



MINUTES
PLAN COMMISSION
City Hall Forum - 100 State Street, Beloit, WI 53511
7:00 PM
Wednesday, November 8, 2023

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairperson Ramsden called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Commissioners Ramsden, Abarca, Flesch, Jacobsen, and Anderson and Councilor Day were present. Commissioner Elliott arrived at 7:01pm. Commissioner Janke was absent.

2. MINUTES

2.a. Consideration of the minutes of the October 18, 2023 Plan Commission meeting

Commissioner Flesch moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Jacobsen. Motion prevailed, voice vote (5-0).

3. REPORTS

3.a. Consideration of a Resolution 2023-041 approving a one-lot Extraterritorial Certified Survey Map for the property located at 2077 S Pow Wow Trail in the Town of Beloit

Julie Christensen, Community Development Director, presented the staff report and recommendation.

Commissioner Anderson moved to approve Resolution 2023-041, seconded by Commissioner Flesch. Motion prevailed, voice vote (6-0).

3.b. Consideration of a Resolution approving/ denying an amendment to the City of Beloit Comprehensive Plan for the property located at 1642 Sixth St

Julie Christensen, Community Development Director, presented the staff report and recommendation.

Brandon Methu, representing Northern Star companies, stated that they came across a site that fit a housing opportunity. Mr. Methu said that they reached out to residents to get their views, and how to help with their vision to construct a new housing development. Mr. Methu said there are a lot of variables that are necessary to bring housing together, making development like this an obstacle. Mr. Methu said that there has not been any new construction of affordable housing in the past twenty-five years. Mr. Methu said if this is something that moves forward, they would not open until Spring 2026.

Chairperson Ramsden opened the item up for public comment.

JoAnn Maya, Beloit Resident, said that she is pro Beloit, pro affordable housing, and pro home ownership. Ms. Maya outlined the possible problems that could occur if they built on the Sixth Street lot.

Steve Howland, Beloit Resident, said that there are years long waiting lists for affordable housing, and there are numbers of homeless families living in cars. Mr. Howland believes that this project will not solve the homeless problem the City faces, but it would be a step in the right direction.

Lori Marshall, stated that she does not agree with the development being built on this site. She handed out a folder with approved plans from the City, and she believes that the proposed development is not consistent with those approved plans.

Susan Adams, stated she is the secretary for League of Women Voters, and that the change would be difficult for the neighbors, but it would be good for Beloit.

Jessica Larosa, speaking for Wayne and Prisha Gustina, said that they have multiple concerns if the PUD was approved. Ms. Larosa stated that there will be more crime, traffic congestion, a dangerous traffic condition at the proposed entrance to the development, long school bus travel time, and lack of jobs near the development.

Tye Gustina, City of Beloit Resident, stated that the MLS listing indicated that duplexes and storage units are not allowed on that lot, and no development proposal was ever requested for this site in the past. He understands the need for affordable housing but that this property is cherished community space. Mr. Gustina asked the public who is against for this PUD, and several people raised their hands. Mr. Gustina said there are safety concerns, traffic control concerns, and that it does not align with the strategic goal such as safety for Beloit.

Reverend Gregg Schneider, St Paul's Church, stated that he has watched the effects of affordable housing in neighborhoods. Mr. Schneider stated that many of the families are afraid to reach out about their conditions of their homes with fear of being evicted. Mr. Schneider said that we need to increase the amount of affordable housing in Beloit.

Harriett Everette, Beloit Resident, stated she use to walk through the field growing up. Ms. Everette said that when she moved in her apartment eleven years ago it was \$700, and today she is paying \$1100. Ms. Everette stated she doesn't qualify for Senior subsidized housing. She explained that her son lives in an apartment on Gateway, and he has to walk to work at ABC Supply and can barely afford his rent. Ms. Everette supports putting up the apartments.

Chairperson Ramsden closed the public comment.

Commissioner Abarca stated that this would be helpful to the residents in Beloit, Wisconsin, and will help the youth of Beloit.

Commissioner Elliott stated this would be beneficial to the Community, and the good outweighs the bad. Commissioner Elliott stated the interest rates are high right now too. Professionals need places to live, with rents so high.

Commissioner Anderson discussed the reasons why affordable housing developments are not constructed. These projects only work when using state funds to finance them, and they limit the developments to certain census tracts.

Commissioner Jacobsen stated that she agrees with supporting the resolution. She appreciates the citizen's input on this project. She thinks that Plan Commission has to look at the greater good. At the community meetings, she has heard about the need for affordable housing for Beloit residents.

Chairperson Ramsden stated he has a different view, and he thinks in a residential neighborhood, a property owner has a reasonable expectation of consistent zoning and for the zoning to remain the same. Mr. Ramsden stated the parcel is R-1A, and all the surrounding properties are R-1A. Mr. Ramsden said that amending the Future Land Use Map is doing the opposite, and he does not support the decision.

