

Spartanburg City Planning Commission Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, April 23, 2020  
ZOOM Meeting Minutes

The City Planning Commission met via ZOOM on Thursday, April 23, 2020, at 5:30 P.M. The following City Planning Commissioners attended this meeting: Jared Wilson, Howard Kinard, Dr. Phillip Stone, and Reed Cunningham were present. Mike Epps was absent. Representing the Planning Department were Natalia Rosario, AICP, Planner III; and Julie Roland, Administrative Assistant.

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***Roll Call***

Mr. Wilson, the Chair, stated that notice of this meeting was posted and provided to the media 24 hours in advance as required by the Freedom of Information Act.

Mr. Wilson noted that four Planning Commissioners of the current five member Board were present, constituting a quorum; and he went over the rules and procedures for conducting a public hearing.

Dr. Stone moved approval of the Agenda for tonight's meeting; and he was seconded by Mr. Cunningham. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

**Disposition of Minutes from the February 20, 2020 Meeting:**

Dr. Stone moved approval as submitted of the February 20, 2020 Meeting Minutes; and he was seconded by Mr. Cunningham. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

Old Business: None.

**Rezoning Request TMS#7-12-08-028.00; 029.00; & 030.00; located at 638 & 644 E. Main Street & 129 N. Fairview Avenue, zoned LOD, Limited Office District to R-6 PDD, Residential Infill Planned Development District to enable the construction of a condominium development upon the property. Applicant and Developer Tom Croft, The Croft Company, on behalf of Omnific Spartanburg, LLC, Owner and Partner.**

Ms. Rosario, Senior Planner was sworn; and she submitted the meeting packets the Board Members had previously received via email, as well as tonight's presentation and slides, into evidence as Exhibit A. She said this was the first proposal coming before the Planning Commissioners regarding the infill PDD Text Amendment that they all had worked very hard on and had recommended it to Mayor and City Council for approval; and Council had approved the Text Amendment on March 30, 2020. Ms. Rosario said this parcel was actually three parcels right now, two that faced East Main Street, and the other that faced North Fairview Avenue. Ms. Rosario referenced a slide of Google Earth and said there were two structures on the properties that faced East Main Street; and they were residential structures. They had been vacant and were currently condemned; and she explained the City had been working with the property owner for about the last year in order to try and come up with a good idea that would work for the site to bring it back to use, and also that would either maintain the existing character with the existing houses or have a very similar use on it. Ms. Rosario said this was one of the projects that actually spurred them to take a look at the PDD ordinance to try to find a way to make those one- to three-acre sites work. She said right now it was just three large houses that were not in shape to be inhabited, but the old PDD would not have allowed any useful, productive use of these properties. So this proposal was to take the total 1.11 acres of the site and rezone it to LOD PDD. Right now they were zoned LOD, which allowed for one unit for every 2000 feet, or 2000 square feet. These lots combined were around 33,000 square feet; so the maximum number of units they could get in would be sixteen. Ms. Rosario said they were only proposing nine units she believed, in eight structures, or eight units in seven structures; and she would bring that up in a minute. She said primarily, these were single-family, with the exception of the duplex, which was built as a duplex in order to maintain an existing alleyway that was accessed by both

this site and the two commercial properties to the side. The alley ran behind this property and was in current use, and it was being maintained.

Ms. Rosario said these would be for sale; and the Owner/Developer could speak to this in better detail; but she said starting around \$250 per square foot. She mentioned the shared alleyway access that would actually be improved, widened at least through this site, not all the way, but at least the entrance to it would be improved to maintain. Ms. Rosario said they had a neighborhood meeting with the same people who were notified about this meeting, property owners within 500 feet. They only had three attendees she believed; and Staff answered a few questions about the buffering, the nature of the use, and prices. She said they had received one communication from a nearby resident and owner of the condos immediately north of the property, from Miss Fran Bagwell, which she read to the Planning Commissioners. Ms. Rosario said Miss Bagwell wanted additional information about the buffering. Ms. Rosario said as of right now, the buffering plan was still in a preliminary phase, so it was not showing very much on what she pulled up on the screen; but the issue was that the existing fence at Converse Place was not completed, and it was broken up in a couple of spaces by existing trees. She said Miss Bagwell's question was what kind of buffering would be done. Ms. Rosario said there was a gap in the fence, there were trees in the way that may need to be cut down before a privacy fence was added. Ms. Rosario said Mr. Croft did respond to Miss Bagwell, and they were going to be working together with Roland Management, who managed Converse Place, to make sure that whatever buffer goes in; which there certainly had to be one; and both parties would desire one. So they were going to work together and make sure that whatever buffer was in place worked for them with mature landscaping, and some form of fence. It might take the place of the existing fence, which was an older one. It may add to it and elongate it. She said the developer would build it in conjunction with the desires of the folks at Converse Place.

