



WHEATON CITY COUNCIL PLANNING SESSION MINUTES

MAYOR PHILIP J. SUESS

COUNCILMAN MICHAEL BARBIER | COUNCILWOMAN ERICA BRAY-PARKER

COUNCILWOMAN SUZANNE FITCH | COUNCILMAN JOHN RUTLEDGE | COUNCILMAN CHRISTOPHER ZARUBA

WHEATON CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 303 W WESLEY STREET, WHEATON, ILLINOIS 60187

Monday, August 12, 2019

1. Call to Order

The Wheaton City Council Planning Session was called to order at 6:58 p.m. by Mayor Suess. The following were:

Physically Present: Mayor Suess
Councilman Barbier
Councilwoman Bray-Parker
Councilwoman Fitch
Councilman Rutledge
Councilman Zaruba

Absent: None

City Staff Present: Michael Dzugan, City Manager
John Duguay, Assistant City Manager
James Kozik, Director of Planning & Economic Development
Paul Redman, Director of Engineering
Arin Thrower, Public Information Officer
Susan Bishel, Public Relations Coordinator

2. Approval of July 22, 2019 City Council Planning Session Minutes

The Council approved the July 22, 2019 City Council Planning Session Minutes.

3. Comprehensive Plan/Market Study/Zoning Ordinance Update – Roosevelt Road Corridor

Mayor Suess stated tonight is a continuation of a discussion about a proposed Comprehensive Plan/Market Study/Zoning Ordinance Update. Even if the proposed Comprehensive Plan Update is approved, this would not change the City's Zoning Ordinance. Any changes to the Zoning Ordinance would involve a detailed process involving the Planning & Zoning Board, City Council and additional opportunities for public feedback.

Mayor Suess stated the reason for the study stemmed from many buildings on Roosevelt Road becoming increasingly obsolete, with market practices concerning retail changing, and doing nothing is not in the best interest of the community. The City sought guidance from consultants, who identified four distinct segments in the study with suggestions of appropriate uses in each of the four areas. The proposed areas are up for discussion and revision. Mayor Suess stated all proceedings related to this subject have been in public meetings, and the City has communicated the proposed changes on numerous occasions. The City will continue to explore any proposed changes, and further notice will be given informing the community of upcoming discussions.

Director of Planning & Economic Development Kozik stated consultants Chris Jennette and Uri Pachter from Camiros and Jeanne Lindwall from Valerie Kretchner & Associates were present to

answer questions about the recommendations from the market study and report. City staff is seeking feedback from the Council on the four character areas, their boundaries, setbacks and acceptable uses. He clarified that adopting an update to the Comprehensive Plan and creating an overlay district with specific regulations, as recommended, would not mean the City's zoning would change. To have a change in zoning would require a separate, more detailed zoning process.

The first of the four character areas Director of Planning & Economic Development Kozik reviewed was the Transition Zone, from the eastern city limits to Lorraine. The consultants suggested that this serve as a transition to more mixed-use areas with all commercial uses on the north side of Roosevelt and office uses on the south side of the street. Proposed changes would allow for increased rear setbacks to protect adjacent residential areas.

The second area, from Lorraine to President, is suggested to be the Mixed-Use Flexible area, allowing for a variety of uses and development forms in a vertically and horizontally mixed-use environment. Because of the larger lots, this section could allow for larger developments and is suggested to allow commercial, office and multi-family housing but prohibiting auto repairs and gas stations.

In response to a Council question about the uses prescribed for the character areas, Mr. Jennette stated the list includes uses already defined by the City. Director of Planning & Economic Development Kozik stated the recommendation for this area is a maximum building height of 40 feet for all buildings, vs building height varying based on zoning in this area. The report suggests the front setback be changed from 20 feet to a build-to-zone between 5 and 25 feet, with rear yard setbacks increasing if a building is abutting residential property.

