

PLANNING COMMISSION

September 19, 2019

The City of Portage Planning Commission meeting of September 19, 2019 was called to order by Chairman Corradini at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Six citizens were in attendance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chairman Corradini led the Commission, staff and citizens in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Christopher Forth, Deputy Director of Planning, Development & Neighborhood Services; Michael West, Senior City Planner and Randy Brown, City Attorney.

ROLL CALL:

Mr. Forth called the roll: Myer (yes); Pezzoli (yes); Harrell-Page (arrived at 7:02 p.m.); Baldwin (yes); Corradini (yes); Joshi (yes) and Patterson (yes). A motion was then made by Commissioner Baldwin, seconded by Commissioner Joshi, to approve the roll excusing Commissioners Fries and Schimmel. The motion was unanimously approved 6-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Corradini referred the Commission to the September 5, 2019 meeting minutes contained in the agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Baldwin, to approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0.

SITE/FINAL PLANS:

None.

PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Preliminary Report: Rezoning Application #19/20-2, 1730 East Centre Avenue. Mr. Forth summarized the September 13, 2019 preliminary staff report regarding a request from Auville Krause to rezone property located at 1730 East Centre Avenue from R-1B, one family residential to OS-1, office service. Mr. Forth stated the property is currently occupied by a single family residence and the applicant has indicated plans to demolish the residence and construct a new office building at the site. Mr. Forth discussed the recent rezoning of the adjacent parcel at 1700 East Centre Avenue and the new office building that was under construction. Mr. Forth then briefly summarized the preliminary analysis of the rezoning request including consistency with the Comprehensive Plan/Future Land Use Map and evolving office zoning/land use pattern along East Centre Avenue, suitability of existing R-1B district and impacts of proposed OS-1 district.

David Keyte of Callander Commercial (applicant representative) was present to support the rezoning application. The public hearing was opened by Chairman Corradini. One citizen (Bill McNally, 1727 Pleasant Drive) spoke in regards to the proposed rezoning. Mr. McNally stated he did not object to the rezoning, however, requested that a screening fence be installed and any outdoor lighting be minimized to provide privacy to his home. Mr. Forth and Mr. West discussed the outdoor lighting standards and conflicting land use screening requirements between office and residential land uses. No additional citizens spoke regarding the proposed rezoning.

After a brief conversation, a motion was made by Commissioner Myer, seconded by Commissioner Harrell-Page, to adjourn the public hearing for Rezoning Application #19/20-2, 1730 East Centre Avenue, to the October 3, 2019 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Accessory Building (Smoots), 2934 Woodhams Avenue. Mr. West summarized the September 13, 2019 staff report regarding a request from Ryan and Karen Smoots to construct a 2,068 square foot detached accessory building along the northeast portion of their residential property located at 2934 Woodhams Avenue. Mr. West indicated the accessory building will be of pole barn construction with siding and roofing materials that will match the existing residential structures and will be utilized for storage of a large RV, antique vehicles, quads, trailers and other personal items, and will not be utilized for any business related purpose. Mr. West stated the Zoning Board of Appeals on September 9, 2019 approved a variance to allow the accessory building to be constructed to a height of 17-feet. Mr. West indicated the 5.3-acre parcel is currently occupied by a 1,505 square foot ranch style home, a 462 square foot attached garage, a 768 square foot detached garage and a small storage shed (10-foot by 10-foot) that was proposed to be removed with construction of the proposed pole barn. If the proposed pole barn was approved, Mr. West indicated the total ground floor area of all accessory buildings would exceed the ground floor area of the main residence by 1,793 square feet.

Mr. West referred the Commission to a revised site sketch and letter provided by the applicant. Mr. West indicated the revised site sketch now proposed a 20-foot setback from the north/side property line (30-foot setback originally proposed), a 240-foot setback from the east/rear property line and a 275-foot setback from the south/side property line. Mr. West further indicated the proposed pole barn would be situated in excess of 300-feet from the nearest adjacent single family residence. Mr. West stated the size and configuration of the parcel, combined with the setback distances from adjacent property lines and residences, would mitigate impacts on adjacent properties and the proposed pole barn was recommended for approval subject to removal of the existing storage shed (approximately 10-foot by 10-foot) upon completion of the proposed pole barn.

