

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE OAK PARK PLAN COMMISSION
VILLAGE HALL- COUNCIL CHAMBER
January 7, 2016
7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Chair David Mann; Commissioners Jeremy Burton, Mark Gartland, Douglas Gilbert, JoBeth Halpin, Greg Marsey, and Kristin Nordman

EXCUSED: Commissioners Garret Eakin and Monica Sanders

ALSO PRESENT: Craig Failor, Village Planner; Jacob Karaca, Attorney; Bill McKenna, Village Engineer

Applicants: Joe Segobiano, Lincoln Properties; Javier Millan, KLOA

Roll Call

Chair Mann called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Roll was called. A quorum was present.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Gartland moved to approve the minutes from December 3, 2015. Commissioner Gilbert seconded. Chair Mann asked for revisions. Commissioner Gilbert asked for a correction on page four, paragraph 5. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously with the correction.

Commissioner Marsey moved to approve the minutes from December 10, 2015. Commissioner Gartland seconded. Chair Mann asked for revisions. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously as submitted.

Public Hearing(s)

Chair Mann explained that the discussion would be limited to traffic and parking for the Lincoln public hearing tonight and the public hearing would be continued to February 4, 2016.

PC 15-07; Zoning Ordinance Amendment: Amendments to Article 3 (“Zoning District Regulations”), Section 3.9.6 “Madison Street Overlay District” of the Village of Oak Park Zoning Ordinance (“Zoning Ordinance”) by replacing it with “MS Madison Street District Regulations” and amendments to Article 9 (“Definitions”) of the Zoning Ordinance with various definitions. Key changes being proposed are as follows: 1. Merging the Madison Street Overlay District with the underlying zoning – creating one District; 2. B1-B2 General Business District uses will replace C Commercial District regulations; 3. Creation of a Retail Core Zone between Home Avenue and East Avenue allowing only retail uses on the first floor; 4. Allow residential (multi-family & townhomes) uses on first floor outside of Retail Core area; 5. Parking requirements reduced within ½ mile of train/transit stations; and 6. Allow sustainable rooftop accessory uses, such as wind turbines and solar panels. **FINDINGS OF FACT.**

Chair Mann asked for comments or questions for staff. Commissioner Gilbert asked about parking requirements on page 6, staff clarified the parking ratio was listed. Commissioner Marsey asked to delete second hand shops from the pawn shop category. Staff agreed.

Commissioner Marsey moved to approve the Findings of Fact. Commissioner Gilbert seconded. Chair Mann asked for comments on the document page by page. Attorney Karaca corrected the date of publication on page one. A roll call vote was taken:

Marsey – yes
Gilbert – yes
Halpin - yes
Nordman - yes
Gartland - yes
Burton - yes
Mann - yes

The motion passed 7-0.

PC 15-06: Lincoln- OP South Boulevard LLC (325-331 North Harlem Avenue & 100-107 South Maple Avenue) The Applicant seeks approval of a planned development for a mixed use project consisting of 10,000 square feet of first floor commercial space, 263 rental apartments, and 398 parking spaces. The applicant is requesting an allowance to increase the building height from 45 feet as required in Section 3.8.1 A(2) of the Zoning Ordinance to 135 feet (as measured at the highest point of the flat roof), an allowance to reduce open space from 25% as required in Section 3.8.1 C(2) of the Zoning Ordinance to 12%, an allowance to increase density from the allowed 76 dwelling units as regulated in Section 3.8.1 A(1)b of the Zoning Ordinance to 263 dwelling units, and an allowance for setbacks and landscaping along the south-most property line from a required 15 foot setback to zero feet and along the west property line from a required 5 foot setback to zero feet. The Applicant is also requesting the vacation of a portion of Maple Avenue – an area approximately 115 feet by 66 feet. **CONTINUED FROM DECEMBER 3, 2015.**

Mr. Failor noted Village Engineer Bill McKenna was present to answer any questions.

Mr. Joe Segobiano, applicant, said they have met with the village's architectural consultant and will be back to address the architectural changes at the next meeting. He introduced the applicant's traffic consultant.

