

**MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
JANUARY 18, 2018, 7:30 P.M.**

Secretary Stimson called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. on January 18, 2018.

Commissioners Present: Brickner, Countegan, Fleischhacker, McRae, Mantey, Stimson

Commissioners Absent: Orr, Rae-O'Donnell, Schwartz

Others Present: City Planner Stec, Staff Engineer Kennedy, City Attorney Schultz,
Planning Consultant Arroyo

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Fleischhacker, support by Brickner, to approve the agenda as published.

MOTION carried unanimously.

REGULAR MEETING

A. PUD PLAN 3, 2017 INCLUDING SITE AND LANDSCAPE PLAN 71-12-2017

LOCATION: 32600 Northwestern Hwy.
PARCEL I.D.: 22-23-02-126-003, 011, 025
PROPOSAL: New self-storage building and senior living facility in B-2,
Community Business District and B-3, General Business District
ACTION REQUESTED: Set for Public Hearing
APPLICANT: NorthPoint Development
OWNER: NWH Holdings LLC

Utilizing overhead slides and referring to his review letter of December 18, 2017, Planning Consultant Arroyo gave the background and review for this application for PUD qualification, site plan, and landscape plan approval. The action requested this evening was to set the request for public hearing.

Most of the site proposed to be include in the PUD was zoned B-2. The portion that extended southward toward Northwestern Highway was zoned B-3. Two of the parcels were currently vacant, while the third hosted a large vacant commercial building.

Master Plan designation called for the majority of this property to be multiple-family residential. The Northwestern frontage use was primarily designated for non-center-type business.

There were existing structures not only on the subject site but also on Northwestern Highway frontage properties that were proposed to be removed as part of this application.

This property received preliminary PUD qualification on December 14, 2017. Tonight's meeting was to review the proposal in more detail, especially regarding what would be heard at the public hearing.

Issues for discussion included:

- When the property came before the Commission for preliminary qualification it had a specific boundary that included a new road connection, but what was actually submitted for this evening was not consistent with that. Now half of the road was not within the PUD boundary.
- Both proposed uses – a senior living center (Stonecrest) and a self-storage building (Beyond Self Storage) were proposed for the B-2 portion of the site. Neither of the uses was permitted in a B-2 or B-3 District.
- This area was a focus area in the Master Plan, designated as *14 Mile Road and Northwestern Highway Area (no.2)*. As such there were specific goals and supporting policies, some of which were met by this proposal. Others, however, were not, including:
 - Disallow vehicular access to 14 Mile Road
 - Require that redevelopment include a significant portion of the Northwestern frontage
 - Provide visual buffering to the residential areas north of 14 Mile Road
 - Consider residential use of the 14 Mile Road frontage as buffer
 - Encourage LEED Certification and Best Management Practices for control of storm water quality and quantity
- Based on the review of the plans as submitted, the applicant was seeking to vary the following standards:
 - Building height (for Stonecrest only): 40 feet required; 50 feet proposed. However, it appeared that height had not been measured correctly, and the building might not be as tall as 50 feet. Correct calculations needed to be given.
 - East setback to residential district: 75 feet required; 64 feet proposed.
 - West setback to commercial district: 20 feet required; 10 feet proposed.
 - Front setback: 75 feet required; 25 feet proposed.
 - Parking for Stonecrest: 74 spaces required; 54 spaces proposed.
- The senior living facility was residential in appearance; the self-storage building appeared more industrial, with flat rooflines and a commercial façade, although some attempts had been made to soften that.
- There was no specific parking requirement for self-storage facilities, and all loading and unloading would be handled inside the building. One space was provided for every 63 storage units. The cul-de-sac turnaround was partially in the front yard, and screening this such that it was not obtrusive and headlights did not shine into traffic on 14 Mile Road would be important, if the configuration were allowed.
- The access road from Northwestern Highway might also serve later B-3 development at Northwestern Highway and thus provide a cut-through to 14 Mile Road; this could significantly impact traffic on 14 Mile Road. A traffic study was recommended by the Engineering Department.
- Engineering would also like to see an access management plan for the properties to the east and west of the access drive on Northwestern Highway.
- The trash enclosure by the self-storage building was very visible from 14 Mile Road. There was also a landmark tree in that general area proposed to be removed. Site modification including shifting the dumpster to the rear yard might allow the tree to be saved, and also give a more appealing view from 14 Mile Road.
- More information was needed regarding rooftop appurtenances on the self-storage building – would there be any, and would they be shielded per ordinance?
- More information was needed regarding lighting to ensure ordinance standards were being met.
- Regarding landscaping and tree preservation issues, there were regulated trees on the site that were not on the survey, particularly closer to Northwestern Highway. Also, non-irrigated grass was proposed for along Northwestern Highway. This was a perfect location for landscaping and the