Ms. Rosario referenced the site plan and said there was seven single-family houses and one duplex with two units, which would also be for sale. The rest of the site would be the common area. She referenced the survey; and said they could see a little bit more of the details on that. She said the front setback was at 15 feet; the side setbacks were at 5 feet on the north, northwest, northeast; and ten feet to the rear; which did meet the building code. She said it was a pretty similar situation as to what you found in Converse Heights, and Converse Place had around five to seven feet away from their property line as well. She said the only other thing was that the other buildings that were adjacent to this property were actually pushed further back into the lot. So the footprint would essentially remain the same as the buildings that were there today, in terms of how they held up the street, but they were not exactly in line with some of those that were pushed further back; however she said the Urban Code and their Urban Design Guidelines that the DRB followed downtown encourage residential properties being as close to the street and having as much of a positive presence as possible. She said she would be happy to answer any questions from the Planning Commissioners now if they liked.

#### Planning Commission Questions for Staff:

- Mr. Cunningham said he assumed the internal parking reference was a single-car garage on the ground floor.
- Ms. Rosario said she was not sure whether it was single-car; but it was a garage on the ground floor to the interior of the site.
- Mr. Danny Balon, on behalf of Seamon Whiteside spoke and said they were actually two-car garages; and there would be 18 parking spaces in the nine units; and then there would be four parallel spaces in the common area.
- Ms. Rosario said so each unit would have its own parking, and then there would be an additional couple of spaces for visitors.
- Mr. Cunningham asked if they had a plan view of the East Main frontage, or an artist's conception of what the façade would look like on East Main.
- Ms. Rosario said they did not have that yet; and the Developer was still working on the specific

architectural drawings for this site, because they wanted them to match as much as possible what they saw across the street in the Converse Heights Neighborhood; and they had to be custom drawn and would also be custom-built to the desire of the buyer, to a certain extent. She shared some slides of some of the other projects the developer had worked on that were good examples for the Planning Commissioners to look at that were done in different areas in Greenville, S.C. Ms. Rosario showed some slides that were along East McBee Street in Greenville that was a similar project to what was envisioned for this particular corner. She said they were pretty sizeable houses in a more compact site, but very urban, and designed to appeal to the pedestrian, located close to the downtown. She thought part of the appeal for the proposed site was its similarities to some of the other successful projects the developer had done in and around Greenville. She also showed slides of Riverplace Flats that were located at 121 Rhett Street in Greenville. Ms. Rosario said they would not be done in brick because brick did not make sense in every case; but they could expect similar designs and styles.

- Mr. Wilson asked what the average range was regarding the size of the units.
- Ms. Rosario said she thought around 2500 square feet; and someone from the Development Team could correct her if she was wrong.

