

MINUTES
SPECIAL PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
March 18, 2021

Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chairperson Mary Loch, who explained procedures – including provisions for public comment – for the evening’s meeting which, due to the disaster declaration related to Covid-19 and public health concerns, is being conducted remotely by video conference. She described the Plan Commission’s charge and operation, and introduced the meeting’s topics, and participants Trustee Liaison Bill Enright, Community Development Director Staci Springer, Planning Manager Kelly Purvis and Recording Secretary Barbara Dutton.

Roll call commenced. Present: Chairperson Loch and Plan Commissioners Lloyd Berry, Laura Brown, Angela Fanella, Tracy Heming-Littwin, John Mulherin and Jamie Vondruska. Absent: Plan Commissioners David Rodemann and Mohammed Saeed.

Adoption of Emergency Allowance of Remote Participation by the Plan Commission

A motion to allow remote participation in the meeting was made by Commissioner Heming-Littwin, and seconded by Commissioner Mulherin. The motion passed with seven (7) yes votes and zero (0) no votes as follows: Commissioners Heming-Littwin, Mulherin, Berry, Brown, Fanella and Vondruska, and Chairperson Loch voted “yes.”

Public Comment Non-Agenda Items

There was no public comment relative to non-agenda items.

Pre-Application Conference with Brick & Mortar for consideration of a co-working office and event space at 411 N. Main Street

Staff Introduction

Planning Manager Purvis described the potential co-working office space proposed by Brick & Mortar Managing Partners Andrew Nast and Adam Clabaugh as a renovation of the 411 N. Main building, which is on the east side of the street between Duane and Hillside. The subject property, zoned C5A, is in the heart of the retail core amid other such-zoned, mixed-use buildings, though a multi-family building is at the rear of the subject property, with some R2-zoned properties on the outskirts of the downtown. She stated that the Comprehensive Plan highlights this part of downtown as a pedestrian shopping area, and the Plan suggests the Village should “continue to improve and enhance the heart of downtown as a pedestrian-oriented shopping and business area.” She also cited Downtown Strategic Plan language on the benefits of office uses, including providing opportunities “for residents to walk to work, having a daytime and early evening population base to eat in Downtown restaurants and shop in stores,” and “infusing additional professional and medical offices and service businesses into the Downtown would increase employment and thus the demand for retail and other services.” This Plan, she noted, stresses strategic positioning so as not to interrupt retail street corridors, and identifies as an appropriate

location “above or below first floor retail in a mixed use setting or a site that is on the periphery of the Downtown Core.” The subject property, said Planning Manager Purvis, is a 5,350SF mixed-use building containing apartments on the second floor and vacant restaurant space on the first floor.

Planning Manager Purvis stated that the Petitioners, who operate a facility in suburban Park Ridge, propose a co-working office space in a shared environment, with event accommodations as a secondary, but significant, use. At least one event a week, with an estimated attendance of 10-20 people, is anticipated. Holiday parties and networking functions are among those envisioned. The space, she said, is to feature such amenities as fiber-optic Wi-Fi and sit-stand desks, and could offer business people a place to bring clients. Members would have 24-7 access, with peak business hours from 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. (during which the Park Ridge location usually has 15-30 members onsite). Between one and three staff would be present between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The Park Ridge location reports 62 members, half of whom are monthly members; 60 percent of the members are drawn from a 20-minute radius. The member profile, she stated, is white-collar professionals in such fields as marketing and law.

No parking is required for the proposed use, continued Planning Manager Purvis, adding that larger events could be served by the Main Street and Civic Center garages. Because the Village Code does not currently allow event venues as a use, she said Staff suggests the petitioners request a Zoning Code Text Amendment to allow event venues in the C5A district. Special Use Permits would be needed for event venue use and for the co-working office use and, she continued, as would approval of the exterior appearance.

Commissioner Heming-Littwin asked if the Petitioner is looking to keep the apartments or to use the entire space for co-working. Planning Manager Purvis replied that Brick & Mortar is planning to renovate the entire building as co-working space. Noting that a building code review has not been performed, Community Development Manager Springer stated that using second-story, walk-up space for assembly uses might be difficult without elevators or a chair lift. Commissioner Vondruska asked whether the number of people permitted in a space would be defined in a text amendment. Planning Manager Purvis stated that the text amendment probably wouldn't specify this, but that conditions could be attached to a Special Use for an event venue. Commissioner Mulherin asked, “Wouldn't there be a maximum occupancy based on square footage?” Director Springer indicated that occupancy hasn't been calculated for this space, but that it would be limited by the building's limitations. Commissioner Heming Littwin asked if the Brick & Mortar enterprise would require a liquor license, and asked why the Petitioners would need “24-7” access. Responding that about 98 percent of business at the Park Ridge location is during normal business hours, Planning Manager Purvis advised asking the Petitioners about access.