Commissioner Abarca moved to approve Resolution recommending the amendment to the Future Land Use Map for the property located at 1642 Sixth St, seconded by Commissioner Elliott. Motion prevailed, roll call vote (5-1), with Commissioner Ramsden voting no.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

4.a. **Consideration of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) Master Land Use Plan for the property located at 1642 Sixth Street**

Julie Christensen, Community Development Director, presented the staff report and recommendation.

Chairperson Ramsden opened the public hearing.

Lori Marshall, asked why is she even here, if the City has already pre-judged this proposed development before getting input of residents. Ms. Marshall said it is not fair, and there is a need for low-income housing, and she said for them to put it in McNeel school. They have worked hard all of their lives, they pay their taxes, they maintain the houses, and now they are being told that they just have to accept this development next to them, and it is not fair.

Nicholas Schneider, stated that he bought his home in Beloit, even though he was living in Whitewater at the time. His family and everyone told him not to move to Beloit,

and those people were wrong about Beloit. He has a great relationship with his neighbor, Ron. During Covid, he and his wife paid off their home. They love their neighborhood. He and his wife paid off their home, and they run two businesses here in Beloit. It's not about Not In My Backyard. He is all about helping people out. The proposed development does not match the existing houses in the neighborhood.

Reverend Gregg Schneider, stated that he was late tonight because he was listening to youth homelessness panel in the library. They are part of Project 1649, and after 18 months, they will need to find an affordable place to live. Mr. Schneider said there was discussion about the need to leave the zoning the same. If we followed that, development would have stopped years ago. Every time we have a development, the zoning is changed to accommodate the new development. We need to continue to move forward to have the affordable housing we need in this community.

Ron Greer, neighborhood resident, lived in the neighborhood for about 24 years. His children and grandchildren loved playing in that field. When the developers came and surveyed the land, he knew it was a done deal. He understands this affordable housing thing, and this is the United States of America. He doesn't have anything against anyone here.

Mark Abdor-Rasheed, said to be homeless should be a crime. To have affordable housing is a plus, but he wants to know how many people came out when eminent domain was used for Maple Avenue. While he empathizes with the concerns raised by the residents, he hopes that it will be consistent. This land isn't their backyard, it is separate land. He didn't see all these people coming out when Maple Avenue properties were taken.

JoAnn Maya said that when something is listed as single family, it should stay that way. It is a slippery slope in our community. That anywhere in the community this could happen. Thank you, Plan Commission and City Council for your work and time. It has been wonderful meeting all of these new people during this process.

Jessica Larosa explained that she works in property management, and she feels that some comments were incorrect. She stated that she knows what her tenants pay and it is affordable. Ms. Larosa said that there are people from Madison, Milwaukee, Chicago, and Rockford coming to Beloit, and it is already affordable already. She said imagine where you live, if tomorrow, you suddenly had 200 extra neighbors in your backyard. Are you going to construct an 8-foot fence around it, so that they can have the privacy they pay for? Ms. Larosa said that the City of Beloit will be losing people like them who currently own their homes, because they are dismissing their concerns.

Linda Kidd, 1666 Sixth St, said that she is upset and has lived there for nine years. Ms. Kidd said that there is not enough space to put that development there. She asked if Plan Commission would want all of these people in your backyard.

Tye Gustina, asked the Plan Commission who lives on the West side, and said that there is not enough land to put that development there. He indicated that his family has been taking care of the land for the last 25 years. He said that there is pending litigation with this property, and they will win.

Brandon Methu explained that he would answer some of the questions that had been asked. He outlined his education and experience, specifically that he has a degree in economics and worked for a firm developing tax credit projects, then worked for Federal Home Loan Bank. From there, he worked for Bear Development. They are also partnered with Horizon Development and Baker Tilley in this application. Mr. Methu said this development is a step in the right direction, and the site is roughly 4.8 acres. The people who will live in this development will work. Mr. Methu said that they would put 88 dwelling units, and half of the land would be green space. He explained that they had initially proposed more units, but based on citizen feedback, they had reduced the unit count.

Gary Cole said he is listening to a lot of valid points with Beloit needing affordable housing, and rents have been increasing. He said that we need affordable housing, but not low-income affordable housing. Mr. Cole said that there are a lot of code issues for these homes that are being rented out. The City should be addressing this. If it is a rental property, it should be inspected. Mr. Cole said that it does not make sense that the City of Beloit shut down all the schools on the West side, and the developer wants to put more kids on the west side. How many schools does the City already have that they aren't doing anything with? There is a school in the township sitting empty. This doesn't make any sense. What does show up is that money talks. Since there is money available for affordable housing, that is what we are building because the City wants the money. Then, the residents are told to come and speak, but it is all pre-determined. The only one who spoke up is Commissioner Ramsden. This has not been a fair hearing for the residents.