Mr. Tom Croft, said he was the Developer for the project and he was from Greenville, S.C.; and he had been developing throughout South Carolina, mostly residential projects, since 1980; and for the last 20 years he had been focused mainly in downtown Greenville with infill projects. He had done a total of seven projects in downtown Greenville over the last 20 years. He felt there were a lot of similarities in Greenville and Spartanburg from the desire of the design and architecture of the homes. He said typically, they would range from about 2500 up to 3200 square feet. He explained in one of the Greenville projects they had done, that because of the small footprint of the building itself they had found as they had pre-sold the units and people wanted additional space, they had either had them fill in living space above the garage or actually finish it. He said most of those were two and a half stories. He said they would finish the third floor to give them additional heated space. So a typical 2800 square foot house might end up actually being 3300 to 3500 square feet when they added the space. Mr. Croft said they could not go out with the footprint, so they had to go up or either fill in unconditioned space like above a garage in order to capture the additional square footage. He said through the presale program, most people would come in and that most of the changes they would make were on the finishes on the interior. He said when they talk about a price range, it was really hard to say. If they were to build those as a spec product they would probably be roughly \$250 a square foot. However; his experience had been when people bought before they were built and had the opportunity to make selections for the interior, it could exceed \$300 a square foot by the time they were through. Mr. Croft said they were very excited about this opportunity; and they thought it was a great location for a product like this. They were excited about getting started as soon as they could and he would be happy to answer any questions.

#### Planning Commission Questions for Developer:

- Mr. Cunningham asked so these would be in the \$600,000 to \$900,000 dollar range.
- Mr. Croft said that was correct; and he explained when they had started McBee Park in Greenville several years ago they thought they would average from \$550,000 to \$600,000; and they had a couple end up in that range; but based on what the buyers wanted as far as finishing interiors and adding additional square footage, heated space within the footprint; most of them exceeded \$900,000.00. He said they did not envision these as being spec homes. Mr. Croft said the developer would control the exterior architecture; and they would give the buyer choices on several brick or siding colors and exterior trim colors. He said they would not stray from what their architectural design was and once that final design was completed, they would share that with the City before they started marketing that product, just to get any input that might be helpful.

Mr. Wilson asked did any of the Planning Commissioners have any more questions for the applicant. There were no other questions at this time. Mr. Wilson asked Ms. Rosario to proceed with Staff's presentation.

Ms. Rosario said Staff recommended approval of the rezoning from LOD to LOD PDD. She said the

storm water would be underground, which she had previously failed to mention; and there would be a storm water plan. She would be happy to circulate the addendums as they came in and they would make that a condition of approval before it went to Council if they so choose. She explained if the Planning Commissioners recommended the request favorably to Council there would be another public hearing and First Reading of Ordinance on May 11<sup>th</sup>; and then if approved the Second Final Reading would be held because of the holiday on May 26<sup>th</sup>.

Planning Commission Questions for Staff:

- Dr. Stone asked Ms. Rosario if there was any particular reason for the LOD PDD instead of an R-6 or R-8 PDD.
- Ms. Rosario said not other than LOD PDD automatically gave a 2000 square foot; so there was not any need to transition to another residential zone that would give an even higher density.
- Mr. Wilson said to be clear, the application summary on the departmental memo did say R6 PDD.
- Ms. Rosario apologized and said it was her mistake. That it was LOD PDD.

Mr. Wilson asked were there anymore questions from the Commissioners.

There being no more questions; Mr. Wilson opened the public hearing and asked if there was anyone who wished to speak in favor, or in opposition to the request to please address the Planning Commission.

Dr. Stone explained if there was anyone that wished to speak; there was a hand indicator by which they would be able to see if someone had any comments. No one addressed the Planning Commissioners.

Mr. Wilson closed the public hearing portion and said they would move to Planning Commission Deliberation.

Planning Commission Deliberation:

Dr. Stone felt this was the kind of project they had thought about when they recommended the Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance be passed to allow for PDDs in these type infill sites. He also felt it looked to be a pretty good project, even though it was not part of the urban core, Downtown District that would be reviewed by the DRB, it looked like it met a lot of things they would like about it. Dr. Stone liked the way it addressed the street, that it was not setback terribly far from either of the streets. He said if these sold for over \$600,000 each, they would have added well north of \$5,000,000 of assessed property value to the City tax rolls and activate a corner that had not had a good use. He felt it was also always a good thing they did not have a bunch of angry neighbors complaining about the project..

Mr. Wilson agreed with Dr. Stone; and said the homes that were currently there were terrible eyesores; so this would be a vast improvement to this prominent corner.

Mr. Cunningham agreed. He said to him it looked like they would have to remove all the mature trees on the properties to get the density they wished for; and he was assuming they would have to meet the requirement regarding planting certain caliper trees.

