



Andy Schor
Mayor

LANSING PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
May 2, 2023 – 6:30 p.m
Neighborhood Empowerment Center
600 W Maple Street, Lansing, MI

MINUTES – *Approved 6/10/2023*

1. OPENING SESSION

Mr. Hovey called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

- a. Present: Tony Cox, Josh Hovey, Monte Jackson, John Ruge
- b. Absent: Katie Alexander (excused), Farhan Bhatti, (excused), Thomas Morgan (excused)
- c. Staff: Sue Stachowiak, Andy Fedewa

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

3. COMMUNICATIONS

Email correspondence from Joshua Pugh of W Madison St. in support of Z-6-2023

Email correspondence from Kelley Austin of N Chestnut St. in opposition to Z-6-2023

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. Z-4-2023, N Larch St., Rezoning six properties from “R-3 “Suburban Residential” to SC “Suburban Commercial”.**

Ms. Stachowiak stated that this is a request to rezone six parcels along the unimproved N. Larch Street right-of-way, west of the 3300 block of N. East Street from R-3 “Suburban Residential” to S-C “Suburban Commercial”. The purpose of the rezoning is to permit use of the subject properties for storage of equipment and materials related to the fence contracting business at 3323 N. East Street. The applicant has also requested that the City vacate the unimproved section of N. Larch Street located east of and between the subject properties and the properties that have frontage along N. East Street. That request is still pending and was recommended for denial by the Planning Commission at its April 4, 2023, meeting.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that the properties to the east, including 3323 N. East Street which is the site of the applicants fence contracting business are zoned “S-C” Suburban Commercial. The applicant would like to combine 3323 N. East Street with the properties to the west creating one large parcel of land that would be entirely zoned “S-C” so that he can have outdoor storage related to his business. In order for the properties to be combined, the Larch Street right-of-way that separates them would have to be vacated. Under the proposed “S-C” zoning, storage could only be “accessory” or “incidental” to the primary use which is the office for the business. Open storage would not be permitted in the “S-C” district. It would have to be confined to an enclosed building or an area surrounded by a fence that effectively screens the storage area.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that staff is recommending denial of the request. She said that the proposed rezoning is not consistent with the existing zoning and land use patterns in the area and with the low-density residential future land use pattern being advanced in the Design

Lansing Comprehensive Plan. She also said that the proposed rezoning may have negative impacts on traffic patterns, the environment, and future patterns of development in the area.

Mr. Ruge stated that he would like to consider a way to allow the business to grow and utilize some of the subject properties while protecting the neighboring residential properties from any negative impacts that may arise therefrom. Mr. Ruge asked if a buffer with increased landscaping can be installed. Ms. Stachowiak replied that the City cannot request conditions on the rezoning request. Conditional rezonings have to come from the applicant through a new request.

Darren Tews, applicant, stated that his business has installed a screening fence along the property lines and have resolved all premise violations. Mr. Tews stated that his business is growing and he would like to stay in his current location but he needs additional storage for his materials and equipment. He also stated that no one is going to build homes on the 6 properties in question as constructing a road to City standards necessary to access the homes would be far too expensive.

Mr. Hovey opened the public hearing.

Michael Zwolensky, E Frederick Avenue spoke in opposition to the request. Mr. Zwolensky stated his property directly adjoins the subject property and the illegal storage that has occurred thus far has been very disruptive to the area.

Kristopher Graham, N Cedar Street, spoke in opposition to the request. Mr. Graham stated he is a neighbor directly adjacent to the subject parcels and expressed concerns about the noise, traffic and appearance of storage materials and equipment on the subject properties. He also said that the fence that was illegally erected needs to be removed.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak, Mr. Hovey closed the public hearing.

Mr. Jackson stated that he does not believe that the subject properties are going to be developed into single family residential homes. He said that he would rather see the property in use rather than just sitting vacant in perpetuity.