Ron Greer said that the Commission needs to look at the area because he doesn't think there is enough room for the development.

Lori Marshall asked Brandon Methu a question about one of the community meetings, whether he said that he had put a shovel in the ground.

Brandon Methu, said that he has worked extensively in affordable housing and handled several hundred million dollars of development. He hasn't put a shovel in the ground as Northern Star, a new company founded by Brandon and James Methu. He has been awarded tax credits, but has not yet completed a project.

Commissioner Ramsden closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Flesch made a motion to deny the PUD Plan, seconded by Commissioner Ramsden.

Commissioner Flesch said that he voted to approved the change in the Comprehensive Plan because he doesn't feel that single family at this location is doable. However, he has concerns about accessibility. He believes that Sixth Street can handle the additional traffic, and the City Engineer has asked for a traffic impact analysis. He is not sure if the layout is functional. The plan does not show space for the patios shown in the renderings. Mr. Flesch said those conflicts need to be brought forward, and the exterior as shown is appropriate for the neighborhood. He said these needs to fit better, and the city should not settle for less than better.

Chairperson Ramsden said that he has ridden his bike through this neighborhood and is trying to see how the traffic will flow. Chairperson Ramsden said that the traffic from this development will come out on the hill, and that is not a good solution especially during the winter. Chairperson Ramsden said that this needs to increase the quality of life for everyone living near there. He said it is upon us to find the right site for this development. He's not willing to compromise other's quality of life.

Commissioner Anderson said that the site in the long term is other than single family homes. He feels that it should have more than one access point and at a minimum, turn lanes. The renderings don't exactly tie to the site plan.

Commissioner Abarca asked how long will it take to find a spot that is suitable because there will always be a better spot. Commissioner Abarca said we have a huge homeless problem that we need to address right now. We don't have time to analyze every vacant lot in the City. Commissioner Abarca said that he thinks this is a good first step.

Commissioner Ramsden that he understands what Commissioner Abarca is saying, but that is what we are trying to do with the updated Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Flesch proposed the idea of laying over the item instead to give the developers time to make changes to the plan. He thinks we can do better.

Commissioner Anderson asked what we could do procedurally. Ms. Christensen explained that Commissioners Flesch and Ramsden would have to withdraw their motion and second. You could then make a motion to lay it over and have the developer prepare a better plan.

Commissioners Flesch and Ramsden expressed willingness to do so.

Councilor Day asked about the timelines for the tax credit application, if they would be able to apply for tax credits this year, if the item was laid over. Brandon Methu said that if it is laid over, there will be no tax credit application submitted this year. Another

application next year would be dependent on the project site being located in an appropriate census tract. This would deny the City of Beloit another affordable housing development. Councilor Day commented that this is why he is bringing it up, so that the Commission is aware of the implications of their decision. There is a timing element here, and Mike, if you have specific elements, you need addressed, then he could expedite this.

Commissioner Jacobsen asked a procedural question. She asked if the plan would go to City Council if it was laid over. Ms. Christensen said it would not. Then, she asked if it was denied, what would happen. Ms. Christensen explained that it would go to City Council for final action.

Commissioner Ramsden explained that Commissioner Flesch moved to deny the PUD Master Land Use Plan, seconded by Commissioner Ramsden. Motion for denial prevailed, roll call vote (4-2). Commissioners Abarca and Elliott voted against the motion.

4.b. Consideration of Ordinance No. 3815 amending the Zoning District Map of the City of Beloit for the property located at 1642 Sixth Street

Julie Christensen, Community Development Director, presented the staff report and recommendation.

Chairperson Ramsden opened the public hearing.

Nicholas Schneider asking for clarity on item 4b. Commissioner Ramsden said that it is changing the zoning from R-1A to PUD. Ms. Christensen explained the difference between items 4a and 4b.

Brandon Methu, applicant, explained that he had held two community meetings before submitting his application. He outlined what happened at these meetings, that he sought input from residents, and all they were willing to say was that they didn't like the height or the density and that they wanted the land to remain undeveloped. He explained that the need for affordable housing is not going away, and this land has been vacant for years. When affordable projects are denied, developers see this as a big red flag when deciding whether to come to the community. He is unclear as to how he can redesign this site to make it better.

Commissioner Ramsden closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Anderson moved to deny Ordinance No. 3815, seconded by Commissioner Flesch. Motion prevailed, roll call vote (4-2).

5. **STATUS REPORT ON PRIOR PLAN COMMISSION ITEMS**

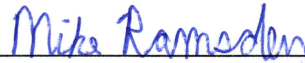
Ms. Christensen updated the Plan Commission on actions taken by City Council related to an item previously reviewed by Plan Commission.

6. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Julie Christensen outlined the future agenda items.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Abarca made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Jacobsen at 9:07 PM. Motion carried, voice vote (7-0).



Mike Ramsden, Chairperson