Mr. Javier Millan, KLOA, was present to review the traffic study. He explained how the traffic counts were conducted and noted the heaviest hours in the report. He noted that Maple Avenue will become a cul-de-sac and the current Maple Avenue at South Boulevard will be shifted slightly to the east and become the access point to the development. He said they were assuming most traffic from Maple Avenue will shift to Marion Street. He said some drivers may shift to Pleasant Avenue or alter their drives before coming into the area to bypass it completely; but they believe most traffic will shift to Marion from Maple. He said they factored in the other major developments in Downtown Oak Park when doing the report. Also, in addition, they added another scenario that Harlem Avenue might be widened and a left turn lane added for South Boulevard, although that scenario was far from certain at this time.

He said based on all the numbers, the traffic would be operating under acceptable levels of service under federal industry guidelines. During evening peak hours, westbound traffic on South Boulevard tends to back up to Maple Avenue, due to thru traffic on Harlem Avenue queuing beyond the intersection. With their analysis, they determined that scenario may increase a bit, but not to unacceptable levels.

The development would provide 398 parking; 250 would be dedicated to the residential portion, which translated to .95 spaces per residential unit. Mr. Millan said due to the proximity to public transit, the parking was consistent with transit-oriented development parking. Their opinion was there will be adequate parking for the development.

Chair Mann asked for questions. Commissioner Gilbert asked for clarification on a chart of intersection ratings on page 28: many intersections would decrease a full rating, for example from B to C. Commissioner Gilbert asked what a reduction in a rating means from a technical and practical standpoint.

Mr. Millan said the grading was similar to school grades with A being the best and D was the minimum acceptable industry standard. The ratings were based on average seconds of delay. He said going down a full grade would mean people would have to wait longer times overall. He noted some drivers might shift to another route, which was difficult to calculate. Commissioner Gilbert asked why the Harlem and South intersection was projected to worsen with the possible Harlem viaduct widening. Mr. Millan said if Harlem was to be widened and a turn allowed onto South Boulevard that would be introducing conflicting movement as well as adding time to the lights, which would add wait time for drivers. However, it was difficult to predict because it could also relieve pressure on northbound Harlem traffic.

Commissioner Gartland asked for clarification on how they incorporated the new developments in their study. Mr. Millan said KLOA did the traffic study for Oak Park Station and found that southbound traffic from that development would travel south on Marion and go west on South Boulevard. They incorporated those traffic numbers into their report. He said they also added traffic from the Lake and Forest development that would be going west on Lake Street and Harlem traffic as well. In addition, they increased existing traffic by 2.5% to account for development they might not be aware of. A short discussion ensued about how traffic studies are conducted. Chair Mann asked about public parking in the two developments and how that would change the traffic. Mr. Millan said they followed the same travel pattern as commuters; the small retail and parking lot would not be a destination like Woodfield Mall. Mr. Millan said they also created trip generations for the retail portion and also for public parking. Chair Mann asked if commuters would be the bulk of the parking, Mr. Millan agreed.

Chair Mann asked about the delay numbers on the table. Mr. Millan said for a signalized intersection, it would take into account the time for a driver to slow down, wait for light change and then accelerate again. For stop sign controls, it's similar but with some additional factors like taking time to look if you can go or not. Mr. Millan said the average would be in the table. Chair Mann noted 30 seconds at a stop sign seemed long. Mr. Millan said that accounted for the time from the back of the queue to the actual turn.

Chair Mann said the intersections rated D were pretty close to failing. Mr. Millan agreed but said it was still within the federal acceptable level. Commissioner Gilbert said it was discussed at the last meeting that there was a bus stop at Harlem northbound but no bus lane and traffic backs up. He asked Mr. Millan to weigh in on a proposed bus lane. Mr. Millan said they did not analyze that because there was not enough room to create a bus lane without hindering the width of the sidewalk and building. Commissioner Gilbert asked for a traffic flow impression. Mr. Millan said he liked to have a bus move over, but then the bus must look over and find a gap to get back into the flow lane; many times the bus has to force itself into traffic to get back in. So it would be good but presented problems, too.

Mr. Bill McKenna, Village Engineer, said the Village has discussed with PACE changes on Harlem near I-290 and having a bus pullout. He said PACE asked not to include a bus pullout near I-290 because of efficiency issues and believes there would be issues with the viaduct being so close and merging back into traffic.

Mr. McKenna reviewed the memo provided earlier to commissioners. He said overall, staff agreed with KLOA's report, but they wanted them to revise some areas due to some factors like pedestrian crossing and bus usage on South Boulevard. Also, they wanted the traffic studied up to Lake Street. He said when they get that updated study he can speak to commissioners on it.

