

Rock Island Planning Commission Minutes

Council Chambers (3rd Floor), City Hall

1528 3rd Avenue

August 2, 2023

5:30 PM



Voting Members

Present

Mike Creger
Bruce Harding
Norm Moline
Ted Johnson
Maureen Riggs
Sarah Wright
Reshanda Johnson

Voting Members

Absent

David Parker

Staff Present

Tanner Osing
Eunice Amisshah-Mensah

Guests

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Creger called the meeting to order at 5:34 PM and read the roll call.

Public Comment

There were no members of the public who wished to comment.

Approval of the Agenda

T. Johnson moved to approve the agenda for August 2, 2023. Riggs seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a vote of 7 to 0.

Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes

T. Johnson moved to approve the minutes for June 7, 2023. Wright seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a vote of 5 to 0.

Old Business

None

New Business

2023-06 Public Hearing: David VanDerGinst of Route Six Equity Growth Corporation – Consider an amendment to a Special Use Permit to operate a dough manufacturing facility on the first floor of the former Aqualetic Swim Club building at 3204 27th Avenue in an R-1 (one unit residential) district.

Osing presented the staff report.

He noted that at present, the Special Use Permit granted to Route Six Equity Growth Corporation allows for four (4) individual dwelling units on the property. The applicant now proposes to add a dough manufacturing facility on the lower level of the old swim club building. The dough made at the facility will be pizza dough that will be used by local Happy Joe's restaurants. One (1) delivery is proposed to be made from the facility every day. An amendment to the Special Use Permit is required because dough manufacturing is not a permitted use in an R-1 zoning district.

He noted that staff believes the proposal does not meet the seven conditions for approving a special use permit identified in the zoning ordinance and that staff recommend that the Planning Commission pass a recommendation to the City Council that the request be denied.

Chair Creger called for David VanDerGinst, the applicant.

David VanDerGinst made his case clarifying that he would have a maximum of two employees work at the property at a time and would only exceed that maximum by one person during shift changes. He also noted they would be making only dough and not producing the finished pizza product at the location. He also noted that a van will deliver the products necessary for making the dough. Lastly, he shared additional comments regarding improvements he has made to the property.

Chair Creger asked if there were any questions from the Commissioners regarding the request.

Wright asked the applicant about the other residences at the location and if there might be an issue with noise. The applicant responded that he had three (3) apartments above the former swim club and they are about 300 feet from any other residences in the neighborhood.

Moline asked what would be done in the facility to prepare dough and what kind of equipment would be needed to meet health safety. VanDerGinst explained the equipment they have meets the requirements and that there have already been conversations with health officials to provide a three compartment sink and other basics.

Moline noted that there are rarely requests for manufacturing, of any type, in residential zoning districts and that this proposed use would be a rare exception if approved. VanDerGinst noted that manufacturing does not seem like the right word to use and the proposed use would not be detrimental to the neighborhood. He also noted the property was a business before and that it is far away from other residences.

Creger asked if semi-trucks would be used to get the goods into the building. VanDerGinst responded that vans would be used to deliver dry goods and deliveries would happen once a week at most.

As there were no further questions from the commission for the applicant, the Chair called for interested parties.

Dino Milani stepped forward to probe the applicant. Milani asked if the applicant explored different places to produce the dough. VanDerGinst responded that he has explored other options, but nothing came to fruition. Milani also asked the question regarding traffic and access to the site. VanDerGinst noted that they have already improved the access road and parking surface and will continue to maintain it.

Milani further questioned if the applicant had any intentions of discontinuing the use after a certain amount of time. VanDerGinst noted that there is no timeframe in mind. Milani additionally asked the applicant about water use. VanDerGinst noted that there are currently no issues and that for each 50 pound bag of flour approximately 2.5 gallons are used for the dough.

Rob Steeber, an interested party, also stepped forward to ask questions of the applicant. Steeber clarified that if there would be a delivery for raw goods in addition to transporting the pizza dough to and from the property. The applicant responded affirmatively.

Steeber also asked if the applicant could clean up the area near the entrance on to 32nd Street to help with visibility. VanDerGinst responded that it would be cleaned up.

T. Johnson asked Steeber if he lived in the neighborhood when Aqualetic was in operation. Steeber responded affirmatively.

Reshanda Johnson stepped forward to ask questions of the applicant. R. Johnson asked if traffic would increase if business for Happy Joe's increased. The applicant noted he does not foresee that trend, but there would be the same number of employees on the property regardless of increased business.

R. Johnson questioned if there would be emissions from production. VanDerGinst responded that there would be no emissions.

R. Johnson also asked if there is the potential for waste runoff. VanDerGinst responded negatively. He noted that material waste may be accommodated by a larger dumpster.

Chair Creger clarified how the applicant would handle trash pickup. VanDerGinst noted trash may be picked up more often or a larger dumpster may be used.

Ellen Tsagaris spoke against the request. She noted that the neighborhood is not set-up for manufacturing as it is residential. Tsagaris also provided concerns over a ditch flooding due to the business use.

As there were no other questions or members of the public wishing to speak, Chair Creger closed the public hearing.

T. Johnson noted that dough making operations tend to be low-impact and that rezoning to commercial would not be appropriate.

Moline voiced concerns over a business or manufacturing use being in the middle of a residential neighborhood and that it may set a precedent for other low-impact uses being approved. He noted that he believes the property will come to be seen as a business site even if its approved under a Special Use Permit.

