



PLANNING COMMISSION

Wednesday, July 10, 2024 at 5:30 PM

1 Benjamin Franklin Way Franklin, Ohio 45005

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CLERK'S JOURNAL

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Dr. Sarah Nathan, Paul Ruppert, Christine Pirot, David Hopper, Mayor Brent Centers, Jason Hall

Absent: Brian Rebholz

Staff: Barry Conway, Liz Fields, Jonathan Westendorf, Cindi Chibis

Guests: Don Edmonds, Shawn Edmonds, Josh Williams, Michael Huber, Kevin Scott, Alex Walther, Jeff Baumgardner, Neil Hoffman, Bill Miller, Nick Blizzard

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Dr. Nathan.

4. APPROVE THE CLERK'S JOURNAL AND ACCEPT THE TAPES AS THE OFFICIAL MINUTES

The Clerk's journal was approved, and the tapes were accepted as the official minutes of the June 12, 2024, meeting.

Motion made by Ruppert, Seconded by Hall.

Voting Yea: Ruppert, Hopper, Hall

Voting Abstaining: Dr. Nathan, Pirot, Mayor Centers

5. OATH OR AFFIRMATION

The Oath was administered to all guests.

6. OLD BUSINESS

PC 24-08 Major Site Plan Revision - Franklin High School Parking Lot - Parcels #0431178001, 0431178011, 0431178010, and 0431178003 (140 East Sixth Street). The applicant, SHP c/o Mark Demko, on behalf of Franklin City Schools, is requesting approval of a major site plan revision to PC 22-02 in order to demolish the existing 89 space parking lot located to the northwest of the school along parcels #0431178003, 10, & 11 and construct a new 96 space parking lot predominately on

parcel #0431178001 and abutting East Sixth Street and Anderson Street. This property is located in the MU-1 & CV-1 zoning districts. (This Item to Remain Tabled.)

PC 24-08 - Major Site Plan Revision - Franklin High School Parking Lot remained tabled.

7. NEW BUSINESS

PC 24-11 Major Site Plan Application - 3501 Shotwell Drive - The applicant, Bunnell Hill Construction, Inc., is requesting approval of a major site plan to construct a 36,000 square foot addition to Walther Engineering located at 3501 Shotwell Drive. This property is located in the I-2 zoning district.

Liz Fields introduced the Major Site Plan Application explaining that the proposed building addition is located at the rear of the existing structure-zoned I-2. If approved, the addition will be used for warehousing and production with additional loading docks and parking proposed to support the expansion. Fields stated that the applicant has confirmed that planned parking is sufficient to support visitors, current employees, as well as expected employment growth. As such, she confirmed that staff recommends that Planning Commission consider waiving parking requirements per Subsection 1111.07(s)(1).

Fields stated that no additional lighting has been proposed. Accordingly, staff requests that the applicant submit an updated lighting plan showing lighting for the parking expansion for approval.

Fields stated that additional landscaping is not proposed as a part of the major site plan, as the expansion is not visible from the street, additional landscaping would reduce available space for parking, and the lot is surrounded by trees. For these reasons, staff recommends that Planning Commission consider waiving the landscaping requirements per Section 1111.06(m).

Fields reviewed details of the building design and building materials. Due to minimal visibility from the street and the fact that the proposed building materials match the existing structure, staff recommends that Planning Commission consider waiving the materials requirements per Subsection 1115.08(h)(2)(A).

Fields concluded her presentation by confirming that staff recommends approval of the Major Site Plan with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall comply with the comments from the City of Franklin Fire Department.
2. The applicant shall provide the calculation for the detention basin to the City Engineer.
3. The applicant shall provide an updated lighting plan which meets the requirements of Subsection 1111.07(d) for staff approval.

Hopper invited questions from Commission members.

Dr. Nathan asked a clarifying question regarding the lighting plan.

Barry Conway explained that a lighting plan for the building was submitted. However, a lighting plan for the expanded parking lot was not included.

Hopper noted that there are three proposed deviations from plan requirements. He reviewed and supported the rationale for waivers on landscaping and material requirements, then asked for clarification on the requested parking requirements.

Fields explained that parking requirements are typically based on a combination of building use, square footage, and the number of employees and expected visitors. She confirmed that the City's parking requirements under Subsection 1111.07(s)(1) are under review for possible revision.

Hearing no additional comments or questions from Commission members, Hopper opened the floor for public comment on PC 24-08 at 5:41 PM.

Kevin Scott, of Bunnell Hill Construction approached the podium, stated his name and address, and confirmed that he had been sworn in. He stated his appreciation of staff support throughout the application process, then offered to address concerns, and respond to questions as needed.

Mayor Centers asked a follow-up question on the lighting plan for the parking lot.

Scott explained that failure to include the lighting plan for the parking lot was an oversight on their part. He reassured Commission members that if additional lighting is needed, they will fully comply. If the current lighting is sufficient, the applicant will request a waiver.