Mr. McKenna said mainly the South and Marion intersection and the Marion and Pleasant intersection will see degradation with the recent developments in the downtown area. He said they have concerns that people waiting to cross Marion at Pleasant may become more aggressive due to the increased wait time. He said they believe KLOA was being conservative in the redistribution of traffic from Maple- staff anticipated people will drive other routes rather than cut through Maple Avenue. Should Maple become an issue, they could do a 4-way stop. He said the Marion and South intersection was more problematic as there was a poor level of service for stop control and concerns it will affect the North and Marion intersection. That was one reason they were asking KLOA for a model of a larger area of the downtown. However, Mr. McKenna said they were not expecting any major changes in the traffic findings with the added revisions.

Chair Mann asked about loading access concerns and the use of alleys. Mr. McKenna said the proposed loading zone was the southeast corner of the building and there was no defined route to how trucks will use it. There were tight loading bays and larger trucks could block alley access; also, the angles of the loading bays were difficult and may shift traffic to the south onto Pleasant. Commissioner Gilbert said the alleys near the development were heavily used and said there would be an impact with more trucks using the alley. Mr. McKenna said it wouldn't change the character of the alley as it was currently heavily used. Commissioner Gilbert noted many pedestrians use the alley to get to the train stations. Mr. McKenna agreed.

Commissioner Gartland asked if the village considered doing its own study on different ways to get traffic flow moving. Mr. McKenna said there has not been a wholesale study of traffic downtown; they have looked at Lake Street and have an intention to do an area-wide traffic study to look at downtown congestion sometime in the future.

Commissioner Marsey asked if people turn left onto South Boulevard from Harlem would that back up traffic. Mr. McKenna said it was not allowed, but an illegal left turn would back up traffic. Commissioner Marsey asked if the Harlem bridge project would occur. Mr. McKenna said currently there was no funding budgeted for it. Commissioner Marsey asked if there was any advantage to consider one-way traffic direction for North or South Boulevard. Mr. McKenna said they would consider this when they do the area-wide traffic study and would model this, but an initial concern would be lack of access to the business area. Commissioner Marsey asked about no left turn allowed onto Harlem from North Boulevard; was that because of queuing space under the bridge. Mr. McKenna said that would degrade traffic on Harlem and as IDOT controls Harlem, most likely they would reject that change without an additional lane. Commissioner Marsey noted as turning left onto South Boulevard from Harlem was prohibited, traffic goes down to Pleasant and it was not signalized. Mr. McKenna said the traffic on Harlem dissuades that naturally, but it does happen. Commissioner Marsey asked if signalizing Pleasant and Harlem would be allowed by IDOT. Mr. McKenna said they'd have to run the traffic numbers to justify it, but he expects there would be pushback from IDOT. Commissioner Marsey asked if there was any reasonable solution on the village's end to mitigate this. Mr. McKenna said there was not an easy solution and a larger traffic study was necessary to model some solutions. Commissioner Marsey asked about adding a dedicated turn lane on South and North Boulevards and reducing the angled parking to do so. Mr. McKenna said he wasn't sure there was enough room without eliminating parking completely on South to add a dedicated lane; also, buses park along the road as well.

Commissioner Marsey said his biggest concern was keeping in check Pleasant and Marion with the crush of pedestrians and increased traffic. Mr. McKenna said staff shared those concerns as well; traffic may distribute from Maple to Marion and Pleasant but if conditions get poor, some drivers would likely find an alternative route and staff would keep an eye on it.

Commissioner Burton asked if the village audited traffic studies or parking projections after the fact. Mr. McKenna said follow up studies would be done if staff was directed to do so. Commissioner Burton

asked if the work KLOA has done in the past has been fairly accurate. Mr. McKenna said they have not done any traffic studies and comparisons to see if work has been validated, however, staff does ensure with each report that the correct methodology was being used. Commissioner Burton said it was a part of the scientific process that data was validated after the fact. Mr. McKenna said that could be a requirement of the applicant.

Chair Mann asked for clarification on the traffic revisions requested from staff. Mr. McKenna said they wanted the traffic study to include the anticipated increased number of pedestrians crossing streets from downtown developments; buses going west on South Boulevard and lost time for cars waiting for buses to clear. He said they didn't expect wholesale changes with those comments added into the traffic study. Chair Mann asked when those revisions would be coming. Mr. Millan said the report was anticipated sometime next week. Chair Mann asked for that for the next Plan Commission meeting. Staff agreed.