In response to Council questions, Mr. Jennette stated the rear yard setbacks establish how far a building can be from the rear lot line, but things such as parking or landscaping could be closer than the setback. Director of Planning & Economic Development Kozik stated any new multi-family housing that could be developed would not be as dense as the existing multi-family housing in this area, which predates the City's current zoning standards.

The third proposed area, from President to West Street, would be the Commercial Core Zone. The proposed uses for this area would include a concentration of new development and redevelopment that fosters a pedestrian-oriented mixed-use environment that accommodates the needs of residents immediately adjacent to the corridor. Director of Planning & Economic Development Kozik stated the proposed changes would allow a varied mix of more intense development on the north side of Roosevelt Road. The plan also suggests a maximum height of 50 feet, except 65 feet within 200 linear feet of four identified key corners. The suggested minimum front yard setback would change from 20 feet to a build-to-zone of 0 to 20 feet, allowing for increased rear yard setbacks adjacent to residential areas.

For the fourth area, a Horizontal Mixed-Use Zone is proposed from West Street to Carlton. This would be intended for a mix of residential and nonresidential uses, serving as a transition from the more intensely developed Commercial Core. The current Office/Research (OR) zoning mostly only allows for narrow uses, so the plan suggests allowing additional types of low-intensity uses that are a variety of commercial, office, single-family and multi-family housing with a maximum building height reduced to 35 feet. The suggested minimum front yard setback would be 15 feet versus 20 feet, and rear yard setbacks would increase from a minimum of 30 feet vs the current 25 feet.

Mr. Jennette stated the consultant also suggests eliminating the requirement for developers to replicate the residential look and for construction to be all masonry. Instead, they are suggesting a list of design standards and prohibited materials. Other changes suggested a 15% reduction in parking minimums in this district and allowing for reduced landscaping requirements on smaller lots.

Council feedback included the desire to make Roosevelt Road more pedestrian- and bike-friendly, especially near the downtown. Council members expressed the opinion that Roosevelt Road could use visual improvements, and the City should allow for more flexibility and uses in the areas currently zoned OR while respecting surrounding neighborhoods. Council members expressed support for the plan's recommendation that buildings in the current OR district should not require offices to have a residential look.

Some Council members expressed an interest in redefining the boundaries of the sub-districts and updating the definitions of some uses to reflect current terminology and uses.

Council members expressed concern about allowing for increases in the height of redevelopment and the effect that higher intensity uses would have on adjacent neighbors. They also expressed concern about the proximity of businesses and parking to residences and the availability of affordable housing.

In response to Council questions, Mr. Jennette stated the current view obstruction restrictions would not change.

In response to Council questions about lighting in parking lots behind businesses that would be adjoining a residential area, Director of Planning & Economic Development Kozik stated the City's zoning standards address parking lot lighting.

To respond to Council comments on stormwater concerns, Director of Planning & Economic Development Kozik stated the vast majority of the properties developed on Roosevelt Road have no stormwater management system in place due to when they were developed, and any redevelopment would require a developer to meet the City's rigorous requirements.

Council members expressed the desire for a traffic study to be conducted, as suggested by the consultant's recommendations. Some Council members also expressed the desire for the City to have more control over uses to create a more uniform look for the corridor by allowing special uses. Other Council members expressed concern that the City could face legal issues if it starts allowing special uses for some projects.

In response to Council questions, Mr. Jennette stated the height of 65 feet would typically be a 4- or 5-story building.

Some Council members expressed the opinion that the City should not allow drive-through restaurants to be allowed in any of the character zones. Director of Planning & Economic Development Kozik clarified that fast food restaurants and sit-down restaurants are defined in the City's zoning ordinance. He stated fast food restaurants without a drive-through would be allowed in some of the character areas, but not in the horizontal mix.

4. Public Comment

Shelly John, 1300 Aurora Way, expressed concern about the sweeping nature of the proposal and feels it is not consistent with Wheaton's small-town feel. She also stated she had heard that a home designed by Jarvis Hunt will be torn down and replaced by Section 8 housing. Mayor Sues stated the information Ms. John received about the Jarvis Hunt home is not factually correct.