Hearing no further questions, Hopper closed the floor for public comment on PC 24-11 at 5:43 PM and moved to discussion.

Mayor Centers complimented Walther Engineering for being a strong business partner in Franklin. He said that he is pleased to hear of their on-going success and is excited to see them grow in the City.

Hearing no further discussion, Hopper called for a motion on PC 24-11.

Motion made by Pirot to approve PC 24-11 Major Site Plan with the three conditions noted as staff recommendations. Motion was amended by Hopper to include the three needed waivers.

Motion seconded by Ruppert.

Voting Yea: Dr. Nathan, Ruppert, Pirot, Hopper, Mayor Centers, Hall

Motion passes.

PC 24-12 & PC 24-13 Preliminary Planned Unit Development & Rezoning | Shaker Farms - (Parcel #0835200001 Northeast corner of Manchester Road and Shaker Road) The applicant, Charles E Baverman III, Dinsmore & Shohl, LLP, on behalf of Forestar (USA) Real Estate Group, is requesting to rezone 109.5 acres from I-2 General Industrial to R-2 Metropolitan Residential with a Planned Unit Development Overlay, and to approve a preliminary development plan for 284 single family units.

The proposed zoning designation will allow the property to develop with a single-family residential subdivision that is similar in nature to the City's R-2 Zoning District but allows the Planning Commission to vary the development regulations required in that district including setbacks, density, lot sizes, and other similar features.

The proposed Preliminary Development Plan review and approval is the first step in the Planned Unit Development approval process. This step allows the applicant to present an overall concept for the subject property, without providing all the typical detailed information like utility requirements, grading, landscaping, etc. The Planning Commission and City Council then can review and provide feedback on the concept and decide whether the proposal makes sense for the City moving forward.

The Planning Commission will provide a recommendation to City Council on the rezoning request and Preliminary Development Plan and Council will ultimately make the decision to approve or deny both requests. If the Preliminary Development Plan is approved, then the applicant will return with a

development agreement and a Final Development Plan which will include the detailed information that is required before construction can begin.

Fields provided an overview of PC 24-12 and PC 24-13. She opened with review of the Planned Unit Development Overlay and the Preliminary Development Plan for #0835200001, which includes 284 residential units, a sport court, dog park, walking trail and tot lot, on 27.5 acres. She reviewed sample housing elevations, open space depictions, and corresponding staff comments regarding R-2 Zoning conformance. Fields confirmed that staff recommends that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation for the Planned Unit Development Overlay and Preliminary Development Plan, to City Council.

Fields introduced the applicant's request to rezone 109.5 acres from I-2 General Industrial to R-2 Metropolitan Residential. She explained that when the Parcel was annexed into the City, consistent with City Zoning Regulations, it was zoned I-2, the same as the adjacent property.

Fields reminded the Planning Commission that the proposed development promotes the housing goals noted in Chapter 5 of the Comprehensive Plan by creating higher end housing in the City.

She provided detailed consideration of each Zoning Amendment Standard for Approval per Section 1115.04(e) and noted that a waiver on the lot width, side setbacks, and rear yard setbacks would be needed for approval.

She concluded the presentation by confirming that staff recommends that Planning Commission forward a recommendation of approval for the proposed rezoning to the City Council.

Hopper thanked Fields for the overview and invited questions from Commission members.

Dr. Nathan requested that Fields say more about requested modifications related to lot size and setbacks when applying the standards, and asked if there was a case to be made for rezoning without the modifications.

Fields explained that the purpose of the Overlay is to allow some flexibility. She stated that if setbacks are not modified, the neighborhood would lose much of the proposed open green space. She explained that the City cannot mandate such green space and that the parties have worked cooperatively to find an agreeable solution. Stating that "It's a give and take with the developer". Fields also recognized that nationally residential lot sizes are getting smaller with construction prices rising, and that the proposed lot sizes are within the norm for new builds.

Hopper stated that we are essentially creating a building envelope that the applicant can build within.

Hearing no additional questions for staff, Hopper opened the floor for public comment on PC 24-12 and PC 24-13 at 6:02 PM. He invited the applicant to comment first.

Mike Huber, Attorney Dinsmore and Shohl approached the podium, stated his name and address, and confirmed that he had been sworn in. He offered to answer any questions and invited Bill Miller to join him at the podium.

Bill Miller, Vice President of Forestar Group Inc. joined Huber at the podium, stated his name and address, and confirmed that he had been sworn in. He thanked the City for working with the Forestar Group on project planning, praising staff for their support and knowledge. Miller shared a Power Point image to review the proposed neighborhood configuration, pointing out both larger and medium sized homes, townhouses, and green space amenities.

Huber acknowledged Commission comments related to setbacks and explained that slightly smaller lots make it easier to provide a diverse housing stock that is assessable to a wider audience. He confirmed that smaller lots are consistent with national trends.

Ruppert asked if the units would be built in advance or built to each buyer's specifications.

