



APPROVED

**MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 2014
CITY OF ROCK ISLAND, ILLINOIS**

The Rock Island Planning Commission held its regularly scheduled meeting in the City Hall Council Chambers at 1528 – 3rd Avenue, Rock Island, Illinois. The meeting was called to order by Chairman David Levin at 5:30 PM. Present were Commissioners Michael Creger, Andrew Dasso, Ted Johnson, David Levin, Jason Lopez, Norman Moline, Kevin Nolan, Lorian Swanson and Berlinda Tyler-Jamison. Commissioners Bruce Harding and Bruce Peterson were absent. Also in attendance were Alan Fries and Ben Griffith.

AN ORDER APPROVING THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 7, 2014 MEETING

The Commission considered the matter of approval of the minutes of the May 7, 2014 meeting. After a brief discussion, Commissioner Creger made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Commissioner Lopez seconded the motion and the Commissioners unanimously approved said minutes.

APPROVAL OF THE WRITTEN AGENDA

The Commission considered the matter of approval of the written agenda. After a brief discussion, Commissioner Tyler-Jamison made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Lopez seconded the motion and the Commissioners unanimously approved the agenda.

BI-ANNUAL ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chairman Levin opened the floor for nominations for Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Commissioner Tyler-Jamison nominated Norm Moline for Chairman and Michael Creger for Vice-Chairman. Commissioner Swanson nominated David Levin for Chairman and Michael Creger for Vice-Chairman. Commissioner Lopez nominated Bruce Peterson for Chairman and Michael Creger for Vice-Chairman. After a brief discussion, Chairman Levin asked for a vote by show of hands in favor of David Levin and then Bruce Peterson for Chairman. Mr. Levin received 7 votes and Mr. Peterson received 1 vote. After further discussion, Chairman Levin asked for a vote by show of hands in favor of Michael Creger and Bruce Peterson. Mr. Creger received 5 votes and Mr. Peterson received 3 votes. Chairman Levin announced that he had been re-elected Chairman and that Michael Creger had been elected as Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission.

PROCEDURAL EXPLANATION

Chairman Levin provided a brief explanation of the public hearing procedures for the benefit of the Planning Commissioners and those in attendance.

PUBLIC HEARING #2014-04: REQUEST FROM THE ROCK ISLAND CONGREGATION OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESS REQUEST FOR A REZONING FROM I-2 (GENERAL INDUSTRIAL) DISTRICT TO B-4 (HIGHWAY BUSINESS) DISTRICT AT APPROXIMATELY 7830 CENTENNIAL EXPRESSWAY

Next there came before the Planning Commission a public hearing: a request for a rezoning by the Jehovah's Witness from I-2 to B-4 at 7830 Centennial Expressway. Chairman Levin asked Mr. Fries to present the request. Mr. Fries approached the podium and provided a brief overview of the request and staff report. Chairman Levin asked the Commissioners if they had any questions for Mr. Fries and there were none.

Chairman Levin then asked the applicant to step forward to address the Planning Commission. Mr. Jens Friedrichsen of 1428 Olde Freeport Place in Bettendorf, approached the podium. He stated that the church's current location on 9th Street serves three congregations. He said they needed a larger building for meetings, additional parking and would like more visibility so they are easy to find. Mr. Friedrichsen stated that they have members from west and central Rock Island and other outlying areas and members included speakers of Spanish, Swahili and Karin. He stated that the proposed site would easily accommodate a larger building, larger parking lot and drainage. He stated the site was highly visible and there were high-voltage power lines that would provide additional buffering since no buildings could be built under them and the closest buildings would be over 200 feet away. He added that their building would be a single-story structure that could be easily converted for other uses in the future and that the site would be nicely landscaped and include two monument signs. Mr. Friedrichsen concluded by stating that their members meet mostly evenings and weekends, usually Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 7:00 PM to 8:45 PM.

Commissioner Tyler-Jamison asked why the site was so attractive and where they would relocate if the rezoning were not approved. Mr. Friedrichsen answered that most of the sites they looked at were hilly, posing parking and drainage problems and that they desired the visibility on the corner. He said they had looked at other locations along Andalusia Road in Rock Island and Milan, but traffic safety was a concern.

Commissioner Nolan asked if they had purchased the property. Mr. Friedrichsen answered that the sale was contingent on the rezoning. Commissioner Nolan thanked him for considering staying in Rock Island and stated that he had lived on 9th Street as a kid and knew many members over the years. He stated that he had talked to the Hass brothers who owned the corner to the east of the site and they were in favor of the rezoning, welcoming them to a site that had been vacant for a number of years. He went on to state that he was in favor even though it was not Industrial but B-4 could be compatible, that the church could move anywhere and keeping it in Rock Island was definitely noted.

Commissioner Lopez asked about signage, stating his concerns about the possible temptation to use temporary banner signs at a highly visible corner to attract visitors, which are prohibited by the City's Sign Ordinance. Mr. Friedrichsen referred to the photos in the staff report which showed a monument sign and the conceptual site plan showing the proposed locations at the intersection and at the entry off 79th Avenue. He added that their signs are not internally lit, nor do they have a message board, such as time and temperature.

Commissioner Tyler-Jamison asked what they intended to do with the 9th Street location. Mr. Friedrichsen replied that it was for sale and would be up to the buyer to decide how it would be used. He said that the way their buildings are designed, they can easily be converted into other uses, such as offices, a clinic, a day care or classrooms. Commissioner Tyler-Jamison asked Mr. Fries if the 9th Street property was zoned commercial and he replied that it was not.

