

**Cedar Falls Planning and Zoning Commission
Regular Meeting
January 9, 2019
City Hall Council Chambers
220 Clay Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa**

MINUTES

The Cedar Falls Planning and Zoning Commission met in regular session on Wednesday, January 9, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers, 220 Clay Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa. The following Commission members were present: Adkins, Giarusso, Hartley, Holst, Leeper, Saul and Wingert. Larson and Oberle were absent. Karen Howard, Community Services Manager and David Sturch, Planner III, were also present. Holst presided as acting chair due to Oberle's absence.

- 1.) Acting Chair Holst noted the Minutes from the December 12, 2018 regular meeting are presented. Mr. Hartley made a motion to approve the Minutes as presented. Ms. Adkins seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with 7 ayes (Adkins, Giarusso, Hartley, Holst, Leeper, Saul and Wingert), and 0 nays.

- 2.) The first item of business was Zoning Code Text Amendments – Proposed changes to Section 29-160, College Hill Neighborhood Overlay Zoning District to define and clarify standards for mixed-use buildings. Acting Chair Holst introduced the item and Ms. Howard provided background information. She explained that a public notice was published in the Waterloo Courier and it has been entered into public record. She went on to discuss the goals of the amendments. The primary goal is to clear up the ambiguous and confusing language in the College Hill Overlay District and establish clear and objective standards in the code to facilitate consistent review and approval of proposed development. The changes are intended to further the existing Comprehensive Plan goals for the College Hill Neighborhood, including improvement of pedestrian access, spurring local development of more mixed-use storefronts with apartment dwellings above and to link the “Upper Hill” and the “Lower Hill” along College Street into a more cohesive, walkable area. She noted that there will likely be an upcoming study of public parking in College Hill, so the proposed zoning amendments may need to be adjusted after the parking study is completed. She also discussed the hidden costs of setting aside too much land for private off-street parking. As requested by the Commission after conflicting opinions about the interpretation of the zoning ordinance for several previous development requests, staff is recommending to delete ambiguous and confusing language in the code regarding principal and secondary uses, define mixed use buildings and establish parking standards for residential dwelling units within a mixed-use building. In addition, staff is recommending to establish building design standards for mixed-use buildings that address safe and prominent building entries, quality storefront design and standard for high quality building materials and building articulation to match what is required for multiple dwellings within the College Hill Overlay. There would also be some minor clean-up on the terms used for different types of dwellings to match Section 29-2, Definitions. Staff recommends approval of the proposed zoning code amendments.

Jerry Geisler, 4412 S. Hudson Road, stated that he did not get his paperwork in to the Commission in time to be a part of the record, but at the last meeting it was mentioned that a lot of the students come from middle income families and are looking for a cheaper place to live. He noted that in his experience the students want to have the maximum amount of tenants in a unit to keep costs down, but they also all have vehicles. He feels that parking requirements should be more than one vehicle per bedroom to accommodate the added tenants.

Mr. Sturch noted that there are letters that were submitted and given to the Commission after the packets were compiled.

Eashaan Vajpeyi, 3831 Convair Lane, feels there is a distinct difference between any preliminary parking studies in the downtown area, where the developments are more expensive and tenants have higher incomes and fewer vehicles, and the parking situation on the Hill. He mentioned a survey of landlords of college students that showed that 98% of the students own cars. The students will typically walk to class from their apartment, leaving their cars parked in the available spaces during the day. This does not allow much turnover for commercial/visitor parking. He stated his opinion that city parking is not there for residents of developers to capture and use for their purposes. Mr. Vajpeyi recited a quote from Maggie Miller, former director of government relations for University of Northern Iowa. "Every student I know that lives off campus owns a car. There's really not a way to live in this city without a car. We've had a problem with Urban Flats." He stated that the Urban Flats project was passed through with the agreement that the students were to buy a UNI parking pass, however there was no verification in place and there is only one lot where a 24 hour pass can be purchased. He feels a study needs to be done before another project like that is approved.

