

MINUTES
REGULAR PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
August 25, 2022

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairman Tim Loftus called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m., and explained the Plan Commission's function and operating procedure as an advisory body. He went over protocol for public comment and introduced Village Board Trustee Liaison Steve Thompson, Assistant Village Manager Emily Rodman, Senior Planner Atrian Fard and Recording Secretary Barbara Dutton-Thomas.

Roll was called. Present: Chairperson Loftus, Plan Commissioners Arango, Brown, Cooper, Dawson and Wyant; Absent: Commissioners Saeed and Thakkar.

Public Comment Non-Agenda Items

Lobbying for development of a supportive, accessible and affordable living facility on the Taft and Roosevelt hotel site, representative of DuPage United Jane Stroh, 160 S. Milton, explained that the group works to promote affordable "rental apartment solutions" for DuPage County residents who could benefit from living in a facility that features a case worker. Julie Evans, 554 N. Park, also with DuPage United, called individuals with intellectual and development disabilities "a vital part of the community," and said parents and caregivers need living options for adult loved ones with special needs. And, Rene Atchison, 66 Forest, suggested that lack of affordable, supporting housing is a common problem. She contended that disabled individuals need to live independently, yet still need guidance.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Arango moved to approve the draft minutes of the May 26, 2022 meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Cooper, the motion passed by voice vote.

Public Hearing – 525 S. Park Boulevard

Commissioner Cooper moved to open the Public Hearing for 525 S. Park Blvd. Seconded by Commissioner Brown, the motion passed by voice vote.

Staff Introduction

Sworn in, Atrian Fard, Sr. Planner, 535 Duane, said the Petitioner, the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (FPDDC) requests approval of a Special Use Permit, Zoning Variations and Exterior Appearance to accommodate Phase A of improvements to the Willowbrook Wildlife Center at 525 S. Park Blvd. The subject property is approximately 43.12 acres and is located on the east side of South Park Boulevard, at its intersection with Fawell Boulevard, she said. It is zoned CR (Conservation Recreation District), continued Ms. Fard, who noted Single-Family Residential, Church and College zoning proximate.

In 2013, continued Ms. Fard, the Village Board granted approval of a Special Use Permit, Zoning Variations, Sign Variations, and Exterior Appearance associated with a Master Plan to enhance the rehabilitation center. The Master Plan, she said, was approved to be constructed in two phases within 10 years of the date of the Ordinance. Among other things, Phase I included the expansion of the existing parking lot and service building, and Phase II included the development of the visitor center as well as enhancements to the site and relocation of animal exhibits. Since 2013, she related, the Forest Preserve has completed Phase I, while Phase II was deferred due to financial challenges and internal processes. In 2022, the Petitioner filed a building permit application to complete Phase II as part of the approved Master Plan, she continued. The permit application included a new phasing plan comprised of Phases A to B, in order to finish the project, stated Ms. Fard. In a preliminary review of the permitting-application plans, she reported, Staff found the proposal different from the approved Master Site Plan of 2013, and lack of information. Further discrepancies were also found in Phases B through D, specifically pertaining to building locations. So, she said, Staff requested the District go through approval of a new Special Use Permit, and the Petitioner has opted to focus on Phase A at this time (starting construction in September 2022), and to come back before the Plan Commission for the remaining Phases. The entire project has targeted completion for January 2025, she noted.

The subject property is currently developed as native wildlife rehabilitation and visitor center, said Ms. Fard. She explained that proposed improvements for Phase A include construction of a new raptor flight barn and new carnivore and mammal enclosures, raptor dorm relocation, a new walking/driving path, installation of a new 8-ft.-tall fence, and landscaping. Ms. Fard added that no changes to the access drive that forms the east leg of the signaled intersection of Park and Fawell are planned as part of Phase A. According to the Traffic Impact Study (TIS) provided by the Petitioner, she said, the addition of new structures would increase the maximum number of employees at any given time from 30 to 35. In addition, said Ms. Fard, the shift times for staff will vary, so, not all the employees will arrive and depart at the same time. The TIS, she added, also anticipates a limited increase in the number of visitors at the Center with the proposed improvements. Therefore, Phase A is projected to generate a low volume of additional traffic, particularly during the critical weekday morning and evening peak periods. In general, she said, the Village's Traffic Engineer had no objection to the TIS. The Zoning Code, continued Ms. Fard, requires one parking space for each 250SF of building area, so the Petitioner needs to provide at least 44 on the site, and at this time there are 98 spaces and no plans to change this. Staff considers the existing service and clinic buildings the primary structures on the site, with others subordinate, she related, explaining that, hence, variations need to be sought concerning:

- the total combined area of all freestanding accessory structures on a zoning lot;
- the requirement that accessory structures be located no closer to the front property line than the principal structure on the lot; and
- the requirement that the eaves of all accessory structures shall not exceed 12 feet in height.

Also, continued Ms. Fard, fences located closer to the street than the principal structure on the lot have to be a maximum of 4 ft. tall and with at least 33.3 percent openness; so a variation is needed to allow 8-ft.-tall, solid portion of fence. In addition, she said, the maximum allowable height for fences placed behind the front face of the main structure is 6 ft.; therefore, an additional variation is needed for proposed 8-ft.-tall fencing. To accommodate the new improvements and clear the site, stated Sr. Planner Fard, the Petitioner is proposing to remove approximately 232 existing trees, including one in the public Right-of-Way. (Public Works, she said, expressed no concerns about its removal.) The Petitioner plans to plant 20 new shade trees once construction is complete, she added, saying Staff believes there should be sufficient screening with the new landscaping and remaining trees.

Wetlands/water areas on the subject property total approximately 3.2 acres, continued Ms. Fard, who explained that, as the total wetland area is an estimate, all wetland flags must be surveyed to confirm their boundaries and jurisdiction. The site currently drains to Glen Crest Creek, she added. According to the engineer, said Fard, the proposed improvements will comply with the requirements of the DuPage County Stormwater and Floodplain Ordinance, and the proposed runoff changes will be minimal. There will be post-construction best management practices installed to reduce runoff and improve water quality. The Village Stormwater Consultant and the Village Environmental Consultant, she reported, have reviewed the Stormwater Management Report and Wetlands Assessment Reports for Phase A and their comments do not impact the layout or design of the proposed improvements and could be added as a condition to the entitlement approvals for Phase A, to be addressed later in the permitting phase of the project. She reviewed materials and finishes – including rustic finished wood and exposed concrete – as well as the style of the fence (to be covered with cloth) proposed for the project. She remarked that the fence design blends well with the natural area, but isn't the best match with the primary buildings. She noted that industry design standards for dedicated uses preclude meeting Village architecture standards. Ms. Fard outlined Plan Commission action.

Commissioner Questions

Commissioner Cooper asked if any parking is being eliminated from the 98 spaces outlined. Ms. Fard said there are to be no changes to the parking lot as part of Phase A. Chairperson Loftus observed some discrepancies in the documentation. Mr. Cooper expressed skepticism that the renovations wouldn't serve to increase visitor traffic at the Center, and if not, why the renovations are being undertaken. Chairperson Loftus asked if trees removed for the temporary construction entrance would be replaced. Ms. Fard said only one is to be removed and is to be replaced. Commissioner Arango wondered about construction interference with nearby school and church activities. Ms. Fard said she expects alternatives to access drives and measures put in place to avoid hazards. Chairperson Loftus asked for clarification of the fence plan for Phase A. Ms. Fard said she believes a 6-ft. temporary fence is delineated, and that a permanent one will be around the enclosures. Commissioner Wyant asked the rationale for Phasing. Ms. Fard suggested asking the applicant. Commissioner Brown asked about bus parking. Ms. Fard said the three spaces for buses were not included in the parking space count.