Commissioner Fanella asked why, given that other businesses in town host special events, a Text Amendment and Special Use Permit consideration is being discussed for this proposal. The reason, explained Planning Manager Purvis, is because of the frequency of events anticipated and the activity's significance in the business model. Director Springer elaborated that the guideline centers on the point at which Village believes that an accessory-type use becomes more of a majority or a certain percentage of the business. She cited examples of a concept for a café-banquet facility that didn't materialize, and a former photo/art studio that went out of business after its owner faced having to cut back the volume of monthly space rentals that had become its main source of revenue, and which found the operation

“creeping” into a different use. A dollhouse product vendor, she recalled, ran summer camps and small birthday parties but mainly sold goods. Likewise, Fire & Wine occasionally rents out space, though rarely, remaining mostly a restaurant. Commissioner Mulherin thought a seminar or reception of 10 or 20 people would probably not be noticeable, but a party of 50, 60 or 100 people could spill out into the street or patio. Pointing out that there are a lot of residences in the area, he said determination of a hard, verifiable number is needed. Director Springer advised that, because business models can change, it might be desirable to impose limits. In Commissioner Vondruska’s estimation, contemplated weekly events equating to networking gatherings would typically not pose a disturbance. Commissioner Brown asked what the Village decided about the hours for Enclave. Director Springer said that because the Plan Commission recommended denying a Special Use Permit, the project did not move forward. Staff met with the Petitioner to look at retail applications, she said, but as this was during the Covid-19 crisis, the effort was put on hold. Commissioner Brown sought clarification relative to 24-hour access to Enclave, to which Ms. Purvis replied that no limitation on hours has been imposed. Commissioner Heming-Littwin recalled their hours only going until 2 a.m. She added that, in her opinion, aspects aside from the retail requirement could be changed.

Petitioner’s Presentation

Petitioner Andrew Nast gave a photographic tour of the Park Ridge location, which he said is the oldest building in town. He pointed out the electronic access point at the front entry, and stated that video surveillance is installed throughout the building. Other features he mentioned are a conference room, sound-proof phone booths, and kitchen accommodations. He stated that Brick & Mortar is looking to purchase the Glen Ellyn property and developing it to “have a similar vibe.” Unlimited and partial monthly memberships, he indicated, as well as a \$25 daily membership would also be available, and said that office space and dedicated desks could be reserved. Maintaining that most offices are, in general, accessible “24-7,” though not marketed as such, Mr. Nast emphasized surveillance and electronic access as safety features, adding that Brick & Mortar sees a “valley” in usage from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. He agreed with Commissioner Vondruska’s assessment of the types of events envisioned, and offered as examples SEO seminars that have taken place, and bringing in, post-Covid, guest speakers for the community.

Petitioner Nast explained that in identifying Glen Ellyn as a place to expand, Brick & Mortar looked for demographics akin to Park Ridge, where, he said, the co-working facility has been well-received, and added that he is familiar with Glen Ellyn. He said that his favorite part of the experience heading Brick & Mortar is seeing members take pride in the facility and give tours. As to parking, he said members arrive by Metra, as well as drive, use ride sharing, and walk to the location. He added that members typically spend two to four hours at the facility. Mr. Clabaugh had no remarks to add to the presentation.

Commissioner Heming-Littwin inquired as to the maximum number of people allowed in the Park Ridge building, to which Mr. Nast said there are 60 seats. She then asked how Brick & Mortar has been managing Covid-19 restrictions, to which he stated that seating arrangement and mask protocols were in place. Commissioner Heming-Littwin asked if there were ever more than 30 members on the premises, to which Mr. Nast replied, “No,” saying daily averages were 10-15. The Commissioner asked the nature of the access mechanism. Mr. Nast explained that an email-enabled phone app would prevent unauthorized admittance. Commissioner Berry asked if the app was similar to “Open Door,” to