Mr. Ruge said that he cannot support the request but would be willing to consider an alternative plan that places limits on the amount of land that would be rezoned and provides for adequate landscaping, buffering, and screening.

Mr. Cox stating that he understands the neighbor's concerns but would like to provide for reasonable use of the subject properties, possibly through a modified rezoning request as described by Mr. Ruge.

Mr. Ruge made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jackson, to recommend approval of Z-4-2023, N Larch Street, rezoning six properties from R-3 "Suburban Residential" to SC "Suburban Commercial". On a roll call vote, the motion failed by a vote of 1-3. Mr. Ruge, Mr. Cox, and Mr. Hovey cast the dissenting votes.

B. Z-5-2023, 1905 E Miller Road and adjoining vacant, parcel, rezoning two properties from R-3 “Suburban Residential” to R-MX “Mixed Residential”.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that this is a request to rezone 1906 E. Miller Road and the vacant 9.3-acre parcel at the southwest corner of E. Miller Road and Aurelius Road and the south 1.48 acres of the adjoining property to its west (1906 E. Miller Road). The north 147 feet of 1906 E. Miller Road will be split off from the remainder of the property and the existing single-family home will remain thereon. The property is currently zoned “R-3” Residential, which district permits one single family residential dwelling unit per parcel. The proposed “R-MX” zoning, by contrast, permits multiple family residential development to the density necessary to accommodate the proposed development. The acreage of the subject property (11.11 acres) is more than sufficient to allow the 55, 3-bedroom unit concept plan provided by the applicant, under the permitted density of the proposed “R-MX” zoning. Ms. Stachowiak stated that the concept plan/number of units is subject to change. She also said that staff is recommending approval of the rezoning as the proposed development will be compatible with and have no negative impacts on any of the surrounding properties. She said that the site is surrounded by a church to its south, a vacant parcel, and an office building to the north, a 4.3-acre property to the west with a single-family home located near its north property line and various commercial and industrial uses on the east side of Aurelius Road in Delhi Township. There is an existing multi-unit condominium complex to the west of the 4.3-acre parcel which is just one property west of the subject properties.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that the existing single-family zoning of the subject properties is not appropriate given the surrounding non-residential land uses and location at the intersection of 2 high traffic volume roads. A rezoning of the property would be necessary to allow for any reasonable use of the site. The proposed R-MX zoning allows for a multi-family residential development which would not only be an appropriate use of the site given its location but would also provide much needed housing in the City.

Mr. Hovey opened the public hearing.

Mike West, representing the developer, spoke in support of the request. He briefly reviewed the concept plans containing in the packets. In response to a question from Mr. Ruge, Mr. West said that all of the units will be market rate rentals. He said that they would have the ability, at anytime in the future, to make is a condominium development but there are no plans to do so at this time. Mr. West said that there is a strong market for single and 2-family rentals in this area.

Robert Sweet, E Miller Road spoke in opposition to the request expressing concerns about the increased traffic that would be generated and the protection of wildlife on the site.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak, Mr. Hovey closed the public hearing.

Mr. Ruge stated that the proposed development seems like a good use of the property. He expressed some concerns about traffic during rush hours.

Mr. Hovey stated that he understands the concerns about traffic but both Aurelius and E. Miller are major streets that should not be overwhelmed by the additional traffic generated by

the proposed development. He said that the City has a housing shortage and this development will help in that regard.

Mr. Jackson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ruge, to recommend approval of Z-5-2023, 1905 E Miller Road and adjoining vacant parcel to its west, rezoning from R-3 “Suburban Residential” to R-MX “Mixed Residential”. On a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously (4-0).