Riggs noted that the Special Use Permit process seems to be appropriate given the unique circumstances of a property. She further noted that the property being dedicated to solely a residential use seems unlikely.

Wright mentioned concerns over the compatibility with residences on the property.

Chair Creger called for a motion.

Recommendation for Case 2023-06

T. Johnson moved to recommend the approval of the Special Use Permit for operating a dough manufacturing facility on the first floor of the former Aqualetic Swim Club building at 3204 27th Avenue with the stipulation that there should be no semi-truck traffic. Riggs seconded the motion.

Chair Creger called for a vote. The motion carried on a vote of 5 to 1 (Yes: T. Johnson, Riggs, Harding, Wright, Creger and No: Moline).

2023-07 Public Hearing: Barry Reuther – Consider a Special Use Permit to operate a produce stand business from the garage on the property at 2963 9th Street in an R-2 (one-to-two unit residential) district.

Osing presented the staff report.

He noted that historically, the property was part of the Dingeldein Gardens and used for commercial purposes that included greenhouses and a sales garage that sold produce and flowers. The applicant desires to re-establish the sales garage to sell pumpkins, flowers, crafts, sweet corn, and other produce. The hours for the produce stand business are proposed to be from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Sunday, with a maximum of one (1) employee who is the property owner. The Special Use Permit is required because the zoning code does not allow a produce stand business as a permitted use in an R-2 district.

He noted that staff recommend the Planning Commission pass recommendation that the City Council approve the request with stipulations because the proposed use meets the seven conditions for approving a Special Use Permit identified in Section 6.5 (G) of the Zoning Ordinance.

Chair Creger called for the applicant, Barry Reuther.

Barry Reuther stated that he wants to restore the property to its former state and use and that he has received positive responses from the neighbors and the Dingeldein family.

Wright asked where Reuther would be sourcing produce. Reuther responded that he is still figuring that out but he will be looking to get the produce from local suppliers.

Chair Creger asked about the parking lot being paved. The applicant responded he will ensure it is up to code.

Chair Creger also asked about the times and seasons of operations. The applicant responded he is still figuring out the different times of the year that the stand would be open, but would like have it open near holiday times.

Riggs asked the applicant if he will be painting the garage. Reuther responded affirmatively.

As there were no other questions or members of the public wishing to speak, Chair Creger closed the public hearing and called for a motion.

Recommendation for Case 2023-07

Moline made a motion to recommend approval of the Special Use Permit with the recommended stipulations. Wright seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a vote of 7 to 0.

Other Business

Osing introduced the new Urban Planner, Eunice Amissah-Mensah

Discussion on the consolidation of Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals

Osing outlined the proposal regarding commission consolidation.

Wright asked if there would be any additional responsibilities that the commission would handle. Osing responded that the proposed commission would assume the responsibilities of both groups with no changes.

Moline asked about other similar cities and if there are any trends regarding consolidation. Osing responded that it is a mix for cities of that size and mentioned other communities that have their commissions combined.

Moline also questioned how often cases come up that require action by the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals. Osing noted two recent cases regarding Special Use Permits and a separation requirement for bars that required two public hearings.

Moline noted that he spoke to a planner from another community who mentioned that it's important to have commissioners that are well-trained, especially on variance requests that are more detailed. He asked Osing if he believed there would be an issue with getting people to join the new commission. Osing noted that he did not foresee any issues with getting a good number of applicants.

Moline asked if it would be necessary to have two separate meetings since both bodies have different decision making authority. Osing responded that there would only be one meeting.

Chair Creger asked a question regarding terms of appointment. Osing noted that term limits are being proposed so consistency is achieved with other commissions in the Community & Economic Development.

Wright asked about the process for the proposed change. Osing responded that staff want to have conversations with both the Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals before taking it to City Council.

Moline noted that he believes the more people that can be involved in commissions the better. He also stated that he believes there are different skillsets required for a Planning Commissioner versus a Board of Zoning Appeals member. Lastly, Moline noted that it would be important to explicitly include the Commission's responsibilities as they relate to the Comprehensive Plan.

Riggs spoke favorably of the City of Moline's process regarding variances. She also concurred with Moline's point that there are different skillsets required, but she believes that an easier process would be beneficial to residents and developers. Riggs also noted that keeping two bodies may get more people involved, but there also may be difficulties with getting people to fill the spots.

Chair Creger mentioned concerns over getting enough people to devote time to serving on the commission. Osing concurred that getting applicants for commissions is sometimes an issue.

T. Johnson and Harding spoke on the importance of seeking commission members that have complementary skillsets.

Wright noted that she sees the argument for keeping the bodies separate in terms of more opportunities for residents to be active in local governance, but also noted that consolidation would benefit applicant needing multiple zoning approvals.

Moline clarified the next steps for consolidation. Osing replied that staff would like to include comments from the commissioners in a memo that will go to the City Council. He also welcomed Planning Commissioners to attend the Board of Zoning Appeals meeting. Moline noted that it would be good to have continued discussion on the proposal.

Adjournment

Chair Creger asked for a motion to adjourn. T. Johnson made a motion to adjourn. Harding seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a vote of 7 to 0, and the meeting adjourned.

Minutes submitted by Eunice Amisah-Mensah and Tanner Osing.

DRAFT