which Mr. Nast replied that it's called "Kisi." Commissioner Heming-Littwin asked how the Petitioner would feel about the local police department having access to go into the space at any time. Mr. Nast responded that that would be fine, and said that police personnel in Park Ridge were pleased to see the surveillance system (from which video is stored for 90 days). Commissioner Heming-Littwin asked how events are booked, whether events will be catered with food and drink, and how occupancy levels will be maintained. Nast stated that Brick & Mortar has so far done no such events – which aren't a "make or break" for its business model but offer an opportunity to partner with restaurants. He said Brick & Mortar has an event coordinator who will meet with clients and be present throughout the events. Commissioner Heming-Littwin asked if events would be allowed all days of the week including weekends. Mr. Nast replied that, depending on the type of event, he and his partner are open to Saturdays and Sundays. Chairperson Loch asked how Brick & Mortar would handle a request for an entertainment event. Mr. Nast said these have come up, but were turned down. He cited children's birthday party requests that were rejected. Commissioner Heming-Littwin asked whether for a two-story operation the Petitioner would be committed to installing an elevator for ADA compliance. Mr. Nast said he understands that, as long as the same type of event or "ongoings" can occur on the first floor as they would on the second floor (i.e., same spatial layout), an elevator would not be necessary, so that would be Brick & Mortar's goal.

Declaring that she would not be in favor of the proposed façade treatment – which she articulated doesn't fit the historic Main Street character – Commissioner Heming-Littwin said she anticipates an outcry from the community over a modern design treatment. (Planning Manager Purvis confirmed that the structure is in a listed historic district.) Mr. Nast indicated that Brick & Mortar is open to working with the community to achieve an acceptable design and that the rendering is only illustrative. Commissioner Heming-Littwin asked the Petitioner if he could commit to not looking to the Village for funds for renovation work. Mr. Nast asked if this was an option. Planning Manager Purvis explained that the Village does offer financial incentives for ADA compliance, fire sprinklers and façade improvements. Director Springer elaborated that funding is for elements that cannot be removed, and covers 50 percent of costs up to \$30,000. Commissioner Heming-Littwin restated her question. Mr. Nast said Brick & Mortar would be looking for whatever is fair, and doesn't know why they would pass on that.

Commissioner Fanella asked if renting out the entire space was rare; Mr. Nast confirmed this to be the case, saying that Brick & Mortar would be "hard pressed" to close the entire space, out of consideration for members, who are making a commitment on a monthly basis. The Commissioner asked if renting space was restricted to members; Mr. Nast answered, "Not necessarily," adding that event booking, however, could not be done "blindly" (e.g., online). Chairperson Loch said the concept would make for a nice option for businesses that don't have their own spaces to meet. Commissioner Mulherin said he's aware of a need for such meeting space, and views the proposed concept as having potential. Commissioner Brown asked about mail-receiving services at the Park Ridge operation. Mr. Nast explained that mail receptacles separated from member-only space allow for "mail suite"-only clients.

Commissioner Discussion

Perceiving acceptance of the concept, Chairperson Loch asked how the Commission felt about having such a business on Main Street. Planning Manager Purvis related that the Petitioners are looking for a

building to buy, and nothing for sale in the C5B district where the proposed office use would be allowed by right. She mentioned a site off of Main in C5A, but said it doesn't fit the Petitioners' requirements.