Miller stated that homes would be built all at once and would be sold as they go. He explained that this approach ensures that homes correspond with lot sizes "so we do not put larger houses on smaller lots". For comparison purposes, Huber offered to provide addresses and names of similar communities in the pipeline.

Dr. Nathan said that she was curious how long the entire project would take from groundbreaking to project completion.

Miller said that he would be shocked if building and sales were completed in less than two years, or more than four years.

Mayor Centers asked about traffic studies and questioned how the Planning Commission could be confident that all traffic concerns were fully addressed.

Barry Conway confirmed that traffic studies have already been completed and submitted to the Warren County Engineer and the City's Traffic Engineer also reviewed the results. Conway explained that Warren County will require the developer to make the required improvements.

Mayor Centers asked if a cluster mailbox community was being proposed.

Miller explained that they will collaborate with the local post office to finalize the decision regarding placement of mailboxes.

Hearing no additional questions for the applicant, Hopper invited additional public comments on PC 24-12 and PC 24-13 at 6:16 PM.

Don Edmonds approached the podium, stated his name and address, and confirmed that he had been sworn in. Edmonds said that he had just heard about the planned housing development. He said that he strongly objects to the plan, as the area is now beautiful farmland and that he thinks that it should stay that way. He explained that he moved to Franklin from a larger local metropolitan area to avoid such development; stating "This is not progress-this is an intrusion".

Mayor Centers explained that the rezoning request presented to the Commission is to change the land from an industrial zone that permits factories, warehouses and other potentially disruptive activities, to a residential zone. Centers asked Edmonds if he would prefer to see industrial development on the property.

Edmonds conceded that he had not been aware of the land's current zoning classification. He stated that he would strongly prefer to see the land remain farmland, but given a choice between residential or industrial development, he believes residential development is preferable.

Mayor Centers thanked Edmonds for his comment and questions. He stated that the Planning Commission and City Council think deeply about such decisions and sincerely value community input. He asked the City Manager to remind attendees of the on-going communication efforts.

Westendorf summarized communication strategies and reassured all attendees that keeping the community informed of changes, and listening to resident concerns, continues to be a priority.

Hearing no questions, nor further public comment, Hopper closed the floor for public comment on PC 24-12 and PC 24-13, at 6:37 PM, and moved to discussion.

Dr. Nathan said that she appreciated the Mayor's reminder that the land in question now carries an industrial zoning classification. She acknowledged that Franklin is seeing a growing population and has a limited housing stock. She stated that increased housing options are needed.

Hopper commented that this is the first housing development that has come before the Planning Commission in sixteen (16) years. He commented that he too is resistant to suburban sprawl but recognizes that Franklin's housing stock has stagnated. He said that "It is the responsibility of local government to make the changes needed to support our community. Such growth is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan....It is our job to hold the developer's feet to the fire to ensure that they deliver on what they promise".

Hopper called for a motion on PC 24-13 Rezoning Request.

Hall made a motion to recommend that Planning Commission forward a recommendation of approval for the proposed rezoning to the City Council. Motion seconded by Dr. Nathan. Voting Yea: Dr. Nathan, Ruppert, Pirot, Hopper, Mayor Centers, Hall
Motion passes.

Hopper called for a motion on PC 24-12 Preliminary Planned Unit Development

Pirot requested an opportunity to comment before voting. She said that she recognizes that there is a housing shortage nationally and appreciates the City's desire to increase housing options locally. She also recognizes the importance of offering varied lots and housing sizes to accommodate different price points. That said, she feels this is an important decision and wonders if this is an opportunity for Franklin to buck the trend for smaller lots.

Mayor Centers explained that land use has been a frequent topic of discussion by Council members. He acknowledged that Council also wants to see development that includes larger lots and higher value homes in Franklin. He explained that developers have limited high value properties to use as comparables in Franklin right now, which has hindered interest in high ticket housing development locally.

Westendorf agreed, stating that the lack of comps has stifled high-ticket home growth in Franklin. He said that the best case scenario is that this subdivision that includes a 20 million dollar investment in public infrastructure at the site, sells out in two (2) years spurring further development. Westendorf confirmed that staff have thoroughly considered the proposal and believe it is the best option for the community at this time. He recognizes that we all want Franklin to become a "community of choice", but that "without rooftops increasing, we cannot grow downtown development".

Hearing no additional discussion, Hopper again called for a motion on PC 24-12.

Pirot made a motion to forward a recommendation of approval of the Planned Unit Overlay and the Preliminary Development Plan to City Council. Motion seconded by Dr. Nathan.
Voting Yea: Dr. Nathan, Ruppert, Pirot, Hopper, Mayor Centers, Hall.
Motion passes.

8. DISCUSSION

Westendorf provided an update on City Council's decision to approve the rezoning of school property. As a result, Planning Commission should expect a revised Major Site Plan application for the Franklin High School Parking Lot at the August meeting.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 PM.

Motion made by Dr. Nathan, Seconded by Hall.

Voting Yea: Dr. Nathan, Ruppert, Pirot, Hopper, Mayor Centers, Hall