

MINUTES
PLAN COMMISSION
City Hall Forum - 100 State Street, Beloit, WI 53511
7:00 PM
Wednesday, October 9, 2024

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairperson Ramsden called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Commissioners Ramsden, Anderson, Winkelmann, and Flesch were present. Commissioners Jacobsen, Abarca, Elliott, and Councilor Day were absent.

2. MINUTES

Chairperson Ramsden suggested a correction to the minutes, but since Commissioner Anderson wanted to abstain and there weren't enough members for quorum without him, there was no action taken on the minutes.

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

3.a. Consideration of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) Master Land Use Plan for the property located on 3500 Eagles Ridge Drive

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

Chairperson Ramsden opened the public hearing.

Chris Day, the developing project manager from The Alexander Company, stated that they have three primary project goals: to address the community's shortage of quality multi-family housing, to support the retention and recruitment of the local workforce, and to create genuine workforce housing aimed at individuals and families at the upper end of the income limits for the affordable housing program.

Mr. Day noted that the current zoning allows for up to 216 units in a single building, but they believe this is not suitable for the site. They advocate for better-planned, smaller buildings that align more effectively with the existing neighborhood's character. The purpose of the PUD is to facilitate the construction of multiple smaller buildings. They also aim to address concerns related to traffic, parking, and the inclusion of a play area.

He explained that they conducted a traffic study examining five properties in similar suburban neighborhoods, including Madison, Verona, and Fitchburg. Currently, Gateway Boulevard operates at 21-33 percent capacity, and the additional traffic from the project is expected to increase this by 1-2 percent. They also assessed the existing intersection of Gateway and Eagles Ridge and determined that it does not meet sight

line and stopping distance requirements according to both their standards and DOT regulations.

Related to the parking concerns raised at the last meeting, Chris Day explained that they analyzed the number of registered cars per unit type and the number of residents of driving age at each property. Based on their findings, they need around 66 spaces to meet basic demand, while the maximum requirement would be 96 spaces. With the proposed 154 parking spaces, they believe there is ample capacity to accommodate guests and family members, in addition to the residents.

Regarding the request for park space for the development, Chris Day explained that they began by determining the appropriate size for a play space based on the number of children aged 12 and under in the existing properties. They applied Wisconsin guidelines for park space sizing and identified two specific locations on the site that would be ideal for an outdoor play area. This resulted in a total play space area of approximately 3,800 square feet.

Due to the concern related to proximity to the existing neighborhood, they assessed the distances from the proposed buildings to neighboring single-family homes, finding that to the east of the property, there is more than 650 feet, while to the north, the distance is approximately 150 feet. Additionally, they plan to enhance the landscaping on the berm to serve as a natural barrier between their project and the Eagles Ridge neighborhood.

Terry Rousseau, 1602 Hawks Pass, expressed that their previous concerns remain valid, and they continue to oppose the project overall. However, if the project proceeds, they request the following considerations. Residents from Hawks Pass have a clear view of the project, including the parking lot, and they are concerned that the parking lot's placement between the proposed buildings will create a tunnel effect, leading to increased noise and light pollution in their homes. Since no plans or timeline for phase two have been presented, they are asking that the existing 80-foot landscape buffer be maintained instead of being reduced to 30 feet.

She also requested that a mature natural landscape buffer be planted along this 80-foot area to minimize visibility and provide privacy, while also reducing noise and light pollution. Additionally, she would also like the hillside along Eagles Ridge Drive to remain to help established residents maintain their privacy from noise and light. They noted the lack of a timeline or plan for phase two.

Terry Gerrits, 3675 Golden Eagle Drive, expressed his understanding of the need for this type of development and stated he is not opposed to the proposal. However, he feels that the details are not being adequately addressed. The play area is 3,800 square feet, which translates to roughly a 65-foot by 60-foot space near the grilling areas. If those grilling areas are at opposite ends of the complex, the play space would then be

reduced to a 65-foot by 30-foot area. He noted there is no clarification on the play area's surface, whether it will be flat ground, sports turf, or other materials like those found in playgrounds at the park on the east end of the subdivision. If children do not have a play area within their apartment complex, they will need to travel the entire length of the subdivision to reach the park, using bike paths and sidewalks that are not yet completed. If they cannot traverse the area by bike or on foot, they will need to rely on parents or family members for transportation, but there is no parking available at the park.