Petitioner's Presentation

Sworn in, Kevin Horsfall, 5S280 Naperville, Rd., Assistant Director of Resource Management Development, DuPage County Forest Preserve Headquarters, introduced FPPDC Landscape Architect Supervisor Karen Gray, and said work should begin this year so resident animals can be moved in the fall when they are not stressed. He stated that the square-footage of the facility is comparable to that specified in 2013, and so the parking lot was already designed for the build out. He stated that trees marked for removal are infested with Emerald Ash Borers, the construction entrance is planned for the north end of the site to preserve trees along Park, and the District does not intend to block the sidewalk. He stated that the 2020 "re-imagined" plan presents reconfiguration – but no change in use – to ensure facilities are adequate for animal care, standards for which have evolved in the past 10 years. He asserted that the renovated wildlife center – to be the District's first "Net Zero" facility – would be an asset for Glen Ellyn. He said the Center will remain operational during construction and that staff parking will be "transitioned" later in the project.

Sworn in, Scott Steffes, Project Director, Wight & Co., 211 Clinton St., Chicago, reviewed existing conditions at the site, calling the present clinic, "packed." He stated that tree density is important, saying the Petitioner is trying to "tuck" facilities into the woods to promote animal comfort, and indicated that screening is important for animal and public safety. The consultant indicated that the nature trail will stay "as is," with merely some minor adjustments. He said Phase A is to focus on four enclosures to meet guidelines for specific species; Phase B will address the clinic; and Phase D will entail renovation of a modest building. He said that the carnivore enclosure is to feature "metal and mesh," and the clinic "natural" materials.

Commissioner Brown wondered if the entire project is approved and funded and so there won't be any modifications to the Master Plan as far as what the Commission is approving tonight. Mr. Steffes replied, "That's correct." Chairperson Loftus expressed concern about the view from Park Blvd. of the covered fencing. Acknowledging this a valid concern, Mr. Steffes replied that it is about 75 ft. away and that the design team is looking at vegetation to "downplay" it. Responding to a query from the Chairman about illumination, Mr. Steffes said not only are neighbors a distance away, but lights will not be lit on a regular basis; he said wall-pack fixtures will be regulated by sensors and there will be no regular site lighting in Phase A. The Petitioner told the Chairperson that there is no intent to change the clinic hours, the walking path will be accessible to the public after hours, and animals that cannot return to the wild (e.g., can't be rehabilitated) will reside at the site.

Commissioner Wyant asked why the District isn't seeking approval of all the phases "in one fell swoop." Mr. Horsfall replied that planning the entire complex will be "a lot more involved" and take time to plan, and it's critical to get the enclosures built this year due to funding. (He said the District is pursuing grants to help in funding the nearly \$30 million project, beyond the already \$27 million in place.) Commissioner Wyant asked if operating costs would "roll back" to Glen Ellyn residents. Mr. Horsfall replied, "No," explaining that the facility will support itself from an energy-consumption standpoint. Commissioner

Wyant asked if the District foresees any additional operational costs. Mr. Horsfall guessed there would be, but said the Center relies largely on a volunteer force, so doesn't expect a negative impact to anything Glen Ellyn provides. Commissioner Wyant asked how success can be measured five years after facility completion. Mr. Horsfall said success will be in the benefit provided to the community and to the environment. Commissioner Dawson asked about the choice of cement board as a material. Mr. Steffes said it is only to be used in a small portion of the raptor dorm, and is specified for maintenance and durability. Confirming that the 2021 traffic study considered all phases of the project, Commissioner Cooper sought to reconcile the assertion of no increase in traffic against an expected increase in attendance. Saying that he understood the evaluation to apply to the full build-out (but could check this), Mr. Steffes said that the parking lot is designed per the 2013 Master Plan which had enlarged programming. Commissioner Arango said she didn't understand how large volumes of traffic wouldn't be anticipated. Mr. Steffes said the increase is factored in. Sr. Planner Fard said the 99 spaces exceed the requirement tied to the existing center, and that once the Petitioner applies for changes, the requirements will be considered again. Commissioner Cooper expressed reservations about approving a first phase, when later ones might be subject to new requirements relative to traffic/parking. Ms. Fard noted that, even though the layout might have changed since, in 2013 the District received approval for a Special Use Permit for the entire site. Commissioner Brown asked if the Center would still be free to the public. Mr. Horsfall said the District accepts donations, but no entrance fee is proposed.

Public comment

David Harms, 22W240 Glen Valley Dr., voiced concerns about obstruction during construction of the sidewalk along Park Blvd. – which he called, “a high-speed county highway” – as well as pedestrian crossings. (Chairperson Loftus said this matter could be noted for the Building Department. Ms. Fard said Public Works would also be involved during construction.)

