



Andy Schor
Mayor

LANSING PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
August 1, 2023 – 6:30 p.m.
Neighborhood Empowerment Center
600 W Maple Street, Lansing, MI

MINUTES – *Approved 10/3/2023*

1. OPENING SESSION

Mr. Hovey called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

- a. Present: Katie Alexander, Farhan Bhatti, Tony Cox, Josh Hovey, Monte Jackson, Shane Muchmore (arrived at 6:41)
- b. Absent: John Ruge
- c. Staff: Sue Stachowiak, Andy Fedewa

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

3. COMMUNICATIONS – Letter correspondence from Patrick Smith in opposition of Z-8-2023 and SLU-2-2023.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. Z-8-2023, 415 and 421 West Kalamazoo Street, Rezoning from “DT-3” Downtown Core to “R-AR” Residential Adaptive Reuse”**
- B. SLU-2-2023, 415 and 421 West Kalamazoo Street, Special Land Use Permit for a Sheltered Care Facility in the “R-AR” Residential Adaptive Reuse district**

Ms. Stachowiak presented the staff report for the requests by VIRIDIS Design Group on behalf of the City Rescue Mission of Lansing to rezone 415 and 421 W Kalamazoo Street from “DT-3” to R-AR and for a special land use permit to utilize the buildings on the site for a sheltered care facility. She stated that the R-AR zoning district is meant to accommodate unique situations and will allow for the sheltered care facility, with a special land use permit.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that the requests will essentially allow the City Rescue Mission to double its current capacity. She said that the Mission currently operates a men’s shelter at 607 E. Michigan Avenue and a shelter for women and children at 2216 S. Cedar Street. The Mission’s plan is to move the men’s shelter to 415/421 W. Kalamazoo Street and convert 607 E. Michigan into the kitchen that produces meals for the homeless. The plan also includes relocating the shelter for single adult women to W. Kalamazoo Street, thus creating additional shelter space at the 2216 S. Cedar Street location for women with children.

Ms. Stachowiak stated that the staff recommendation is to approve both the rezoning and the special land use permit. She further stated that shelters are essential to the community and should be located primarily near the downtown where they are easily accessible to the majority of the population they serve. The site on W. Kalamazoo Street is an appropriate location for a shelter as it is in close proximity to but not directly in the core downtown area. The site is located along two primary bus routes and within easy walking distance to a variety of businesses, institutional and civic uses, and human service agencies that provide assistance and resources to those in need. The site is surrounded on three sides by office buildings. Ms. Stachowiak said that while there is an apartment building directly to the south. it is not

anticipated that the shelter will have any negative impacts on the residents thereof. The City Rescue Mission has been in operation at 607 E. Michigan Avenue for more than 110 years and at 2216 S. Cedar Street for well over a decade. The shelters at these locations are adjacent to or in very close proximity to residential uses and there have been no issues of incompatibility. The Mission has an established a record of doing an excellent job managing its facilities. Incidents requiring police intervention have been non-violent/non-assaultive, non-destructive, and extremely rare.

Chairman Hovey opened the public hearing.

Mark Criss, Executive Director of City Rescue Mission of Lansing, provided an overview of the organization's operations, private funding sources, and level of services. Mr. Criss stated that there is a much greater need for shelter services than what the Mission can provide in its current facilities and the sites on W. Kalamazoo will allow them to at least double the capacity. He also stated that the proposed relocation and expansion will allow for a day shelter and provide space for partner agencies to locate satellite offices within the building to assist members of the community in need.

Mr. Jackson asked about people utilizing the shelter congregating in the area as they do during the evening on E Michigan Avenue. Mr. Criss responded that the proposed expansion will allow people to stay inside during the day and to also line up inside at night rather than wait outside.

Mr. Hovey asked for details about their levels of turnover and occupancy. Mr. Criss responded that CRM serves about 2,000 persons per year and generally have 200-240 individuals staying their shelter each night. The City Rescue Mission has observed that many of their clients are homeless only temporarily due to an unexpected event or situation and eventually transition out, but that the temporary tenure has been getting slightly longer recently.

Mr. Cox asked what the rate of people who successfully transition out of homelessness. Mr. Criss answered that generally about 80% of their clients reestablish permanent housing when they partner with additional agencies that CRM works with, such as Community Mental Health and Michigan Works.

Mr. Hovey opened the public hearing.

Don Morrison, Executive House LLC, spoke in opposition to the requests. He stated that his property is directly adjacent to the subject properties, and he has significant concerns about the proposed shelter and its impact on the residents of his apartment building to the south.

Julie Lawton-Essa, Metro Place Apartments, spoke in opposition to the request. She stated that her apartments have been broken into and vandalized by homeless individuals in the area.

[Name not recorded] read a letter from Patrick Smith, City View Apartments, in opposition of Z-8-2023 and SLU-2-2023. Person also spoke on her own behalf as a property manager for City View Apartments.

Dan Essa, Metro Place Apartments, stated his objection to the proposed shelter being located right next to the Ingham County courthouse.