Mr. Gerrits pointed out that Eagles Ridge Drive is 14 yards wide and Gateway Boulevard is 16 yards wide at the Eagle Ridge Drive intersection. Visibility from the intersection to the north is unobstructed, but to the south, visibility is limited by the slope of the road near the southernmost driveway of the apartment complexes on the west side of Gateway Boulevard. At 40 miles per hour, it takes 7.7 seconds to travel from that point to the intersection, which is a short amount of time for drivers to react, especially with a driveway leading into the subdivision. He anticipates that if the driveway is located where they believe it will be, vehicles turning into it will not be visible until they are making their turn. He believes this situation will be unsafe and recommends prohibiting parking on both sides of Gateway Boulevard.

Jamie Rousseau, 1602 Hawks Pass, expressed concerns about the playground area potentially becoming a party space adjacent to the grilling area. He questioned how children would recognize that it's their play area if it's simply a patch of grass next to the grilling stations. He worries this could turn into a space for adult gatherings that extend into the night, leaving residents to cope with the noise and disruptions.

Steve Howland, a Beloit resident, stated that the Plan Commission is tasked with considering the larger picture of planning and zoning while making recommendations. He noted the difficulty of supporting affordable housing while opposing each proposed project due to fears from neighboring residents. He used the analogy that optimists see a glass as half full, pessimists see it as half empty, and engineers see it as twice the size it needs to be. Currently, the homeless count in the school district stands at 458, with 80 of those being unaccompanied minors. He emphasized that many in the homeless population are two working adults, often juggling three jobs, who still cannot afford housing. He urged the community to take a comprehensive approach to address these issues and develop a viable plan. If this project is approved, he stressed the importance of ensuring it is well-managed and that community concerns and fears are addressed collaboratively.

Carol Munoz, 1608 Hawks Pass, expressed concerns about the lack of playground space. She pointed out that residents pay HOA fees to keep their subdivision clean and well-maintained, questioning whether those using the park will also contribute to the HOA or if they will remain there since the park is managed and funded by them.

She shared her personal struggles, explaining that it took her 15 years to secure a home, and she emphasized that she and her husband worked hard and saved like everyone else. Therefore, she believes that if residents do not contribute to the upkeep of the subdivision, they should not have access to its facilities.

Debbie Fisher, a South Beloit resident and a member of the BATFoH Committee, shared her experience conducting weekly homeless checks with an organization called Beloit Cares. She noted a troubling shift in what she's observing: initially, she mainly saw individuals struggling with mental illness on the streets, but now she encounters families living in cars. Many of these families work two or three jobs, earning \$15 to \$20 an hour, yet still have no place to call home.

She highlighted that the proposed affordable housing complex targets those in essential professions, such as teachers, firefighters, and nurses, who would be able to afford this type of housing. There is a shortage of these workers in the community, and she believes that such housing is necessary to attract them and help them thrive here. Debbie recounted an encounter where she approached a car occupied by a working couple and their two babies in the backseat, and she had to provide them with blankets and diapers, as that car was their only shelter.

Terry Gerrits expressed concerns about the potential for increased auto burglaries with up to 154 vehicles parked outside the new complex, viewing it as an invitation for criminal activity as the neighborhood expands. He noted that most residents east of Gateway Boulevard currently park their vehicles inside overnight, significantly reducing the temptation for those with criminal intent. He pointed out that few addresses in Beloit are farther from the city's Police Department headquarters than the proposed development, resulting in limited police presence in that area.

Mr. Gerrits highlighted the ongoing discussion about the zoning, which has allowed multifamily development for over 20 years, and questioned its continued viability today. He asked why development is proposed for this specific corner rather than further north or south along Gateway Boulevard, where there may be more suitable options.

Terri Rousseau, 1602 Hawks Pass, inquired about how the applicant intends to complete one part of the project while leaving the rest unfinished. She expressed concern that the neighborhood is not receiving adequate information.

Joel Otto, 3529 Eagles Ridge Drive, stated that he and his neighbors were among the first homeowners in the area, and he was never informed about the plans to build apartments across the street. Had he known, he might have reconsidered his decision to build there. He echoed concerns raised by others regarding the placement of child play areas, suggesting they should have been located on the other side of the building, with the grilling space on the opposite side as well.

Mr. Otto expressed worries about the parking situation. He highlighted the inadequacy of parking spaces for the building, predicting that many will have to park on Eagles Ridge and walk up the hill to their apartments instead of parking closer to the driveway.

His final concern was about traffic at the intersection, where vehicles often speed between 70-80 miles per hour during the summer. Despite reporting these issues to the police, he noted that by the time they arrive, the offenders have usually left, only to return the following weekend. He expressed disbelief that there haven't been any fatalities at that intersection or from the apartments on Gateway due to the speeding traffic. Otto believes there should be a traffic light at the intersection of Eagles Ridge Drive and Gateway Boulevard.

He clarified that he is not against affordable housing, but he advocates for proper zoning and development practices for such housing. He suggested that property assessments in the neighborhood should be revisited in light of the new affordable housing developments. He urged the city to create a more comprehensive plan that better integrates these developments into the community.