Commissioner Cooper moved to close the Public Hearing; seconded by Commissioner Dawson, the motion passed by voice vote.

Commissioner Discussion

Though he remarked that the plan “looks incredibly exciting” and lauded the work to help endangered species, Commissioner Cooper said the quality of information received on the project is “incomplete,” and that modifications might be requested for later phases. Acknowledging the schedule pressure, he expressed concern about the fence, but said he is comfortable with it for Phase A purposes. Commissioner Arango indicated she'd like to see the Center grow, but has concerns about traffic and approving variances for only a portion of the entire project scope. Calling the plan is a “magnificent use of green space,” Commissioner Dawson said he is anticipating trail connections. While saying it's unusual that the Commission is “not granting approval on everything,” Commissioner Wyant announced that he would be supportive of Phase A. Stating that she concurred with her fellow commissioners, Commissioner Brown wondered if further changes to animal care protocols could affect the plans. She said it would be nice to see Glen Ellyn recognized in the Center's name.

Chairperson Loftus said he has no issues with the design or materials and that he'd be okay with the screening. He expressed confidence that the permitting process would address construction matters, but declared he'd have no compunction about approving Phase A, yet denying Phases B, C and D if conditions aren't met, and said he hopes the Petitioner takes note of Commission feedback.

Commissioner Cooper moved for the following:

After conducting a public hearing and deliberating on the requests of the petitioner, Karen Gray, on behalf of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, for approval of a Special Use Permit, Zoning Variations, and Exterior Appearance, all to accommodate Phase A of the improvements to the Willowbrook Wildlife Center located at 525 S. Park Boulevard, the Plan Commission hereby recommends approval based on the findings of fact, as discussed or amended at the Plan Commission public hearing on August 25, 2022 which are hereby incorporated into the Motion by reference as though fully set forth herein, and a copy of which will be attached to the minutes of this meeting and kept on file as part of the permanent records of the Village. The Plan Commission makes this recommendation of approval with the following conditions:

1. The project shall be constructed in substantial conformance with the Phase A plans as submitted and the testimony presented at the August 25, 2022 Plan Commission public hearing.
2. That the proposed landscaping on the site shall be installed in compliance with the approved landscape plan and be continuously maintained in perpetuity.
3. That the proposed structures shall be constructed in compliance with the approved Exterior Appearance.
4. The stormwater management plan shall be reviewed and approved by the Village Stormwater Engineer prior to the issuance of a building permit for Phase A.
5. The wetland delineation shall be reviewed and approved by the Village Environmental Engineer prior to the issuance of a building permit for Phase A.
6. The petitioner shall return to the Plan Commission and Village Board for review and approval of the remaining phases of the project.

Seconded by Commissioner Dawson, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote, as follows: Commissioners Cooper, Dawson, Arango, Brown and Wyant, along with Chairperson Loftus voted, "Yes."

Trustee's Report

Trustee Thompson reported that the Board passed an ordinance regarding the purchase of the US Bank property and will partner with the Park District to bring green space and an event center to downtown Glen Ellyn. The Board, he said, also passed an update to building codes, as recommended by the Building Board of Appeals.

Chairperson's Report

Chairperson Loftus directed the Plan Commissioners to familiarize themselves with the five options that emerged from the charrette process for the Roosevelt Road motel property development.

Staff Report

Emily Rodman reviewed the process for facilitating development of the Roosevelt Road hotel site, reporting that the Village had hired a broker (CBRE) to market the site. She further said that she anticipates a special meeting of the Plan Commission to discuss site concepts, and in response to a request for guidance from Commissioner Cooper, provided Open Meetings Act direction on how to respond to members of the community who approach Plan Commissioners with concerns about the property. Ms. Rodman announced that Atrian Fard was promoted to the Senior Planner position, and that Marty Scott has joined the Village Staff as the new Community Development Director.

Adjournment

Chairman Loftus adjourned the meeting at 9:45 p.m., following passage by voice vote of a motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Brown and seconded by Commissioner Arango.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Dutton-Thomas

Recording Secretary