Ginny Noonan, 1653 Stonebridge Trail, asked if the City thinks there will be a market for more office space and stated she thinks there is already available office space. Mr. Jennette stated the plan isn't prescribing more office use; it is showing it is not needed as much. Instead, the plan would help fill vacant spaces by broadening the allowed uses.

Gerald Brenc, 421 W. Roosevelt Road, stated due to significant increases in his taxes in the past two years, he will have to move. He stated there are many empty buildings, and he believes the City needs to raise the tax base to help people who are facing the same problem that he is. He stated the City has done a good job notifying property owners of issues in their area, and he asked when this plan would be done.

Tom Ryan, 624 E. Evergreen St., stated he thinks changing the zoning along Roosevelt Road, so it is not a hodge podge, will not help because the City won't be tearing down the buildings that are already there. He also stated very few people walk along Roosevelt Road.

Erik Maldre, 713 E. Evergreen St., asked where citizens could find the attachments to the agenda that the Council is discussing. City Manager Dzugan stated they are available on the City's website with the meeting agenda.

Ron Bridenthal, 515 Renn Court, expressed concern about drainage issues and the potential for more flooding if there is more development on Roosevelt Road. He stated the only detention in his area is off of Evergreen, and it gets overwhelmed in wet weather. He expressed concern that this plan does not address flooding issues.

Catherine Keegan, 518 Renn Court, stated she appreciates that this plan will make Roosevelt Road more aesthetically pleasing. She expressed concern with the location of dumpsters behind businesses that would be abutting neighborhoods and rodents associated with them. She also expressed concern about potential flooding.

Elizabeth Hain, 724 Warrenville Road, stated she was encouraged by the questions and concerns raised by the Council about this plan. She read the section of City Code related to City officials and conflict of duties. She stated that based on her conversation with Councilman Rutledge at the June 8 Coffee with Council and his relationships with business owners on Roosevelt Road, she believes Councilman Rutledge should recuse himself from any discussions regarding this project. Councilman Rutledge stated he has no financial interest directly or indirectly with any property or any property owners in Wheaton. He stated he has visited businesses on Roosevelt Road and has used their services as a customer, but he has no financial interests in these businesses.

Martha Bradley, 818 Golf Lane, cited the 1999 Comprehensive Plan, which includes a plan on how to boost revenue on Roosevelt Road. She stated the City needs to update the entire comprehensive plan to ensure the City is considering how updates to Roosevelt Road would affect other areas of town. She also stated the City needs to do a traffic study before this plan can move forward.

Ciaran Bradley, 818 Golf Lane, stated the City's West District needs to be represented, and he requested that the City postpone moving forward with this plan until the vacancy on the City Council is filled.

Lesli Marsh, 420 W. Park Ave., expressed the opinion that the community has been poorly considered in this process, and she thinks the Council needs to take steps back to make sure this plan is in the interests of all.

Tim Binetti, 805 Golf Lane, stated he is concerned that no one is currently representing the West District, and he doesn't think the Council should deliberate while there is no West District Council member.

Joe Jeffrey, 606 S. Washington, expressed concern that the result of this plan would be 1.9 miles of strip malls interspersed with tall buildings. He stated the only people who would benefit from this would be office owners and a small group of property owners. He stated the City needs to do a thorough study including all stakeholders to evaluate the problems and goals carefully.

Melissa Binetti, 805 Golf Lane, stated she bought her house due to its walkability to downtown and schools, and she is concerned with safety in this area if a Starbucks could be a considered use here.

Director of Planning & Economic Development Kozik stated Starbucks is considered a fast food use, and at one time there was a letter of intent from Starbucks to the property owner that they were interested in the southeast corner of West Street and Roosevelt Road, but nothing became of it. Ron Dell, the owner of the building, stated Starbucks rescinded their letter of intent, and he didn't think a Starbucks was a good idea for that location.