establishment of an entry feature, which should be addressed within a PUD agreement.

- Per Section 34-5.15.1.1, a 6-foot obscuring wall was required between all B districts and residential districts. When separated by a major or secondary thoroughfare, a greenbelt might be substituted for the wall.
 - The Commission should discuss whether the screening of the parking and turnaround for the self-storage building was adequate, given that the side yard in which those facilities were located was highly visible.
 - The Commission should discuss the front yard parking of Stonecrest, and whether any screening was necessary along the sidewalk in order to prevent headlights from shining toward the intersection of Heather Heath Lane and 14 Mile Road.
 - A 6-foot wall was required adjacent to the RC-2 property to the east.
 - Planting and maintaining hedges at 30 inches along the sidewalk in the front yard of Stonecrest would improve sight distances; it might also be possible to pull those hedges further from the sidewalk.

Noting that a revised landscape plan needed to be submitted, Planning Consultant Arroyo concluded his review.

Commissioner Brickner commented that if the old ATT building was being demolished, the applicants could use some of the additional space to spread out a little more and meet setback requirements.

Planning Consultant Arroyo said the applicants were purchasing a portion of the building only; the entire building was not available to them.

Secretary Stimson invited the applicants to make their presentation.

Jed Momot, Project Manager, Northpoint Development, 230 S Berniston, Ste 500, Clayton MO 63105 was present on behalf of this application. Mark Pomerence, Northpoint Development, 4825 NW 41st St, Ste 500, Riverside MO 64150 and other members of the development team were also present.

Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Momot pointed out the portion of the site they were purchasing. The property line would split right down the center of the old AT&T building.

Mr. Momot explained the project in detail, including renderings and views of the proposed buildings and of other facilities at other locations, such as the Stonecrest facility in Troy MI. As already described, two buildings and two uses were proposed: Stonecrest Senior Living and Beyond Self Storage. Calculated correctly, Stonecrest would only need a 2-3 feet deviation allowance for height, and this was needed in order for the roof to have its residential appearance.

Mr. Momot noted that they had held neighborhood meetings on November 21 and January 3.

Mr. Momot showed the PUD boundaries. In addition to the actual PUD property, the applicants were preparing to improve land to the south, in an area entitled *limits of construction*. This included the demolition of the entire AT&T building and a building along Northwestern Highway. They would install utility infrastructure and grade the area to the south, and put in the road off Northwestern Highway, even though that land was not part of the PUD proposal.

Mr. Momot pointed out that at the preliminary PUD qualification, it was determined they met 6 of the 8 qualifications for a PUD; only one was necessary in order to be considered for qualification.

Regarding access to the site, access off of 14 Mile Road for Stonecrest was strongly desired. This project was very residential in nature. Having access from Northwestern Highway gave circulation for emergency vehicles; this also tied in with the goal of the Master Plan.

Regarding setbacks, Mr. Momot noted that the recent 14 Mile reconstruction had taken some of the original property, thus putting some limits the site's developability, and creating the need for setback deviation. They felt the setback between Stonecrest and the neighboring multi-family development was appropriate, and that a greenspace instead of a 6-foot masonry wall on the east would also be appropriate. The setbacks for the self-storage unit were similar to other self-storage projects recently developed in the City.