Ms. Karen Smoots (applicant) was present to support the request. Ms. Smoots discussed the relocation of the pole barn location in order to address the slope of the land and minimize the need for fill material. Ms. Smoots discussed the construction quality of the proposed pole barn and the nature of the personal items that would be stored within the building. Ms. Smoots also confirmed that the existing 10-foot by 10-foot storage shed would be removed upon construction of the new pole barn. One citizen (Jim Moiles, 10828 Autumn View Lane) spoke regarding the proposed accessory building. Mr. Moiles stated he had no objection to the accessory building, however, asked for clarification on the proposed location and whether the large open area and tree line within the rear of the property would be preserved. Ms. Smoots stated the open area and tree line would be retained.

After a short discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Baldwin, to approve the 2,068 square foot accessory building for Ryan and Karen Smoots, 2934 Woodhams Avenue, subject to removal of the existing storage shed (approximately 10-foot by 10-foot) upon completion of the proposed pole barn. The motion included a finding that the size and configuration of the parcel combined with the setback distances from adjacent residences and property lines will mitigate visual impacts on adjacent properties. The motion was unanimously approved 7-0.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS/COMMISSIONERS:

Chairman Corradini asked each Commissioner if they had any closing statements or comments:

- Commissioner Joshi thanked the city for allowing her and other Commissioners to attend the Michigan Association of Planning conference next week in downtown Kalamazoo.
- Commissioner Joshi also discussed the upcoming Griffin Place Suicide Prevention Walk on September 28, 2019 and encouraged people to participate in this important event.
- Chairman Corradini recognized a former Portage Central High School student (Sam Allen) for his football scholarship to Kent State University and noted that Sam was on the field playing in the Kent State vs. Auburn football game this past weekend that was televised on ESPN.

7:25 p.m. - The Commission took a short recess.

7:30 p.m. - The Commission reconvened the meeting in City Hall Conference Room No. 1

NEW BUSINESS:

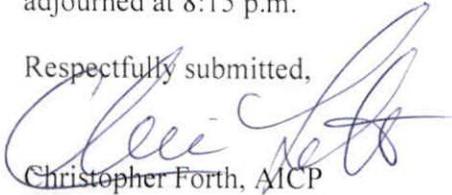
1. Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) Certification and Potential Sites. Mr. Forth referred the Commission to the September 19, 2019 staff report included in the final agenda packet and summarized city's progress in the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) certification program. Mr. Forth discussed the three steps to certification (Engagement, Evaluation and Certification) and where the city was currently in this process. Mr. Forth stated that actions recommended by the MEDC through the April 15, 2019 RRC Baseline Report include development of criteria for identifying and promoting redevelopment ready sites within the city, and updated economic strategy and an overarching marketing strategy to promote the redevelopment ready sites and economic development in general. To accomplish these MEDC recommended actions, Mr. Forth indicated that staff has prepared an example of a marketing site profile, criteria to identify redevelopment ready sites and a preliminary listing of potential redevelopment ready sites. Mr. Forth reviewed these items with the Planning Commission and asked for preliminary comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Harrell-Page asked if the Crossroads Mall could be considered a redevelopment ready site given the recent announcement of the Sears closing. Mr. Forth summarized recent discussions between city staff and the Crossroads Mall and indicated that inclusion of this property as a redevelopment ready site at this time may be premature given the mall ownership position regarding the property, current tenancy and since the site does not meet many of the proposed criteria. Commissioner Myer stated that he believes potential redevelopment ready sites for marketing should focus on older contaminated sites, as opposed to vacant "green" sites, such as the former Kalamazoo Screw Company site at 8833 Shaver Road. Several of the other Commissioners agreed. After additional discussion, Mr. Forth indicated that this agenda item would be included on a future Planning Commission agenda (October 3rd or 17th) and asked that the Commission continue to review the materials and potential sites and provide comments and/or suggestions.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the regularly scheduled meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Forth", written over the typed name.

Christopher Forth, AICP

Deputy Director of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Service