Dan Fridley, 1926 E. Illinois St., would like for there to be consideration for trees and landscaping, and he would like for there to be pedestrian-friendly improvements including continuous sidewalks that are back from the curb so pedestrians are safe from vehicles.

Nancy Flannery, 816 W. Elm St., stated she would like for the City to ensure that the Warren Wheaton house would not be included in any future redevelopment projects. She expressed concern that the Jarvis Hunt-designed home at 534 W. Roosevelt Road is historically significant and is threatened by the fact that it is in an area deemed by 2017 federal tax law as an Opportunity Zone. She stated there are significant tax breaks for developers to redevelop low-income housing in this area, and she asked why the report did not include information on the Opportunity Zone. Uri Pachter, a representative with Camiros, stated this information is not included in the report because the report was created before this legislation was passed by the federal government.

Bernadine Kowalski, 619 Park Avenue, stated she sees the need for improvement on Roosevelt Road, but she does not want to have businesses or restaurants that open before 7 a.m. or close later than 8 p.m. due to the negative effects on abutting residences. She stated even with a 7-foot fence behind her property, there are still issues with noise, light and garbage with adjacent offices. She stated she is in favor of the current requirements for offices to resemble residential buildings and has stayed in her home because she thought the abutting property could not be made into restaurants or businesses other than offices.

Brian Kowalski, 619 W. Park Avenue, stated McDonalds had previously tried to develop a property along Roosevelt abutting his property, and the City was involved in litigation ensuring that office/research buildings were the only type of use allowed there. He stated a change in this would deteriorate the value of nearby properties. He asked that the Council allow for higher screening for residents whose properties back to Roosevelt Road.

John Lorentsen, 310 W. Evergreen St., stated he bought the Jesse Wheaton house in 2010 after reviewing zoning information for the area. He stated a traffic study is needed as part of this process and urged the City to study Elmhurst's North Avenue as an example. He stated the pedestrian underpass is needed because it is difficult to cross Roosevelt Road. He stated he is not opposed to multi-family residential properties on Roosevelt but would like for it to be broken up into sections. He suggested the City address flooding by rebuilding a river along Main Street.

Laura Kobus, 425 W. Park Ave., thanked the Council for addressing some of residents' concerns. She stated she was curious about how the need for this project was identified. She reviewed the earliest mention of the project that she could find, which was in January 2017. She stated this proposal goes far beyond looking at changing uses in the OR district and thinks it would have negative effects on nearby neighborhoods.

Jenny Shelan, 911 W. Roosevelt Road, stated her home is on Roosevelt Road in a section that is mostly residential, and she is concerned with changes that would increase traffic, lower property values and increase proximity of homes to low-income housing and fast food restaurants. She stated she is upset that she was not asked for input, as she is a property owner on Roosevelt Road, whereas business owners were asked for input.

Barbara Dutton, 418 E. Evergreen, stated the property behind her home is part of the proposed Commercial Core. She stated the character of Roosevelt Road has a residential feel in the section near her home, and any zoning changes should avoid potential detriment to adjacent neighborhoods. She stated she is concerned with historic architecture being preserved.

Jeff Antonelli, 225 S. Beverly, stated the essential character of Wheaton is at risk with the proposed changes, and he doesn't think people outside of the immediate area are aware of it. He requested that the Council reach out to the entire community for input.

Tony Olivito, 240 E. Park Ave., stated he is surprised to find out there is an Opportunity Zone on Roosevelt Road, and a lot of money is being invested in these zones. He stated the City should market this to encourage development. He stated the City should look at Roosevelt Road in Geneva as an example, and he would not like to see taller buildings at strategic corners or the proposed architectural standards. He expressed concern about dense uses near Main Street and Naperville Road due to traffic congestion and is concerned with flooding in this area.