The minimum distance to a residential neighbor was about 150 feet, and most of the neighbors were 200 to 250 feet away from the proposed projects. There was substantial distance across 14 Mile Road. Based on the consultant's review, they were considering creating a berm with heavy greenscape along 14 Mile Road.

The proposed uses were low-traffic, and met the Master Plan goal of a transitional use between the businesses on Northwestern Highway and the residences to the north.

A photometric plan had been provided. No rooftop equipment would be placed on the self-storage building.

Mr. Momot showed perspectives and renderings of the proposed buildings from various vantage points. Regarding Stonecrest, the road actually sat higher than the property, so while it was a 3-story building, it would have the appearance of 2-1/2 stories. They were using colors for the self-storage building to blend in as much as possible, and the current configuration reflected neighbors' comments regarding signage placement and landscaping.

Regarding parking, they met ITE (Institute of Traffic Engineers) standards for senior living, and felt that 54 spaces were adequate for the Stonecrest facility.

Mr. Momot described exterior materials for both projects, and noted that they were high-quality and attractive projects.

Commissioner Fleischhacker commented that the upper window above the entrance door to the senior living facility gave the building the appearance of 4 stories. Also, while the applicants were comparing this facility to what they had done in Troy, Troy was a 2-story facility, and this building at 3 stories was not the same.

Mr. Momot spoke to the height of the Stonecrest building, and offered to change the roof slopes and use a thoughtful placement of windows to lower the building somewhat.

In response to a question from Secretary Stimson, Mr. Momot said the storage facility units would not have any individual exterior access.

Mr. Momot pointed out some of the unique things they were doing to soften the exterior appearance of the self-storage building, including a living wall (trellis with vines), and careful color selection along with upgraded exterior materials, etc.

Commissioner Brickner asked about placing the dumpster enclosure in some other location than along 14 Mile Road. Mr. Momot said they had some options to hide the enclosure from view. They were considering shifting the building and the driveway so none of the parking and dumpster enclosure would be in the front yard of the self-storage building.

Commissioner McRae asked how the applicants would keep the access drive from acting as a cut-through from 14 Mile to Northwestern Highway, and vice versa.

Mr. Momot said they would try to limit traffic through the senior living space through the use of stop signs, speed bumps, sharp turns, etc.

Commissioner Fleischhacker was concerned that while the 2 proposed uses were low-impact, opening up the access drive to B-3 businesses from the south would change the access drive from low-impact to significant impact.

Mr. Momot said their comments related specifically to the uses they were developing. However, they did not have control over anything to the south of their parcel. Again, development to the south would have access to the road but this would be limited by the means already discussed.

In response to questions from Commissioner Countegan, Mr. Momot summarized the work that would be done on the parcel that was not a part of the PUD proposal: demolition of all old pavement, old buildings, grading, construction of the access road, and installing utilities and infrastructure, so that the parcel to the south would be development-ready.

Commissioner Countegan said that a good portion of what made the future redevelopment attractive was outside the scope of the PUD boundaries. How could the City be assured that what the applicant was describing would happen?

City Planner Stec suggested moving the curb cut on 14 Mile Road to the west, to lessen the impact on residents to the north. Mr. Momot said the curb cut had to be as far right (east) as possible to avoid conflict with the Northwestern Highway intersection.

Commissioner McRae said the applicants should not assume that the properties to the south would automatically have access to the proposed road. He was not willing to make that assumption without knowing what was being developed there.

Mr. Momot said that future development to the south would have to stand on its own merits, with its own traffic study.

Secretary Stimson reiterated that the access road as shown would provide a cut-through, and people would use that.