Jamie Rousseau, 1602 Hawks Pass, raised similar concerns about the play area, questioning whether it might become more of an adult gathering space. He noted that if residents host guests, they are likely to park on Eagles Ridge, leading to insufficient parking in the lot. This could result in cars lining the road, creating significant issues as it is already difficult to navigate with parked vehicles. His primary concern is parking, especially regarding snow removal; without garages or alternative parking options, managing snow plowing in the lot could become a major problem.

Thomas Munoz, 1608 Hawks Pass, expressed confusion about the decision to place an apartment complex in their neighborhood. He stated his opposition to the construction, fearing it would lead to trash and debris from the complex. He questioned why this particular location in Beloit was chosen for development, noting that he was informed by New Leaf that no one would ever build there, which is why they were charged a high price.

Chairperson Ramsden closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Anderson inquired whether the park space mentioned by residents is managed by the HOA or if it is a City park. Ms. Christensen indicated that it was a City Park. He also asked if the traffic study considered making that intersection controlled. Commissioner Flesch responded that it did not and that it would not meet warrants. Commissioner Anderson further questioned how bus route adjustments are made, specifically regarding usage.

Ms. Christensen explained that there is a bus route in that area, but it's lengthy, which results in low usage. She noted that the City is currently working on updating the transit development plan and exploring micro-transit options, with the Walmart location being considered as a micro-transit hub. This initiative aims to enhance transit services for the neighborhood, and the planning process will begin in the next few months to evaluate adjustments to all city routes.

Commissioner Winkelmann inquired about the water tower, specifically whether it is city-owned property. Ms. Christensen confirmed that a strip of land related to the CSM is being adjusted so that the entire area will be city-owned. He asked if there would be plantings to shield the view of the water tower from nearby homes. Ms. Christensen mentioned that while there are some trees adjacent to the water tower, there isn't much else present. She assured him that the city would require the applicant to install landscaping, but currently, there is no existing greenery in that area.

Commissioner Flesch acknowledged that there could be liability concerns associated with playgrounds not owned by the city, as seen in other developments, and he would encourage proper management of such spaces. He expressed hope that neighbors understand that Gateway was designed as a high-capacity roadway, and the actual increase in traffic is minimal compared to its intended capacity. He noted that it's unfortunate the developers didn't inform homeowners about the zoning when they were building their homes, but he believes the city cannot address that issue. He feels the developers are doing a reasonably good job by not maximizing the potential capacity for that parcel and that, historically, they have managed their properties fairly well.

Commissioner Anderson made a motion to approve the PUD, seconded by Commissioner Flesch.

Commissioner Anderson acknowledged that he doesn't disagree with any of the concerns raised by homeowners, recognizing their validity. He suggested that the city should consider putting up no parking signs along the road, as it seems like a sensible solution. He emphasized that this shouldn't be the final discussion between the neighbors and the developers.

Commissioner Flesch stated that he would like to thank the developer for going the extra mile and getting the traffic analysis done and taking a good hard look at the play areas. Green space is nice but he thinks that they need an amenity or two to play on or around or over something that there is going to be children in the neighborhood that are close by that would like to come play and vice versa.

Commissioner Winkelmann inquired whether the play space is divided or if there are two separate areas. Mr. Day confirmed that it is split into two sections, with a plan for each area that allows for flexibility moving forward. Commissioner Winkelmann then

asked if there is an option for play space on the south side or if that's just the terrain shown on the map. Mr. Day explained that the areas on the southside are for stormwater retention.

Commissioner Winkelmann pointed out that there was parking between the water tower and the play space but no building in that area. Mr. Day clarified that there are trees planted there, and anything shown in green is designated for single-family homes and duplexes. He acknowledged that some residents are correct in saying that there isn't much information available yet, but once a plan is developed, it will go through the proper processes.

Ms. Christensen added that it is likely that whatever is proposed for the remainder of the site will need to be reviewed by Plan Commission. Whether it is a plat or a PUD, it would require Plan Commission review.

Chairperson Ramsden indicated that the same concerns he expressed at the last meeting remain and he has concerns about the proposed play area. He hopes that if the project moves forward, the applicant will pay special attention to improving that aspect. Chairperson Ramsden indicated that there is currently a motion for approval and second on the floor. Motion carried, roll call vote (3-1), with Chairperson Ramsden voting no.

3.b. Consideration of Ordinance No. 3854 amending the Zoning District Map of the City of Beloit for the property located at 3500 Eagles Ridge Drive

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

Chairperson Ramsden opened and closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Flesch made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 3854, seconded by Commissioner Anderson. Motion carried, roll call vote (3-1), with Chairperson Ramsden voting no.