Susan Booton, 1640 Wadsworth Road, stated she is a commercial property owner, and there is a need for modern office space in Wheaton, however the cost to bring existing buildings up to modern standards make them not feasible. She stated her first experience working with the City Council was in resolving an issue with her property, and she thanked Councilman Rutledge for being a very helpful resource for residents.

Jeff Yoder, 524 S. Washington St., stated his home abuts the commercial zone, and he can hear trucks at Mariano's every morning. He expressed concern with larger buildings being proposed from Naperville to Campbell, and he believes that development would negatively affect the value of his home and traffic would increase in his neighborhood with additional cut-through traffic to avoid busy Roosevelt Road intersections.

Coleman Wolf, 801 Golf Lane, stated the Request for Proposals for this project included language discussing the elimination of some low-income housing, and he expressed concern that equivalent housing would be too dense and create problematic zoning. City Manager Dzugan stated part of the issue with the density of housing on East Roosevelt with the multi-family housing is that in 1989, the State of Illinois acquired some of the land through eminent domain to widen Roosevelt Road, and this eliminated some of the parking that had been there.

Ellen Chapelle, 801 Golf Lane, stated she does not believe the plan properly addresses the need for affordable housing. She stated because affordable housing is a complex issue, she thinks the City needs to look at the existing availability of affordable single-family and rental affordable housing and establish a goal before moving forward. She would like for the City to look at what other communities have done to deliver affordable housing in a way that doesn't take it off the community's tax rolls.

Eric Kobus, 425 W. Park Avenue, asked for clarification about current bulk regulations of the Office Research district and a table showing a reduction in height. Director of Planning & Zoning Kozik confirmed that most of the lots in this area of Roosevelt Road do not meet the depth required under the current requirements for the allowed height to be 70 feet. He stated the table was a summary of changes being proposed, so it did not include language about how many stories a building could be under the proposed changes.

John Petrie, 405 Pershing Ave., stated his home is near the commercial core, and he was supportive when Mariano's was being developed. He expressed concern with safety on his street due to cut-through traffic from Roosevelt Road, and he thinks increased development would make this a greater safety issue. He suggested that the City require a greenway zone as a buffer between businesses and homes and adding a sidewalk to make it pedestrian friendly. He asked the City to have a traffic study done as part of this project.

Dave Trotter, 120 S. Blanchard, stated he thinks since Glen Ellyn redeveloped Roosevelt Road, it looks sterile due to the lighting and lack of green space. He stated even if Wheaton's section of Roosevelt Road is not cohesive, it has trees. He urged the City to make it a requirement for businesses on Roosevelt Road to place their dumpsters away from abutting homes due to noise, bugs and odors.

Sutherland Gray, 127 S. Blanchard, thanked the Council for their service and asked that they consider Wheaton's unique nature and make decisions with the community in mind. She asked why the City thinks residential-style office buildings are outdated and why landlords of vacant properties are not required to keep up with the appearance of the land.

Bill McHugh, 1257 Golf Circle, stated he is concerned that developers could buy numerous lots and build a high-rise building or something else that is not appropriate for the area. He stated he is concerned with higher density and the possibility of fires spreading to nearby homes and also with flooding near Kelly Park.

Katie Koprowski, 1910 E. Evergreen, stated her property is in the proposed transition area, and she is concerned with light pollution from existing businesses and the noise from commercial garbage pickup early in the morning. She stated more retail would not help with these issues.

Nick Szarzak, 807 Warrenville Road, stated there is a lot of turnaround traffic and speeding in his neighborhood, and he is concerned about increases in traffic that would come from development as well as changing the character of Roosevelt Road.

Mayor Suess stated the City will compile feedback about this issue and will keep residents informed of the process as they move forward.

5. City Council/City Staff Comments

Councilwoman Bray-Parker complimented the Wheaton Police Department for a great National Night Out and expressed thanks to the organizers of the Wheaton Wine Walk and Bike Wheaton Festival for putting together great community events.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Bishel