Kamyar Enshayan, 1703 Washington Street, board member of the College Hill Partnership, stated that a letter of support of the change was sent to the Commission. The Partnership's goal is to encourage vitality, walkability and bike-ability on the Hill and they feel that the change is a reasonable step forward.

Dan Drendel, Slingshot Architecture, stated that he is in support of what staff is recommending and appreciates the Commission's work to remove ambiguity from the code. He feels this is a good interim step until the parking study is completed.

Brian Sires, 1939 College Street, agreed with the majority of the comments made. He stated that College Hill will change over time and he encourages the Commission to create adequate parking for the future to accommodate those changes.

Ryan Kriener, 4487 Donald Drive, asked about an opportunity for using remote, off-site parking to serve the needs of residents and whether that would be added to the code. Ms. Howard stated that this is an option that could be considered with the larger parking study and future code amendments.

Becky Hawbaker, 2309 College Street, commented that the Hill is changing and bringing more variety. As a resident of the area, she feels that density should be built to create walkable neighborhoods. As new businesses are coming in, there is less of a need for students to drive.

Mr. Leeper made a motion to approve. Mr. Wingert seconded the motion.

Mr. Leeper understands the parking concerns but feels that the increased density and walkability is a good goal.

Ms. Giarusso stated that she feels that the parking study should include the University of Northern Iowa. She feels that there may be students who don't drive often or at all and may be willing to park further from their residences as they walk to classes.

Ms. Saul feels that the study should be done before any changes are made.

Mr. Hartley likes the change and feels it provides a measured solution in the interim until completion of the study.

Mr. Holst supports the parking study for gathering information.

Ms. Adkins asked about the timeframe for the study. Howard responded that there has not been a specific timeline determined at this time.

The motion was approved with 4 ayes (Hartley, Holst, Leeper and Wingert), and 3 nays (Adkins, Giarusso and Saul).

- 3.) The next item for consideration by the Commission was a College Hill Neighborhood Overlay District Site Plan Review for 2119 College Street. Mr. Holst introduced the item and Mr. Wingert noted that he will not be abstaining from the vote as he has no conflict of interest in the matter. Mr. Sturch provided a brief summary of the project, including the number of units and proposed parking. He discussed the current code requirements with regard to parking stalls as well as proposed elevation from different perspectives. He displayed renderings of the proposed building materials and the building height in relation to existing buildings in the area. He discussed additional site plan review elements stating that all requirements are met. Staff recommends approval with conformance to all city staff recommendations and technical requirements, development and execution of a parking agreement for the project and adherence to any direction from the Commission.

Dan Drendel, Slingshot Architecture, feels that the project will provide the density called for in the Comprehensive Plan and work well with the constraints of the site.

Kamyar Enshayan, 1703 Washington Street, stated that the College Hill Partnership board unanimously supports the project.

Eashaan Vajpeyi, 3831 Convair Lane, feels that approving the project based on the assumption that the council will approve the code amendment is putting the train ahead of the engine. Once the project is completed, it's too late to undo the work. He also commented on Mr. Wingert's statement that he would not be recusing himself from voting, stating that it is important to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

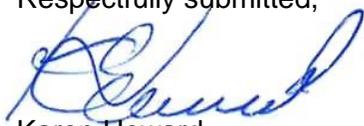
Howard clarified that the proposed site plan should be considered on its own merits under the current code and should not be tied to code amendments that have not yet been approved. She noted that the Commission, at its discretion could vote on the matter under the current code or defer it to a future meeting.

Ms. Saul made a motion to defer action until the Council considers the zoning code amendments discussed previously. Ms. Giarusso seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with 6 ayes (Adkins, Giarusso, Hartley, Holst, Leeper, and Saul), and 1 nay (Wingert).

- 4.) As there were no further comments, Mr. Leeper made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Saul seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with 7 ayes (Adkins, Giarusso, Hartley, Holst, Leeper, Saul and Wingert), and 0 nays.

The meeting adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Karen Howard
Community Services Manager


Joanne Goodrich
Administrative Clerk