

City of Columbus
Regular Planning Commission Joint Meeting
October 21, 2015

The October 21, 2015 regular meeting of the Planning Commission for the City of Columbus was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chair Garth Sternberg at the City Hall. Present were Commission members: Pam Wolowski, Jesse Preiner, Jody Krebs, and James Watson; joint with City Council Members Bill Krebs, Jeff Duraine, Mark Daly, Denny Peterson and Mayor Dave Povolny; City Administrator Elizabeth Mursko, Attorney Jacob Steen, City Planner Dean Johnson, and Recording Secretary Karen Boland.

Also in attendance were Roger Nase, Lars and Linda Larson, Mary Preiner, and Pat Preiner.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Motion by Watson to approve the Agenda as presented. Second by Sternberg. Motion carried.

APPROVAL - REGULAR PC MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 7, 2015

Motion by Commissioner Krebs to approve the minutes of the October 7, 2015 regular Planning Commission meeting as written. Second by Preiner. Motion carried.

PLANNING COMMISSION – CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION

PUD Ordinance

Attorney Steen presented a draft of the PUD Ordinance. He said existing PUD language in the City ordinance was its basis. In Section I, in both the Suburban Residential conditional uses and the Community Retail conditional uses, the language was modified to make it consistent. Senior Citizen housing would be subject to the design and performance standards, which would be developed further, and it would become a conditional use permit, subject to Section 2.

Section 7A-766 specifically defines the use, the classification for senior citizen housing: age 55 or older for 80% or more of the dwelling units. That is used pretty consistently across the board. Section II specifically lays out the purpose. This was modeled on the City's existing PUD section within the SR district. The Senior Citizen Housing would be processed as a CUP or a PUD. Steen explained that higher design standards, site preservations techniques, etc. would be the tradeoff for offering significant flexibility with regard to dimensional criteria. This language is drafted to maintain a high level of design requirements. That includes the materials or utility hook-up standards. Item 2 under that section is process related. This would mirror preliminary/final platting process. Item 3 addresses private streets. There is some question whether the City will allow private streets. There is also an item on Outlots and Open Space, and one on Accessory Uses. A sixth item would make clear what the development agreement would look like. That would allow for the City to have the ability to follow-up and revisit the project to make sure it's been kept up to standards.

Steen said some language could be added to make it clear that senior citizen housing could take any number of forms. The City is looking for the best product. The intent is not to eliminate possibilities, but to increase the options and give flexibility to those proposing projects.

Planner Johnson said that in senior citizen housing we could have a situation where you already have a site that's prepared, not subject to subdivision. E.g. somebody's looking at a multi-story single parcel building. In Item 2C we could modify the language to cover that, by saying the process would be either a site plan review or a plat.

Johnson commented that this is about as simple and standard a PUD as exists throughout the area. There is discretion in this. The way it reads, you are not going to waive density, design standards, or parking. These will be ordinance standards that are fixed. These standards will have to be considered and, if necessary, changed as a result of this process. The current senior housing density is 16 units/acre. That is a different issue, a separate line item in the ordinance.

There was extensive discussion about density, parking with relation to density and type of housing, and design standards. Both the Planner and Attorney warned against eliminating maximums. Changing specific standards would be more advisable after knowing details about potential products. You don't want to open the City up to worst case scenarios. Mursko also pointed out that utility capacities need to be a consideration.

Senior Housing Performance Standards

Much of this was addressed in conjunction with the PUD Ordinance discussion. Planner Johnson gave PC and CC members a handout of typical areas with performance standards (e.g. density, setbacks, height, parking, etc.) He also gave examples of standards used in the communities of Cologne, Blaine and Forest Lake for multi-family developments, both senior and any age group. During this discussion, CC members verbally expressed support for the possibility of raising the density to 20 units/acre for a multi-family development that appears favorable.

Residential/Commercial Buffer Ordinance

Attorney Steen said the previous proposed version of this ordinance would have required every new structure on non-residential property that is adjacent to residential property to have a CUP, and there were no proposed screening standards. He described this draft ordinance as a starting point. The draft states that a scaled and dimensioned screening plan must be reviewed and approved by the Zoning Administrator unless a CUP is required. If a CUP is required, the screening plan would need approval by the PC and CC. The draft ordinance proposes a minimum screening height, location, and opacity; and indicates that screening shall be satisfied by one or more of the following: a berm, a decorative fence, a masonry wall, or a hedge or plantings. The draft ordinance also allows for waiver of the screening and buffering requirements where the commercial and residential areas are separated by at least one-half mile due to wetlands, public waters, or publicly owned properties.

Mr. Roger Nase interjected that he is opposed to the possibility of only a chain-link fence as screening along a residential property line. He also asked who would be responsible for maintenance of the buffer.

The general consensus by PC and CC members was to put in language specifying that a chain-link fence would not comply as screening. Language can also be added to require maintenance of the buffer by the commercial property owner. Steen will look into whether failure to upkeep a buffer would fall under the Public Nuisance ordinance.

The question of noise screening arose. Steen said this provision does not address noise. If a CUP is required, noise screening could be addressed. Planner Johnson pointed out that, in all cases, there are applicable State noise statutes.

Priorities – Freeway District Workshop List

Planner Johnson said that based on group summaries from the Freeway District Workshop some clear priorities came to the fore: 1) the 97 Bridge and Freeway Interchange, 2) a need for zoning

flexibility, 3) a marketing plan, and 4) expanding rooftops. He asked if PC and CC members agree with these priorities, and, if so, how the CC wants to proceed to address them.

The housing initiatives and zoning flexibility are being worked on, but Johnson believes that if the City wants to really get serious about adding rooftops, it's time to convert the overlay district into an actual housing district. This is a more immediate answer, even as the designation change in the Comp Plan is being pursued.

Administrator Mursko asked what the goals are for the rest of this year and for 2016.

Several ordinances are currently in process, including the lighting ordinance, the buffer ordinance, the PUD ordinance, the fee ordinance, and the floodplain ordinance. After completing those, Mursko would like to recodify the Code, because there are two years of ordinances that are not in the Code. For completion by the end of 2015, a hearing would need to be held by November 18th for the buffer and PUD ordinances, and possibly the fee ordinance. Otherwise, the fee ordinance would need to be heard on December 9th. She asked if the group is comfortable going to hearing on the buffer and PUD ordinances on November 18th.

Sternberg asked if PC and CC members agree with these ordinances going to hearing after the revisions discussed tonight. Councilmember Duraine would like to look further at the buffer ordinance and the examples from other communities. It was decided that this can be done at the next CC meeting, and a hearing could still be held before the PC on November 18th.

Sternberg asked for direction by the CC for 2016. It was decided that the CC wants the PC to pursue looking at potential new zoning districts with increased density, and expanding housing in the Freeway District. The PC need not be involved in marketing the City.

PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

There was no topic raised for discussion for Open Forum.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mursko reported there will be a school bond election on 11/3. Absentee voting is starting. Information on absentee voting is available on the City website. The voting on 11/3, in this precinct, will take place at Columbus Elementary School.

She also announced that Public Works employee Josh Pepin has resigned. His last day will be 10/30. He has worked for the City for 9 ½ years, and is leaving to work as a police officer.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS' REPORT

KREBS COMMENT:

Commissioner Krebs will attend the GTS Comp Plan Workshop on 10/28.

Mursko said Commissioner Wolowski will also be attending.

ATTENDANCE - NEXT CC MEETING

Watson does not need to attend the City Council meeting on October 28, 2015.

Motion by Commissioner Krebs to adjourn. Second by Watson. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Karen Boland, Recording Secretary