

City of Decorah
Planning and Zoning Commission
September 11, 2017 – 7:00pm
Meeting Minutes

Members present included: Llew Jenkins, Nathan Thompson, Tony Clarke, Joel Zook, Brain Cook and Barbara Massman

Members absent: Stan Moellers

Others present: Zoning Administrator / City Manager Chad Bird.

Consider approval of minutes from the August 14, 2017 meetings

Motion by Massman and seconded by Zook to approve the minutes from the July 10, 2017 commission meeting.

Roll call vote: Unanimous, motion passed.

Consider C-3 Commercial Design Review re: Backwater Spirits Liquor, 116 West Water Street – signs

Bird noted this is a new retail business which will operate out of the back of the building at this address. He noted that the new business is part of the building renovations at this location. Bird confirmed the proposed signs meet applicable zoning codes.

There was a question as to the final proposed materials and whether wood would be used. It was noted it would be a metal fabricated sign.

Motion by Thompson and seconded by Zook to approve the C-3 design review for Backwater Spirits Liquor at 116 West Water Street.

Roll call vote: Unanimous, motion passed.

Consider C-3 Commercial Design Review re: Barbara Massman Realtors and Broker Leather, 222 West Water Street – signs

Bird noted these two sign applications are both new skins in existing signs. Bird confirmed the proposed signs meet applicable zoning codes.

Motion by Clarke and seconded by Zook to approve the C-3 design review for Barbara Massman Realtors and Broker Leather at 222 West Water Street.

Roll call vote: Ayes: Clarke, Zook, Cook, Jenkins, Thompson. Nays: none, Massman abstained. Motion passed.

Consider C-3 Commercial Design Review re: Edward Jones Investments, 207 East Water Street – signs

Bird noted this new business is relocating into this store front. He noted the street frontage sign and the perpendicular hanging sign are in conformance with all applicable zoning codes. Bird did explain the sign on the west side of the building, above the Nordic Chiro sign is questionable as the code says fascia signs on the street frontage side of buildings only, he pointed out this is not a street frontage side of the building. Bird confirmed the commission allowed the Nordic Chiro sign (January 2016) because an old lighted sign frame was being retro-fit and used.

Bird further explained that the old sign frame had been hanging on the side of the building for many years with no sign in it. The new business, Nordic Chiro, proposed placing a sign in the existing frame and the commission approved the application with council approval.

Bird summarized that the proposed sign, in all other aspects is the proper size. Bird advised that the third sign really should be a board of adjustment application if it is to be allowed.

Motion by Thompson and seconded by Zook to approve the two street frontage signs as C-3 design review for Edward Jones Investments, 207 East Water Street. Roll call vote: Ayes: Clarke, Zook, Massman, Jenkins, Thompson. Nays: Cook. Motion passed.

Consider Site Plan re: Rail Road Ave, *Spectrum Industries, dba as The Spectrum Network*

Bird reviewed the site plan application from Spectrum Industries. He noted they are proposing to add a 5,120 sq ft metal framed wood structure building to their land at this site. While their office address is on Washington Street, this proposed building is situated on the back of their lot at Rail Road Avenue.

Bird noted the building sits pretty tight on the lot and the project does need Board of Adjustment approval for setbacks. He noted the BoA is meeting on Wednesday, September 13 at 5:15pm. He reminded the commission their recommendations to city council will be subject to BoA approvals of the variance.

Bird reviewed the site plan check list and noted most of the site amenities, parking, solid waste, and storm water are already addressed on the site. Bird reiterated the tight lot and the addition of this building will crowd existing buildings with another tightly fit construction, he also noted the site plan includes a sign but there were no plans submitted.

Spectrum board member Mark Kuhn spoke of the plan to meet regional needs through the development of a commercial kitchen and freezer space. He also noted Spectrum is working through Iowa Work Force Development on utilization of the kitchen space.

Bev Fredrick, director of Spectrum noted the kitchen space would be licensed and that under that license, they are only allowed one practitioner in the space at a time.

Massman asked about other compatible uses and there was general discussion about how the space might be used.

Motion by Thompson and seconded by Clarke to approve the site plan for Spectrum Industries pending the variance application from the board of adjustment. Roll call vote: Unanimous, motion passed.

