

PLAN COMMISSION MINUTES

Wednesday, March 22, 2017

Present: Butch Trevor (Chairman), Cindy Wermuth, John Wetzel, Dan McConaghy, Butch Trevor, Pete McDermott, Dennis Kelly, Jeff Nelson, Mike Crotty, Matt Puck

Absent: Bill Fitzsimmons (Vice Chairman)

Staff: Shawn Christ, Chris Mathias

Others: Dick Roels, Brian Harry, Loren Rains, and Vickie Mathis

1. Call to Order

Chairman Trevor called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

2. Reading and approval of Minutes – November 9, 2016

Motion made by Commissioner Nelson; seconded by Commissioner Wetzel, to approve the minutes for November 9, 2016. Motion carried unanimously.

Shawn Christ, Land Development Manager, began the public hearing by swearing in those persons present who wished to provide testimony.

3. Public hearing, PC 17-01 – Request from John Deere (Corporation) c/o Richard Roels for a variance to the Landscaping and Bufferyard standards at Sec. 35-5203-5204 to allow for reduced number of trees and to eliminate trees from interior parking lot islands and areas along the alley and 5th Avenue. (Shawn Christ, Land Development Manager)

Shawn Christ stated the public notice for PC 17-01 was published in the Dispatch on March 7 and on March 1 notices were mailed to all surrounding property owners. Mr. Christ stated the staff report, application materials, and all attachments will be entered into the record for this case.

Mr. Christ stated Deere's worldwide data center is located downtown at 1900 5th Avenue and is losing parking beneath and adjacent to the current I-74 bridge. The applicant is proposing to construct new surface parking east of 19th Street, south of 5th Avenue, and north of 6th Avenue. Mr. Christ presented pictures of the site and the proposed plan for the new parking lot. He also reviewed the eight (8) approval criteria from Sec. 35-2207, the applicant's responses on the application form, and staff's analysis. Staff recommends denial. Mr. Christ answered questions from the Plan Commission.

Mr. Puck arrived at 4:30. Mr. McDermott left the meeting at approximately 4:40.

Brian Harry, Ryan Companies, provided an aerial view and commentary on the project area. Dick Roels, 2605 113th Ave, Milan IL, stated Deere is losing 264 parking stalls and gaining 172 stalls at this location and is working to minimize impact to parking loss. The proposed design provides the most parking stalls to be utilized. There have been security concerns for people in the area including car break-ins, vagrant issues, homeless, and scrapper theft issues. Employees have to walk 400-500 feet to the building and the company wants to mount security cameras to monitor the lot. If the data center goes down, assembly lines go down. There are hydrants and utility poles in the way. Questions and discussion continued between the commissioners and applicant.

Vickie Mathis, 1925 6th Avenue, asked about the parking lot cement and if the applicant considered the heat island effect. Ms. Mathis mentioned 6th Avenue will be raised by 6 feet and asked if trees will be planted after the work is completed. Tree species and the possibility of vacating the public alley to gain additional parking were discussed. Questions and discussion continued between Ms. Mathis, the commissioners, and the applicant.

With no further public comment, the public hearing was closed at 5:29.

Commissioners discussed future parking expansion and landscaping opportunities to the east after the current I-74 viaduct is removed. Commissioner Wetzel stated he has concerns with interior trees and there are conflicts with power lines. He has empathy for the safety and security of employees, and visual security. He mentioned there were similar issues when variances were granted at Mills Chevy and Verizon on 16th Street.

Commissioner Nelson stated in Washington D.C. landscaping and security are of utmost importance. A stark environment is not inviting, you need an aesthetic value, and landscaping is a deterrent to crime. Commissioner McConaghy stated Deere is extending the city's streetscaping plan along 19th Street which is a positive. The open space in front of the new I-74 bridge will be an opportunity to create a new urban park.

Motion made by Commissioner Nelson; seconded by Commissioner Wetzel, for the applicant to finalize a landscaping plan to meet the spirit and intent of the conversation during the hearing. Further clarification indicated the motion includes a possible variance for reduction of trees, but not a specified number. Trees should be considered along the alley and parking lot perimeter, and at the corners of 6th Avenue and 5th Avenue at 19th Street, but not interior to the parking lot, and the possibility of ornamentals in lieu of shade trees. The finalized plan would be approved by city staff based on this motion. **Motion carried 7-0. Motion approved.**

4. Other business

Mr. Christ announced Moline will host the American Planning Association Illinois State Section conference June 1 and 2 at the iWireless Center. All Plan Commissioners are welcome to attend. Commissioner Wetzel said commissioners could assist with hosting if needed.

5. Review of upcoming meetings

Mr. Christ stated there is no business for the April 12 meeting and is cancelled. The City received one application for a zoning text amendment to increase the allowable building height in the B-4 zoning district which will be considered April 26. *[Secretary's note: this was later determined to be incorrect and a hearing will be held April 12].*

6. Public Comment

No public comment.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Christ, Secretary, Land Development Manager