Commissioner Heming-Littwin perceived the concept presented by Brick & Mortar as being different than Enclave's in that the focus of Brick & Mortar was co-sourcing work spot rather than serving as a co-working/social club. She did, however, say she struggles with the location, as the Village has been clear that first-floor C5A space has to contain retail or a restaurant. Because there is no retail component proposed, she is "on this fence." The concept, she said, sounds good for the downtown, but approving it could set a precedent. Citing past Commission action requiring businesses adhere to the code, she said she is torn. Commissioner Vondruska said the proposed use is a good one for the narrow building and that he isn't too worried about events. He said he'd leave Text Amendment and Special Use Permit determinations up to Staff. Observing that retail is on a steady decline, he said it would behoove the Village to be open minded about service businesses. Further, he expressed confidence that the architectural details could be worked out. Commissioner Mulherin said he understands Commissioner Heming-Littwin's point, but stated that the building "desperately needs complete renovation." He said the proposed use is unique and responds to a community need as expressed by the Library's decision to create 14 meeting rooms. He said he thinks it will make downtown retail more robust, and that he is impressed with the quality and features presented. He said he has no problem with the location, but agrees with Commissioner Heming-Littwin about the façade treatment. Commissioner Fanella voiced a need for such a space in the Village, and said she likes the façade concept. She said she'd like to see a final proposal before she commits to a decision, but that she isn't bothered by the location. She said she doesn't want to see a Special Use Permit for events to put undue burden on the Petitioner, which was not imposed on other businesses, but will defer to Staff on how best to move forward. She said she is impressed with a story the Petitioner told about accommodating a member who is a first responder. Commissioner Brown said the concept seems to be a good solution for a challenging space, and that she expects interest in the facility and appreciates the investment in the historic Park Ridge building. She said the Comprehensive Plan should probably be reevaluated to consider Commissioner Vondruska's point about retail vs. business use. Commissioner Berry said he expects a lot of people will be looking for such space. As to the exterior, he said he's not "a big white fan" but is "sure we can figure something out," and from that perspective "totally" embraces the concept. Commissioner Heming-Littwin suggested the Petitioners seek input from area business owners, who can be allies. Chairperson Loch pronounced the proposed project a "great idea that would help enhance the retail and restaurants on Main Street." She said she would like to see a "business hub" move forward, and while she expects pressure to try to make the façade blend in, she thinks the architecture on that side of the street needs updating. Commissioner Mulherin speculated that the word "events" evokes parties, but that the type of meetings described doesn't strike him as events. Director Springer said Staff might look at Park Ridge's Special Use, but that an office space at this site will still require Special Use. Commissioner Mulherin pointed to the dentist office below Bridge Communities as an exception to retail use on the first floor in the C5A district.

Consideration of the Draft Glen Ellyn Zoning Map of 2021

Planning Manager Purvis explained that by April 1st of each year municipalities are required (by State law) to adopt an official Zoning Map, which should reflect any annexations and zoning map amendments. She stated that this past year (2020) the Village has had six annexations, and two Zoning Map Amendments (which were in conjunction with annexation). She listed the annexations:

- Elliot Properties, an industrial area on Hill Avenue
- 623 Scott Avenue, a single-family residential property
- Cumnor/Acorn Residential Properties
- A piece of the Illinois Prairie Path
- 380 S. Milton Avenue, a single-family residential property
- 715 S. Park Boulevard, a single-family residential lot

A motion to accept the Glen Ellyn Zoning Map as presented for 2021 was made by Commissioner Heming-Littwin, and seconded by Commissioner Fanella. The motion carried with seven (7) yes votes and zero (0) no votes as follows: Commissioners Heming-Littwin, Fanella, Berry, Brown, Mulherin and Vondruska, and Chairperson Loch voted “yes.”

Trustee’s Report

Liaison Enright had nothing new to report.

Chairman’s Report

Chairperson Loch asked if anyone recognized reference she made earlier to a film (“Cool Hand Luke”).

Staff Report

Planning Manager Purvis said the agenda for the March 25, 2021 Plan Commission meeting will include Zoning Code amendments for the C5A and C5B districts to amend setback requirements for commercial properties next to properties used for residential purposes, and to consider removing single-family dwelling units from the C5B District.

She also noted that applications for the Associate Planner position close tomorrow. Commissioner Heming-Littwin asked what’s in the two-unit strip commercial mall on Pennsylvania where a cleaner and a “pack & ship” had been. Planning Manager Purvis said an office and a private gym. Director Springer reported that the Civic Center Parking Garage and Pedway should be open by May 1, and that the easement agreements with the owner of the Sushi Ukai building and the owner of the Fire & Wine/Katie’s building were obtained. Commissioner Heming-Littwin asked the status of the Apex 400 apartment building project. Director Springer replied that the crane was to be installed today, and that once it’s assembled the job will start accepting pre-cast deliveries, impacting traffic on Main and Hillside – the latter of which will have a portion closed for a time – and that she expects part of the project’s garage to be open for public use in July. Though the tent isn’t going up on Main Street this year, restaurants are finding ways to do outdoor seating, she said, adding that the streetscape project has been delayed. Replying to a query from Commissioner Heming-Littwin about the Rue restaurant reopening after a fire earlier this year, Director Springer said a building permit is expected to be obtained soon. Commissioner Mulherin asked when the Avere project would be allowing occupancy; Director Springer said tenants started moving in in February, and that leasing continues.

Adjournment

Chairperson Loch adjourned the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Dutton-Thomas

Recording Secretary

Reviewed by Planning Manager, Kelly Purvis