Consider review of the 2017 Commercial Urban Renewal Area

Bird noted the commission is required, under state code section 403, to review the city's proposed urban renewal plan. He noted the city is amending an older urban renewal area and creating a smaller new one to include the parcel of land commonly known as the Berg Lot at Hwy 9 and Hwy 52. The new owner is Kar Auto / Kelly Bachelder. Bird said the plan, as amended, calls for possible TIF improvements to include water and sewer utility extensions and possible property tax abatement for the proposed new development – a Ford car dealership.

The commission reviewed the plan and there were general comments about the proposed project. The commission thought favorably on the plan and took no other action.

Work session on sidewalk improvement plan

Bird discussed the 2017 sidewalk plan and reviewed the steps and procedures established by the commission and the council.

Bird also shared that the commission agreed to hold this review session regarding the platting of the Bruening subdivision. He noted a copy of the plat is in the packet for review and he pointed to the larger copies on the work table.

Thompson noted that the preliminary plat appears to show sidewalks on one side of the outer loop of streets and not on the cul-de-sacs. He noted he thought that looked reasonable.

Cook stated that the overall concept was to provide as much connectivity in the community as possible.

After additional introductory comments, the commission opened the meeting for public discussion with several residents being in attendance.

Pat Woosley, 1201 Walnut Street commented about the slopes and how steep a sidewalk might be if installed. She also asked about who would be responsible for snow removal. She noted she does see some walking in the neighborhood but questioned if it merited a sidewalk.

Rita Holthaus, 1011 Bruening Drive commented that the sidewalks should only be placed where the land is flat. She noted no one was to touch or alter her driveway.

Richard Werner, 1207 Walnut Street commented on similar issues of the terrain and grade and who would maintain a sidewalk.

Keith Bruening, 1203 Linden Street asked why the Bruening subdivision was being picked on and why they came up first in the city's sidewalk improvement plan. He also asked about existing infrastructure and how it would be moved, relocated or handled to accommodate sidewalks.

Paul Mattson, 1011 Walnut Street urged the commission to reconsider the project and noted that it is just not feasible in this subdivision.

There was a general comment about perhaps painting a white line on the street as a pedestrian walkway.

Kari Tjossem, 1012 Walnut Street supported the white line idea and noted the slope, especially in on her street is simply too sharp.

Judy Robinson, 1016 Walnut Street sees the subdivision's slopes and topography as not conducive to sidewalks. She notes her driveway has been sloped to avoid snow accumulations and ice buildup and she wonders if changing the slope for sidewalks will impact the ice melt. She noted she is not opposed to sidewalks and she would be in favor of a split in special assessments for both sides of the street.

Steve Chambliss, 1106 Linden Street believes the city should undertake a study to determine the best locations for sidewalks. He believes the city should study the issue then create a ten-year implementation plan so the entire city knows what is going to happen.

Harlan Satrom, 402 Upper Broadway likes the idea of walkability in the community, but would like to see a reasonable plan to address everyone's concerns.

Mike Cardinal, 1005 Bruening Drive asked the commission to make a case for sidewalks, why is this required and important now after so many years.

In final comments, Steve Tjossem asked the commission to please not oversimplify the problem. Joel Zook spoke of the overall sidewalk plan and an annual review process.

There was general discussion about the historic nature of some areas of town and how they might be addressed.

Bird reviewed the process' implementation to date and Cook asked how many children live in the area of Bruening addition (20 – 30).

Tom Kuhn, 1018 Walnut Street asked how bad the city really wanted to make this happen. What was the city willing to pay for retaining walls and impediments such as utilities.

Jim Miles, 1109 Linden Street asked for a cost / benefit analysis of sidewalk improvements.

In wrap up, Chuck Lensing wondered about the plan and noted several other locations around town that don't have an sort of planning, Division Street, Short Street for example.

Tjossem and Satrom wanted to see a traffic pattern plan and a plans for the entire Phelps Park neighborhood.

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Discussion, review and update of city's 2012 comprehensive plan

1. Chapter 9 – Land Use

The board agreed to table this discussion due to the lateness of the hour.

Other business

In other business, the board agreed to meet on Monday, September 25, 2017 at 6:00pm to review additional sidewalk information and complete the comprehensive plan review.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm

Respectfully submitted,



Chad A. Bird
City Manager
Zoning Administrator