Rawley Van Fossen, Executive Director of Capital Area Housing Partnership, and chair of the Capital Region Housing Collaborative, Lansing's Continuum of Care network, spoke in support of the requests. He stated that his organization is also a property owner and rents

units in the downtown, some of which are reserved for individuals transitioning out of homelessness. Mr. Van Fossen stated it is his belief that without proper support, there will ultimately be an even greater number of people on the streets.

Tyler [last name not recorded], Porter Apartments, stated his apartments have been broken into and vandalized by persons experiencing homelessness, and spoke in opposition of Z-8-2023 and SLU-2-2023.

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

Dr. Bhatti made a motion, seconded by Ms. Alexander, to recommend approval of Z-8-2023, 415 and 421 West Kalamazoo Street, Rezoning from “DT-3” Downtown Core to “R-AR” Residential Adaptive Reuse”.

Dr. Bhatti stated that his organization, Carefree Medical, treats many patients that are homeless or experiencing mental illness. Dr. Bhatti reflected on the public hearing comments about safety and the impacts of a shelter on the surrounding area. He stated that there are statistics that demonstrate that crime does not increase around homeless shelters. Dr. Bhatti stated that it is his belief that a stable housing shelter would reduce congregation, crime, and trespassing because it provided homeless individuals with a place to go where they can receive help rather than just hanging out in a park or elsewhere in the community.

Mr. Cox conveyed his understanding of the public hearing comments in opposition and stated his belief that the proposals present an opportunity for persons experiencing homelessness to be centrally located in a supportive facility where they can receive the help that they need. Mr. Cox asked that CRM inform the individuals staying in the shelter that there are certain behavioral expectations both in and around the facility.

Mr. Jackson stated his belief that there may be very real negative impacts on nearby residents and downtown businesses/organizations. Mr. Jackson asked CRM if they have on-site security and if they track when people arrive and leave the facility. Mr. Criss stated that while they have been on E Michigan Ave. for over 100 years many developments have been completed nearby. The E Michigan Ave. facility has security on site 24 hours a day, 1 per 100 clients – two a night. Mr. Criss stated that a day program will not be mandatory and that based on comments received during the public hearing portion they will explore the opportunity to patrol Reutter Park. Clients are signed in and out while at the facility.

Mr. Hovey asked for additional information on CRM’s program. Randy Barton, City Rescue Mission of Lansing, replied that residents have 30 days to establish a plan and after that, they have to meet with a case manager and counselors to assist with implementing the plan and transitioning out of homelessness.

Mr. Cox requested CRM make a plan to address comments made during the public hearing. Mr. Criss stated they can usually correct behavior on site and that they plan to regularly meet with their neighbors as they currently do at their existing locations.

Ms. Alexander asked for clarification about the R-AR zoning district. Ms. Stachowiak stated that R-AR is the least intensive district that would allow a sheltered care facility.

Dr. Bhatti asked if there will be a fence around the back yard. Mr. Criss stated they are planning to install a courtyard and are open to constructing a fence based on feedback from the neighbors.

Mr. Muchmore asked for clarification about what happens if clients do not follow the rules of the organization. Mr. Criss answered that they may have to leave or relocate to the drop-in center on N Larch St.

On a roll call vote, the motion passed by a vote of 5-1. Mr. Jackson cast the dissenting vote.

Dr. Bhatti made a motion, seconded by Ms. Alexander, to recommend approval of SLU-2-2023, 415 and 421 West Kalamazoo Street, Special Land Use Permit for a Sheltered Care Facility in the “R-AR” Residential Adaptive Reuse district.

On a roll call vote the motion passed by a vote of 5-1. Mr. Jackson cast the dissenting vote.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE – None

6. RECESS – Not taken.

7. BUSINESS

A. Consent Items

(1) Minutes for approval: June 6, 2023

The minutes from the June 6, 2023, Planning Commission meeting were approved without objection.

B. Old Business – None

C. New Business

(1) Amendments to Code of Ordinances Part 12, Title 4, Subdivision Regulations

Ms. Stachowiak stated that the amendments primarily remove the depth to width ratio requirement and bring the minimum width and depth requirements for new lot into consistency with the zoning ordinance requirements. She stated that the City has been issuing a lot of variances to these requirements and these amendments will eliminate the need to do so.

Mr. Fedewa stated that the basis of the depth to width ratio restriction in general is to protect large tracts of land that are typically used for farming which is not relevant to an urban environment such as Lansing. He said that the Planning and Zoning Office consulted with a land use law expert from Michigan State University to verify that the proposed changes will be allowed per state law. He also said that removing the restriction will eliminate a bureaucratic hurdle when splitting large parcels of land to facilitate new residential development.

Ms. Alexander made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jackson, to recommend approval of the proposed amendments to the City of Lansing Code of Ordinances Part 12, Title 4, Subdivision Regulations. On a voice vote the motion passed unanimously (6-0)

8. REPORT FROM PLANNING & ZONING OFFICE – None

9. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON – None

10. COMMENTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mr. Fedewa welcomed Mr. Muchmore to the Planning Commission. Mr. Muchmore introduced himself and his professional background.

Dr. Bhatti informed the Planning Commission that he regretfully has to resign due to family obligations. Planning Commission members and planning and zoning staff thanked Dr. Bhatti for his years of service.

11. PENDING ITEMS: FUTURE ACTION REQUIRED – None

12. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.