Discussion followed. Commissioner Mantey suggested installing a gate. Commissioner Fleischhacker felt the access road and other improvements to the south benefited the current owner much more than it did the City. Regarding setbacks, the applicants knew what the property looked like before they considered purchasing it. The current owner had limited the amount of land to be sold, and this was creating the need for setback deviation – a self-created situation.

Commissioner Countegan asked how improvements to the south could be considered a benefit of this PUD. The Commission was concerned about controlled access to Northwestern via 14 Mile Road. Too much was unknown about future development in the area. Making promises about development outside the PUD would be a tough sell.

Commissioner Mantey was concerned about PUD qualification *Objective vii.*, which required fostering the aesthetic appearance of the city through quality building design and site development, the provision of trees and landscaping beyond minimum requirements, the preservation of unique and/or historic sites or structures, and the provision of open space or other desirable features of a site beyond minimum requirements. The applicants were saying they met this objective because they had an attractive design, but there was much more to that standard than an attractive building.

Objective v. was also now in question – as the furthering of public health, safety, etc., was being done by an improvement not actually within the PUD boundaries.

Commissioner Brickner asked if the roadway could be restricted so there was no access from the south; doing so would alleviate at least some concerns. Planning Consultant Arroyo said the PUD could prohibit access, and if someone wanted access at a later date they would have to come back and amend the PUD to get that. Another option might be to create a break in the roadway, so that only senior living traffic could access 14 Mile Road, and the self-storage facility could only be accessed from Northwestern Highway.

Commissioner Brickner was concerned about the Stonecrest parking lot facing the condos to the east. Headlights from cars parked there would have to be blocked by something taller than a low hedge; that was why a masonry wall was required.

Commissioner McRae asked why the applicants couldn't negotiate purchasing another 50 feet to the south, to alleviate setback deficiencies. This configuration felt self-imposed.

Mr. Pomeranke spoke to the real estate transaction process, and the applicants' problem-solving approach. They were not retail developers, and the current owner felt he needed the space to the south for retail development. They would provide the City any needed legal assurances.

Regarding the road, the access to 14 Mile Road was not contemplated as being a shared access. The shared access was along the back of their property to the south, so that potential southern retail uses could use the road for their services also, but not have access to 14 Mile. They could make access to 14 Mile Road very difficult via the means already described.

Commissioner McRae said he was not comfortable moving ahead with this proposal, based on the shared access from Northwestern to 14 Mile Road, and the fact that it felt like the site was being overbuilt. He did not feel this proposal was ready for a public hearing.

In response to a question from Commissioner Countegan, Planning Consultant Arroyo said the access drive was an internal connecting drive and would not be built to public road standards.

Commissioner Countegan said that in terms of the longer vision of the Master Plan, the Commission would need to see more about proposed development to the south and whether the entire development would be an attractive PUD, given the configuration proposed.

Planning Consultant Arroyo said the access from Northwestern Highway to 14 Mile Road would require a traffic impact study, if the traffic using the access would be more than senior living.

Commissioner Mantey said that more objective information was needed regarding why so much land to the south could not be part of the PUD proposal.

City Planner Stec noted that the property owner to the south would need to be brought in as part of this PUD proposal, in order for the access from Northwestern Highway to be included.

Mr. Pomeranke said the Northwestern Highway access was part of their current contract.

City Planner Stec pointed out that when business was developed to the south, dumpsters, service, loading and unloading, etc., would likely be in the rear of those businesses and could end up abutting the rear of the subject site. The applicants could end up with the back end of a building facing their development center.

Mr. Momot explained it would actually be a back-to-back configuration. Mr. Pomeranke added that they were comfortable with the southern parcel being developed within the limits of the B-3 zoning district.

Commissioner Fleischhacker asked if the current owner was under the assumption he would have access to the interior road. Mr. Pomeranke said future businesses would have access to the road on the southern border, but not access to 14 Mile Road. Commissioner Fleischhacker did not see how access to 14 Mile Road could be prevented.