Commissioner Creger stated that even though adjacent properties had not been developed in 25-30 years, the church could become surrounded by industrial uses. He asked if the church would have any objections to these uses. Mr. Friedrichsen said that they had made it very clear to the congregation and they were prepared for whatever may come. Commissioner Creger commented that he had a customer located close to the Kingdom Hall in Moline and that he had been impressed with how fast it went up.

Commissioner Dasso asked Mr. Fries about the property zoned B-4 to the southwest of the site. Mr. Fries stated that it had been zoned I-2, but in 2004, it was rezoned to B-4 to allow for truck sales but it did not happen and was not rezoned to industrial.

Commissioner Johnson asked Mr. Fries how the location of a church would affect adult uses since they were only allowed in industrially-zoned areas. Mr. Fries answered that he was correct and that the use required a 1,000-foot separation, but that the subject property and the parcel to the southwest zoned B-4 were both outside of the 1,000-foot radius.

Chairman Levin asked if anyone else in the audience wished to speak, either for or against the rezoning request and seeing none, closed the public hearing and asked the Commissioners for their comments.

Commissioner Swanson stated that she did not think the site was the most appropriate fit and that churches are usually a destination, so they could be located anywhere and not on a high-traffic corner because people would seek it out.

Chairman Levin stated that he would play devil's advocate and stated that his family owns property near Seaberg Industries and decided to keep it and it has sat vacant for nearly 50 years. He stated that his family built three warehouses in the area in the 1970's and that very little had changed in the area, and this in a major industrial. He concluded by stating that heavy truck traffic and other industrial uses would not interfere with the church's hours during nights and weekends.

Commissioner Moline stated that he was in agreement with the City's recommendation, that they had just completed a long process to adopt a future land use plan and that plan showed the

intersection of Centennial Expressway and Andalusia Road as industrial uses. He stated that he would hate to see it taken out so quickly after just adopting the new plan.

Commissioner Tyler-Jamison agreed with Commissioner Moline, stating that she struggled with her decision and felt that it was stepping outside the plan.

Commissioner Nolan asked the other Commissioners if they would be comfortable if the church left Rock Island because the last time he had checked, there was not a lot happening in this part of Rock Island that wasn't financed with City funds and that he had not seen a lot of private investment throughout the City in a very long time until recently. He stated that he would like to see a long-time institution that wanted to invest in the City to stay in the City and that the neighbors were welcoming to them. Commissioner Nolan stated that even though the property would be taken off the tax rolls, it would be better to have the corner developed than to sit vacant for another 40 years. He concluded by stating that it would not be good to have a long-time church leave the City and this is why he was supporting the rezoning request.

Commissioner Tyler-Jamison asked if it would not be reasonable to assume that if they did not get this property rezoned that they would look elsewhere and stay in Rock Island.

Commissioner Dasso speculated that they've probably been looking for a long time and they know best what suits their needs. He said he supported the request because it would bring people to the area when traffic is slow and that the area could use such activity in the evening.

Chairman Levin stated the Teamsters Hall down the street is looking to downsize and that they're using their facility for bingo, adding that this would not be the only non-industrial use in the area.

Commissioner Moline referred to the 1983 Southwest Area Comprehensive Plan and the 2000 Southwest Rock Island Plan which also designated all four corners of this intersection as industrial uses and that they should all be kept on the tax rolls for the long-haul and used for such purposes, no matter how long it might take.

Commissioner Johnson stated that these corner properties have sat vacant for 40 years and have obviously not appealed to any commercial or industrial developers so nobody must be interested.

Commissioner Moline stated that he would tend to agree with that statement, but that other land was available and that the Commission shouldn't base their decision on the actions of the past and reminded everyone that they had just gone through a long-range planning process and things will eventually happen.

Commissioner Nolan stated that he respected everyone's comments and opinions on the matter, but as much as he wanted to be an optimist, faith and hope don't work in the development world. He stated that there is a willing seller with an offer on the table by a group that is willing to spend money in Rock Island. Commissioner Nolan stated that 9th Street had changed in 40-plus years and the church wants to invest in Rock Island, adding that he was not happy about spending \$20 million

for a police station for a shrinking city, but that he would have to go against the City's recommendation.

Chairman Levin asked if anyone would care to make a motion. Commissioner Nolan then made a motion to recommend approval of the rezoning to the City Council. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion and it was approved by the Planning Commission 6—3, with Commissioners Moline, Swanson and Tyler-Jamison opposed.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Griffith stated that the Planning Office had received a public hearing request for a rezoning for the July meeting, adding that the deadline for non-advertised items was not until the following week. He stated that Planning staff was arranging some training for elected and appointed officials involved in planning, zoning and other land use decisions and would be forwarding a memo with some potential training dates.

Mr. Griffith reminded the Commissioners of their need to complete their Open Meetings Act training as required by the State of Illinois, and to forward their certificates of completion to him. He concluded by asking the Commissioners to be mindful of any *ex parte* communications and to contact the Planning Office with any questions regarding any items on upcoming agendas.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no other business, Chairman Levin asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Nolan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:13 PM. Commissioner Lopez seconded the motion. The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Commission is Wednesday, July 2, 2014 at 5:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Griffith". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ben Griffith, AICP