than that which is allowed and parking space less than what is required. Kaltsas said Dollar General is a national retailer and has been looking for a site within Watertown for the past two years. They would like to build a 9,100 square foot building. Kaltsas explained the history behind the Forest Hills zoning and subzoning. Subzone H could have a limited range of businesses intended to provide goods and services to a neighborhood. Kaltsas said the applicant and City staff have met prior to this meeting to try to meet as many City ordinances as possible with their applications.

Kaltsas explained the site plan review process. The applicant is meeting or exceeding all building setbacks. Kaltsas said the City worked with the applicant to orient the building to place the parking, trash and loading activity to the rear of the building.

The applicant would be required to provide 46 spaces per city code, but the plan shows only 30. The applicant provided data showing the demand for parking does not support the need for 46 spaces. Kaltsas said staff asked the applicant to provide a pedestrian connection from Paul Avenue to the building with some landscaping and benches.

Kaltsas explained detention basin located in the southeast corner of the site. Carver County Water Management Organization would manage the storm water permits for the project. Kaltsas also noted requests made from the fire department for access to the building.

The applicant has a landscape plan which includes a berm on the NE corner, wrapping around the parking lot. This would provide a buffer between the residential area and the commercial area.

The lighting and signage plan mostly met the requirements, but the City is waiting on an updated plan. Kaltsas noted that any signs would need to be approved with a sign permit.

Kaltsas shared a building elevation concept with the Commission. He explained the requirements for commercial building elevations. Currently the building materials meet the requirements for commercial buildings per city zoning code. Kaltsas explained the fenestration ratio from windows and doors. The required ratio is 65% and the applicant currently has a ratio of 35%.

Kaltsas said the applicant did not show the mechanical equipment that will reside on top of the building. That equipment will need to be screened in the final plan.

CHAIR RIVORD OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING

STUART DAHLMAN 845 BUR OAK LANE – Dahلمان said this business (Dollar General) is not one that services just the neighborhood. He voiced his concern for the layout of the building and would like to see the parking face away from the neighborhood. He would like to see the berm placed on Paul Avenue and Hickory Curve.

KATHY HAVLIK 837 DUTCHMANS WAY SE – Havlik expressed that she was brought to Watertown for the remoteness not the retail business. She does not believe that Watertown allows other businesses to come in with multiple variances. Havlik feels placing the Dollar General on County Road 6 is a self-serving agenda of the City. She feels the retail business will bring additional traffic and cause accidents.

DOUG ROY 1000 HICKORY CURVE – Roy is concerned about child safety. He asked if the City has checked to see if the school board is aware of the possible business. He does not feel it belongs across from a school. Roy said the Dollar General will not spend the money they make in Watertown.

JAMES ERTELT 1012 HICKORY CURVE – Does not like the look of the proposed building. He likes the current amenities in Watertown. He asked Commissioners if there should be any business across from an elementary school. Ertelt asked what needs to be done to re-zone this parcel.

DANIELLE BOOM 911 HICKORY CURVE – Boom said she and her husband moved from Shakopee to Watertown for the small-town feel. She voiced her concern for unnecessary traffic brought to the neighborhood by the possibility of the Dollar General. Boom would prefer if nothing was built on the parcel. She shared her written correspondence with the Commission.

KEVIN LINDQUIST 1048 HICKORY CURVE – Lindquist said he uses Watertown for all his services from pharmacy to grocery. He said it has been proven when Dollar General enters a city, many businesses suffer. He voiced his concern for noise, light, air pollution from the Dollar General. Lindquist said the building does not look like small town America. He shared a picture of his grandson who was killed by a school bus driver who was distracted while driving.

ANDY LUNDGREN 958 BUTTERNUT LANE – Lundgren asked what about 16,000 Dollar General stores speaks small town. He does not like the character of the proposed building and does not believe it fits in

Watertown. Lundgren is curious what type of pedestrian traffic is expected from the front of the building. He would like the justifications explained if either variance is approved.