Ms. Rosario said that was correct; and because this was an infill project the developer was aware that the buffering and landscaping needed to come in colloquially beefier than on a normal project. She said the plantings would be more mature than what you would normally see, which was a two-inch caliper, maybe 12 to 14 feet for canopy trees. She said these would be far stronger, and she would not be surprised if when they came back with the plantings, there ended up being more there than there were before.

Mr. Cunningham said at that price range there certainly should be an attractive vista on the main thoroughfare; and he said he should have asked that question of the developers, earlier regarding the ones that fronted East Main Street and would it be typical that they try to pre-sale three of them and then begin construction of all of them at one time or build them as they sold them.

Mr. Croft explained the process to the Planning Commissioners. He said landscaping had always been a top priority with him as far as making sure they used mature, sustainable material that fit in well with the neighborhood and try to make it look like it had been there a long time as opposed to just putting something in the ground to meet a code.

Mr. Wilson, the Chair asked if there were any other comments from the Planning Commissioners. Mr. Kinard felt it was a good project from a very reputable developer, which he had no qualms with. He wondered about the alley that cut through, regarding whether it would remain open.

Mr. Wilson said it would.

Mr. Kinard said it was a public alley, so those businesses and houses back there would have the right to drive through that part of the project; which he thought the developer understood.

Ms. Rosario said they knew; and it had been part of what had driven this site design because it did have to be maintained for their access.

Mr. Croft said he would like to make a comment regarding the alley. He said it was his understanding that the easement that exists was a 10-foot easement; and he thought it was kind of over-used from the standpoint of people that drove through there from time to time. He said their intention was to keep it at 10' and hopefully make it more of a pedestrian access as opposed to vehicular; and he felt by keeping it at 10', they would comply with what existed now.

Ms. Rosario said that was the case. It was not exactly a right-of-way, but that open kind of no man's land, the alleyway was only designated at 10' as most of them were in the City. She said some of them were not maintained, and others were basically just swallowed up in to the adjacent properties.

Mr. Wilson moved to approve the request favorably as recommended by Staff; and he was seconded by Dr. Stone. The motion was approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

**Site and Landscape Plans approved since the February 20, 2020 Meeting. (For Information)**

- Judicial Center Siting and Grading Plan – 180 Magnolia & accompanying area. Ms. Rosario said this meant the Judicial Center siting and grading plan for the entire site had been completed, and the locations of the buildings had been determined. The parking garage had gone through design review, and had been approved, and was part of the site. She explained additional buildings, which of course was the main Judicial Center were still in design; and they probably had another year, maybe six months in design before they would go before the DRB.
- Ms. Rosario also informed them that the former Bon Haven site, which they had approved for a Residential PDD for a multi-family complex, should start breaking ground very soon.

**City Council Updates (FYI) since the last Planning Commission Meeting on February 20, 2020.**

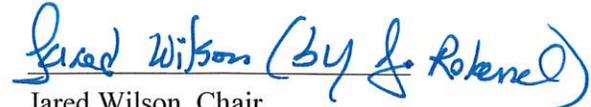
Mrs. Rosario went over the updates that were listed on the Agenda.

**Staff Announcements:**

- Ms. Rosario said there were two current Planning Commission vacant positions on the Board; and she thought the Mayor and Council would look at those either the end of June or in July.
- Ms. Rosario said Dr. Stone's first term would be up on June 30, 2020 and if he wished to be considered for re-appointment he could fill out a new form and send it in for consideration.
- Ms. Rosario said Mrs. Roland had sent an email to all the Commissioners regarding the on-line Continued Education Training available by the ACOG; and it was very inexpensive; which the City would pay for.

- Ms. Rosario said the City Manager had emailed something to them earlier today regarding a virtual meeting with the Comp Plan consultants regarding some available dates and times they could sit down and speak to them as a one-on-one regarding any thoughts they had. Ms. Rosario encouraged them all to respond to that so that each individual Planning Commissioner could be heard.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:09 P.M.

  
Jared Wilson, Chair