In response to further questions from Commissioner Brickner, Mr. Pomeranke pointed out that they would have easement rights to the portion of the road not under their control. City Attorney Schultz said that a PUD was flexible and could be used for offsite improvements; whether or not that was a good idea in this case was a policy question.

Secretary Stimson asked the Commission how they wanted to proceed. Should action be postponed?

Commissioner Countegan said if the plan was not going to change, there was no reason to delay a public hearing. City Planner Stec further noted that if changes were made to the plan, they would have to be almost immediately submitted in order to be heard in February. Commissioner Fleischhacker was concerned that the applicants did not have the Commission on board with this proposal, and it was premature to take it to a public hearing. He felt changes should be made and brought back to the Commission, and then a public hearing set after that.

Secretary Stimson asked the applicants what kind of feedback they had received from their neighborhood meetings. Mr. Momot said they had received a wide range of feedback, from people liking the project but wanting changes, to others not liking it at all. Specific things called out included rooflines of the self-storage unit, quantity of parking, services provided, etc.

Mr. Pomeranke asked for a summary of outstanding issues. Commissioner McRae said one big concern was separating the connection so that the senior living facility would have access from 14 Mile Road, and the self-storage building would only have access from Northwestern Highway.

Commissioner Stimson suggested having 2 entrances on 14 Mile Road in a U-configuration, without a connection to properties to the south. Without the southern road, setbacks could be pushed back. Both of

the uses, as already stated, would generate minimal use. While having 2 curb cuts on 14 Mile Road was not ideal, it was better than creating a cut-through to Northwestern Highway.

Commissioner Countegan agreed with having 2 curb cuts on 14 Mile Road, rather than having a cut-through to Northwestern Highway. He would also like to see a greater amount of property included, along with time frames in terms of what was going to be demolished and what redevelopment was going to occur.

Mr. Pomeranke summarized the issues as the cut-through access, timeline on the building and demolition plan, setbacks, more greenbelt, dumpster location, front yard parking, reduce the perception of height.

Commissioner Fleischhacker said the renderings showed the development 30 years from now. What would it look like when it first was built? How high was the berm, for instance? Would there be trees on top of it? For the public hearing, the renderings should show the appearance when the development was first built.

Mr. Momot added that renderings could show the berm, the dip, and the reduced height of the Stonecrest facility.

Commissioner McRae asked the applicants' reaction to putting 2 curb cuts in a U-configuration off Northwestern Highway. Mr. Pomeranke spoke to the difficulty of adding curb cuts to 14 Mile Road in terms of visibility lines and safety. They were more likely to further restrict the drive so it furthered the idea that this was not a cut-through.

Secretary Stimson commented that until he was satisfied the access road would not be a cut-through, he would not be in favor of this PUD.

After brief discussion regarding process, Mr. Pomeranke said they would be comfortable with postponing setting the application for public hearing in order to get more feedback from the Commission.

MOTION by Fleischhacker, support by McRae, that the request for Public Hearing for P.U.D. Plan No. 3, 2017 be postponed to date uncertain to allow the applicant to address issues raised this evening and return to the Commission with revised plans prior to a public hearing.

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Consideration of date for 2018 Goals Setting meeting

By consensus, the goal setting session was set for March 8, 2018.

C. Appointment of Planning Commission Liaison to The Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority

Commissioner Brickner indicated he would accept the appointment as Planning Commission Liaison to the Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority.

MOTION Countegan, support by McRae, that Commissioner Brickner be appointed as the Planning Commission Liaison to the Grand River Corridor Improvement Authority.

Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

November 9, 2017 and December 14, 2017

MOTION by Fleischhacker, support by McRae, to approve the November 9, 2017 and December 14, 2017 minutes as presented.

Motion carried 8-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Noting that this was Commissioner Fleischhacker's last meeting, the Commissioners individually thanked Commissioner Fleischhacker for his 26-year service to the Planning Commission.

ADJOURNMENT

Seeing that there was no further comment, Secretary Stimson adjourned the meeting at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Steven Stimson
Planning Commission Secretary

/cem