SAM DELEO OVERLAND ENGINEERING – Deleo said he has completed about 25-30 of these projects over the last four years. He said the 30 parking spaces is very typical for this type of building as the parking is rarely full. Deleo said by reducing the parking spaces also reduces the amount of impervious surfaces. The building size requested is based on six prototypes of stores, and if square footage is reduced the store will become overcrowded. Deleo explained the idea of trying to make the building more connected to the neighborhood. He said the parcel was zoned commercial prior to any of the residents purchasing their lots in Forest Hills, therefore he is not asking to be re-zoned. Deleo said the Dollar General could potentially increase the visitors to Watertown.

STEVE DANIELSON 1070 HICKORY CURVE – Danielson expressed the subzone H does not fit the Dollar General to serve the neighborhood. Danielson does not like the look of the building. He noted the hours of operation do not fit the residential area.

CHAIR RIVORD CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING

Rivord recapped that the Planning Commission cannot say no to a variance or site plan just because they do not like the type of business. They must reach a decision based on fact and zoning ordinances.

Rivord shared with the Commission that he has a list of ten unknown items from the applicant's requests, so he is uncomfortable deciding without answers to these. He also agrees the building does not look neighborly. Rivord suggests tabling the item until answers can be provided by the applicant.

Hendricks shared that he has been a life-long resident of Watertown. He said prior to the 1990's development had no regulation and it was a mess. This prompted the creation of rules and regulations on planning and zoning for development. Hendricks said it has always been the goal to increase commerce in Watertown, but it is considered very carefully and strategically.

Kasheimer said there are pros and cons to everything. He pointed out to residents that there are two commercial lots in the area near 600 Paul Avenue.

Towle stated she also moved to Watertown for the small-town feel, however it is important to think critically and apply the ordinances. Towle asked the other Commissioners if a Dollar General does fit the subzone H. She asked City Planner Kaltsas if the variances were not approved tonight would it cause the applicant to withdraw. Kaltsas said ultimately the Commission could deny one or both variances. Towle does not want to set a precedence for other businesses.

Hendricks asked if the Dollar General were to close and the parking variance had been granted, would the 30 space parking be adequate for a new tenant.

Kaltsas informed Rivord that the item may not be able to be tabled due to the 60-day rule.

Sandquist asked if Dollar General could build the smaller 8,000 square foot store and carry less items. Sandquist said there may be concerns about signage in the future that the Commission could address later. Sandquist is not concerned about the reduction in parking.

Jennifer O'Connell asked about traffic incidents on the round-a-bout and near the Speedway.

Lundgren interrupted O'Connell to voice his concern about safety and state he feels that the Planning Commission does not care about the safety of his four children. Rivord stated that is not the case.

Council Member Walters explained that lots are privately owned, and the City cannot make a business move to a different property. They have the freedom to choose where they want their business.

Kaltsas recapped based on the Commission discussion for the variance on building size that the applicant did not meet finding 2, 3, and 5 on the variance application. He also recapped based on the Commission discussion for the parking variance denial that future ownership of the building with reduced parking spaces could deter future tenants.

HENDRICKS MOVED, SANDQUIST SECONDED TO DENY VARIANCES PROPOSED BY APPLICANT. ALL PRESENT VOTED AYE, MOTION CARRIED.

SANDQUIST MOVED, HENDRICKS SECONDED A MOTION TO DENY SITE PLAN AS PRESENTED. ALL PRESENT VOTED AYE, MOTION CARRIED.

Sandquist asked about re-zoning the parcel of land. Kaltsas said the City would have to re-guide that land with the owner of the property consenting to that.

4. Staff Updates:

5. Adjournment:

HENDRICKS MOVED, KASHEIMER SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING AT 8:52 P.M. ALL PRESENT VOTED AYE. MOTION CARRIED.

Chair, Jim Rivord

City Administrator, Shane Fineran

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