4. REPORTS

4.a. Consideration of a four-lot Certified Survey Map for the properties located at 3500 and 3600 Eagles Ridge Drive

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

Commissioner Winkelmann inquired about who is responsible for the plantings on the city lot, noting that any expansion could affect those plantings. Ms. Christensen replied that the city owns the lot and has implemented some landscaping. Commissioner Winkelmann emphasized that the Plan Commission should receive a clearer

understanding of the intended use for the area, and he stressed that the 80-foot requirement needs to be maintained.

Commissioner Anderson indicated that the 30-foot landscape buffer makes sense, as the proposed project would be houses.

Commissioner Winkelmann expressed concern about reducing the buffer, since the proposed development for this portion of the site has not yet been finalized. Ms. Christensen suggested removing condition 2, which addresses the reduction of the landscape buffer from 80 feet to 30 feet.

Commissioner Winkelmann made a motion for approval with the removal of condition 2, seconded by Chairperson Ramsden. Motion carried, roll call vote (4-0).

4.b. Consideration of a Phase Two Improvements to Turtle Creek Park located at 1312 East Grand Avenue

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

Bill Frisbee, Public Works Director, explained that the upper left section of the map represents the long-term plan for the site. The middle area, highlighted in orange and yellow, is where the existing bathhouse currently stands, which will be demolished. The footprint of the bathhouse will be marked with a concrete border as a commemorative feature to indicate its former location. The city plans to convert the area into a flat grassy play space, and in future phases, they will install poured-in-place rubber surfacing with a playground that will be positioned further east.

During this phase, new restrooms will be built just north of the basketball court. Phase one was completed in 2019, which included the construction of a new pavilion in the upper left corner of the photo. In subsequent phases, the city plans to add a community building—an enclosed shelter that could serve as a three-season or potentially four-season space available for public rentals.

In the bottom right corner of the image, one of the commemorative elements will be unity columns featuring photos of the pool and bathhouse, with an archway marking the entrance to Turtle Creek Swimming Pool. This entrance is where the bathhouse once stood, and the larger photo shows wall sections on the right and upper left. The city will also showcase artwork displaying historical photos of the vibrant events that took place in the park. They aim to honor the past, particularly focusing on the history of segregation in Beloit, as they felt it was important to commemorate this history after deciding to demolish the bathhouse.

Although there was initial hesitancy about tearing it down, the ad hoc committee ultimately agreed it was the right decision, given the costs associated with

rehabilitation and the bathhouse's lack of significance without the pool. The city fully supports the commemorative features and has provided input on the design of the new restrooms, which will be constructed on-site using masonry architectural blocks and topped with metal roofing. This design theme will also be carried through to upcoming projects at Regina Duncan Park, formerly known as Summit Park, and Vernon Park. The restroom interiors will feature upgraded porcelain finishes for a more appealing look.

Chairperson Ramsden inquired whether community members can propose names for specific features of the park. He asked if there is a formal process in place for this. Mr. Frisbee explained that there is a process for naming parks, which includes the Park and Plan Commissions. He added that the city manager is in the process of developing a new naming policy. He clarified that the same procedure would apply for naming specific features within the park as it would for naming the park itself.

Ms. Christensen inquired whether it would be possible to purchase a bench for the park with a name inscribed on it. Mr. Frisbee responded that they can have memorial trees or benches in any of the parks, which come with a plaque that can be inscribed to honor a person or commemorate an event.

Commissioner Winkelmann asked whether there is a bicycle station available. Mr. Frisbee replied that currently, bike racks are located just off the path, and the city refers to this area as a bike oasis or bike maintenance station, which includes an air pump and tools for adjusting seats or handlebars. They also plan to install similar stations along other bike paths throughout the city.

Commissioner Anderson then inquired if the bike path ends at the state line. Mr. Frisbee confirmed that it stops at Broad Street, just east of the park, and then continues down to Shirland Avenue, where it connects to another path. Commissioner Flesch added that the design intends for the path to extend through Turtle Creek Park.

Commissioner Flesch made a motion to approve the Phase Two Improvements to Turtle Creek Park, seconded by Commissioner Winkelmann. Motion carried, voice vote (4-0).

5. STATUS REPORT ON PRIOR PLAN COMMISSION ITEMS

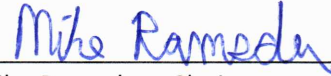
Julie Christensen provided an update on items previously reviewed by the Commission.

6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Julie Christensen outlined the future agenda items. The next meeting is scheduled for October 23, 2024.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Anderson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Winkelmann at 8:28PM. Motion carried, voice vote (4-0).



Mike Ramsden, Chairperson