C. Z-6-2023, 1326 N Chestnut Street and adjoining vacant parcel, Rezoning two properties from R-6A “Urban Residential to R-MX “Mixed Residential”.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that this is a request to rezone the property at 1326 N. Chestnut Street and the vacant lot to its south from “R-6A” Urban Detached Residential to “R-MX” Mixed Residential. The purpose of the rezoning is to permit a multiple family residential building on the subject property. The applicant is considering a 4-unit row house with parking behind the building. . The site currently consists of 2 separate parcels of land that will be combined to create a site large enough to accommodate a 4-plex under the proposed R-MX zoning district.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that staff is recommending approval of the rezoning. She said that while the site is located in a neighborhood that is primarily single family residential, the proposed 4-unit building will be generally compatible with and appropriate for the area in which it would be located. Under the existing zoning, the site could be developed into 3 detached single-family homes as it currently consists of 2 parcels and the parcel at 1326 could be split, thus creating 3 separate parcels, all of which would be buildable for a single-family home without the need for a rezoning. The proposed zoning merely allows for 4 units and allows them to be attached. In addition, since all of the properties on the south side of Pleasant Street are currently zoned R-MX, the requested R-MX zoning will be consistent with the established zoning pattern in the area and will not represent a “spot zone” which is generally considered to be an unacceptable planning and zoning practice.

Mr. Hovey opened the public hearing.

Sanba Saidy, Skyline Drive, East Lansing, spoke in favor of his request. He said that the proposed 4-unit will provide much needed low-income rental housing to the area. He said that they will try to design the site to provide some outside recreation space for the tenants.

Jim Vlahakas, N. Walnut Street, spoke in opposition to the request citing concerns about the number of on-site parking spaces being inadequate thus, resulting in overuse of the limited amount of on-street parking in the area. He said that the site simply is not large enough for 4 residential units.

Deb Simonson, N. Chestnut Street, spoke in opposition to the request citing concerns about the lack of on-street parking and its overuse by the tenants of the proposed building, thus depriving the existing residents of using it. She said that the roads in the area are very narrow which makes it difficult for snowplows as it currently exists. She also expressed concerns about removal of the mature trees on the site.

Thelma Henderson, Pleasant Street, spoke in opposition to the request. She said that she does not want a 4-unit building on the subject property. She also said that the homes in the area are predominantly single family and owner occupied which is the desired land use for the area.

James Pollard, N. Chestnut Street, spoke in opposition to the request. He said that a 4-unit building on the small site is overcrowding and will negatively impact traffic and on-street parking in the area.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak, Mr. Hovey closed the public hearing.

Mr. Ruge stated that the City does need rental properties and when managed properly, they do not detract from the neighborhoods in which they are located. He also said that bad tenants, however, can cause significant problems that can negatively impact neighborhoods. Mr. Ruge said that this is a unique neighborhood with very narrow streets and limited on-street parking.

Mr. Hovey reiterated that the City does need housing and essentially, the rezoning would only allow one more unit than would be permitted by right under the current zoning.

Mr. Jackson agreed that the City needs more housing. He also said that one additional unit above what is permitted on the site at this time is not going to negatively impact traffic or parking in the area.

Mr. Cox also agreed that the City needs more housing but expressed concerns about this proposal resulting in overuse of the site.

Mr. Hovey reminded commission members that they are there to determine if R-MX is an appropriate zoning for the property and if the proposed building is suitable without being harmful to the neighborhood. He said that the Commission is not considering who may live in the units and how tenants may be screened by the owner.

Mr. Jackson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ruge, to recommend approval of Z-6-2023, 1326 N Chestnut Street and adjoining vacant parcel, Rezoning two properties from R-6A "Urban Residential to R-MX "Mixed Residential". On a roll call vote the motion failed (3-1). Mr. Cox cast the dissenting vote.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE – None

6. RECESS – Not taken

7. BUSINESS

A. Consent Items

(1) Minutes for approval: April 4, 2023

The minutes from the April 4, 2023, Planning Commission meeting were approved without objection.

B. Old Business – None

C. New Business – None

- 8. REPORT FROM PLANNING & ZONING OFFICE – None**
- 9. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON – None**
- 10. COMMENTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS – None**
- 11. PENDING ITEMS: FUTURE ACTION REQUIRED – None**
- 12. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.**