Planning & Zoning Board Work Session Minutes

November 28, 2023 at 12:00 PM

Chapman Room
401 S. Park Avenue

Present
Alex Stringfellow, David Bornstein, Melissa Vickers, Warren Lindsey, Vashon Sarkisian, and Jim Fitch.

Absent
Michael Spencer

Staff Present
Planning Consultant Jeff Briggs, Senior Planner/Zoning Official John Harbilas, Planner II Nicholas Lewis, Planner I Corinna Lundgren, and Recording Secretary Mary Bush.

1. Meeting Called to Order

Chairman David Bronstein called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m.

2. Discussion Item (s)

a. Discussion of Community Meetings

Mr. Briggs provided the Board with a brief update of the Planning & Zoning Board's previous hearing item for the Metro Winter Park, LLC request regarding Patmos Chapel, which is currently being heard by the City Commission. He noted that the City Commission tabled the item at their November 8, 2023 regular meeting until their regular meeting scheduled for December 13, 2023, to give the applicant an opportunity to make various changes that were discussed at the November meeting. He then indicated that the Metro Winter Park, LLC request prompted the community meetings discussion for the work session. He noted that staff encourages applicants to have community meetings but cannot require them to do so. He added that sometimes the meetings are productive, and sometimes they are not with regard to public turnout. Mr. Briggs then discussed some examples of public turnout at previous community meetings held by applicants. He expressed that when staff attends the meetings, they are observers and are not able to discuss the staff's knowledge and opinion of the application. He noted that sometimes the applicants do not care what the public says until it affects the Board's or staff's viewpoints. He then provided an example of this.

The Board expressed that the public feels excluded from the discussion and decision on the requests. They noted that if an applicant makes an attempt to present their project to the neighborhood prior to their hearing, the public may feel more comfortable with the process and project. The Board indicated that community meetings provide outreach to the public, so the public can have an opportunity to learn about the project and express their opinions or concerns. The Board then inquired about the possibility of staff providing a written report detailing their recommendation for the request to be given out at the community meetings. The Board expressed that the pros outweigh the cons of having community meetings, especially since the public will then be better able to formulate their inquiries at the public hearing. Brief discussion ensued and Mr. Harbilas provided some examples of how community meetings are conducted in Orange County. The Board inquired about the logistics of having a community meeting for the South of Fairbanks Avenue (SOFA) district project. The Board indicated that they would like to have community meetings for any controversial applications that would need them.

Discussion continued, and the Board inquired about any previous application approvals made by the current City Commission that had been granted without the support of the community. The Board briefly discussed mailing out a letter to the public that would include the plans and information on the proposed project and information regarding where to send comments on it. The Board asked if there could be a recommendation from the staff to the applicant during the application process that a community meeting be held and some type of written confirmation that the meeting did or did not occur. The Board added that if a community meeting had not occurred, then the applicant would have to provide justification as to why it did not occur. The Board then inquired about whether they could require applicants to have community meetings or not and, if so, what the criteria and timeline for the requirement would be. A brief discussion ensued regarding the Board's desired criteria for requiring community meetings. The discussion included a suggestion of basing the community meeting requirement on staff's recommendation for denial or when the conditions for approval would cause substantial changes to the application proposal. Mr. Briggs noted that the community meeting could be added to the staff report under the condition of approval. He indicated that staff would compile more information and recommendations on community meetings for the Board to discuss further at a later meeting.

b. Update on future agenda matters

Mr. Briggs provided the Board with a brief summary of the development agreement for Fairbanks Avenue and Denning Drive. He noted that a driver wanting to turn left onto Denning Drive is not able to do so when traveling down Fairbanks Avenue toward I-4. He indicated that a left-hand turn lane is needed there to keep the flow of traffic moving, which would require some dedication of land in the area owned by the Holler family. He then indicated that the area around MLK Park near Morse Boulevard suffers from flooding issues and needs additional retention, which could be obtained from the use of a vacant property at the corner of Comstock Avenue and Denning Drive also owned by the Holler family. He went on to explain that the relationship between the City and the Holler family has greatly improved, and the Hollers are open to working with the City to donate land for the turn lane on Fairbanks Avenue and the vacant property for the City to create a stormwater retention area. He further explained that in return, the Hollers no longer want to be a part of the Orange Avenue Overlay (OAO) and want to return to C-3 zoning with no variances. He added that the Hollers would commit to not building parking garages on their properties, and they want credits for the Transportation Impact Fees. He also noted that the Hollers wanted the City to vacate 50 feet of Holt Avenue, so they would get 25 feet and Rollins College would get the other 25 feet. A brief discussion then ensued about the type of stormwater system to be used on the vacant property, what the Hollers plan to do with their truck lot, and how to reasonably keep the east-west connections to the retailers in the area surrounding Holt Avenue. Discussion continued on the possibility of developing more attached or detached residential buildings in the area, creating a gateway feature for both ends of Fairbanks Avenue within the City, the plans for the northwest corner of Fairbanks, and if some of the proposed retention on the Hollers' vacant property can be created as park space.

Mr. Briggs then provided the Board with an update on the items for the next regular Planning & Zoning Board meeting scheduled for December 5, 2023. He noted that one lakefront item and one item for Rollins College would be presented. He explained that Rollins College would like to have upscale housing for their students, so they plan to redevelop their old Holt hall with a 300 bed dormitory to get more students to be active on campus. He then discussed brief details of the proposed dormitory buildings, including the architecture of the buildings.

3. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

ATTEST:

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/s/ Mary Bush, Recording Secretary