A discussion ensued about the Harlem viaduct project and the possibility of that occurring. Mr. McKenna said for IDOT to make Harlem a five lane roadway it would need to acquire property along Harlem and thus, the scenario was unlikely.

Commissioner Marsey asked staff if there was anything that could be changed with the development to help mitigate traffic issues for the downtown. Mr. McKenna replied no; those issues would need to be looked at from a larger scale.

Mr. Segobiano said they have met with PACE regarding the bus stop. He said PACE would either like to keep the stop as is or they offered two alternative scenarios that would require PACE to take substantial property without compensation. Mr. Segobiano said they will continue to meet with PACE and look for alternatives. Commissioner Gilbert said this was a major issue for him as it was a major bus stop and a solution needed to be done before the Plan Commission could pass judgement. Commissioner Halpin said she hoped architects were looking at the west side of the building and the five foot setback, because there was currently no room for the bus stop or for pedestrians to walk.

Chair Mann asked for cross examination on only the information provided tonight.

Mr. Christopher Stoller, a cross examiner, said he'd like to cross examine on the entire development and discuss senior housing. Attorney Karaca explained that only the information presented tonight would be open for cross examination. Mr. Stoller said both the developer and the village would be taken to court for discrimination against seniors in affordable housing.

Chair Mann asked for public testimony.

Mr. Michael Bolt, from PACE, said the current width of the sidewalk was a challenge for this location, and the setbacks came as a surprise to them. He said the stop has 1200 boardings every day for two routes. He noted this would not be a location where a bus turnout would be made to work easily unless a queue jump was put in place (a queue jump gives a bus an advance light signal to make a turn). He said PACE was concerned as buses will need to be ramp-equipped so there needed to be maneuverability when getting off the ramp; if the development was built to the lot line it would be a real challenge. Another issue was replacing bus shelters as those shelters were heavily used.

Commissioner Burton asked about loop rapid transit. Mr. Bolt said the Harlem stop was one of 24 Bus Rapid Transits (BRT) in PACE's long- range plans. BRT boarding stations need 12 feet of space.

Commissioner Marsey noted that the street crossing was controlled and suggested moving the stop north and east. Commissioner Halpin asked for more information on BRT. Mr. Bolt said it was a limited stop route: stations would be raised by 12-14 inches at the curb to provide level boarding; stations would have

a large locator; possibly heated sidewalks so snow would melt; and shelters could have themes. Buses would be more spacious with WIFI plugins.

Commissioner Gilbert said he was astounded the village had not been in communication with PACE regarding this and it could have been put in the redevelopment agreement. He asked if ridership was anticipated to go up due to the developments. Mr. Bolt agreed. Commissioner Gilbert asked if BRT stops decrease the dwell time for loading and unloading. Mr. Bolt said yes, significantly.

Mr. David Enderle, a resident of 200 South Maple Avenue, said common sense prevailed that traffic will get worse with all this development. He asked why with traffic worsening the village would take a public street off the grid. He said it will push traffic onto Harlem and Marion, which was a beautiful street not designed to have heavy traffic flow. He said this was the busiest transit location for the Green Line, but he hasn't heard anything about pedestrian traffic and he wasn't sure people will want to walk in a tunnel. He said commissioners need to review pedestrian access for the development. Also, currently the parking lot was used as a drop off point for people waiting for trains or buses; with no lots where will people go to wait.

Commissioner Gilbert asked about the traffic increase and capacity for Marion Street. Mr. McKenna said from a structural standpoint it was made for such traffic. Chair Mann asked about pedestrian flow and if the South Boulevard street improvements would enhance pedestrian flow. Mr. McKenna said they were planning to add a crosswalk at the intermodal station with pedestrian enhancements. Chair Mann said he would like to see that design incorporated with the development designs. Mr. McKenna said he would provide it for the next meeting.

Commissioner Gilbert asked about the 'kiss and ride' aspect of dropping off and waiting for the trains; would there be accommodation like a loading zone in the development for this. Mr. McKenna said there was angle parking along South Boulevard but no dedicated lane for a loading zone or waiting areas.

Chair Mann explained the hearing would be continued to the next scheduled Plan Commission hearing on February 4, 2016. Commissioner Burton moved to continue the public hearing to February 4, 2016. Commissioner Gilbert seconded. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved unanimously.

Other Business

None.

Adjournment

Commissioner Burton moved to adjourn. Commissioner Marsey seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Angela Schell,
Recording Secretary