

MINUTES OF THE
ROCK ISLAND CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting September 7, 2010 5:15 P.M.

(x) Mike Creger	(x) Jason Lopez	(x) Bruce Peterson
(x) Ed Hanna	(x) Tim Meegan	(x) Lorian Swanson
(x) Ted Johnson	(x) Norm Moline	() Berlinda Tyler-Jamison
(x) David Levin	(x) Diane Oestreich	

Staff Present: Alan Carmen, Alan Fries and Doris Quigley

Chairman Levin called the meeting to order at 5:20 p.m.

Procedural Explanation: Chairman Levin explained the procedures for conducting the public hearing.

Approval of Minutes: Approval of Minutes of the regular meeting of August 3, 2010. Commissioner Oestreich moved to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Meegan seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Case #2010-7- Request for approval for Riverfront Corridor Overlay District site plan review in a B-3 (community business) district for 2408 4th Avenue.

Alan Fries presented the staff report.

Mandus Group/Spirit Partners has filed an application for a Riverfront Corridor Overlay District site plan review for a building expansion at 2408 4th Avenue. The applicant proposes to expand the existing consulting service office building by constructing an approximate 7,385-square foot warehouse and light-assembly area addition and a 45-space parking lot to the east and south of the existing office structure.

The property measures 302' x 156' x 237' x 42' x 65' x 114' (approximately 43,686 square feet). The site consists of the existing Mandus Group/Spirit Partners office building and development site. To the north is the proposed Jackson Square residential development, zoned PUD; to the east and south are commercial and industrial uses, zoned B-3; to the west is a vacant site undergoing environmental remediation, zoned B-3.

Board of Zoning Appeals Case #2008-03 - Request for temporary use for parking on a gravel surface was approved. The Comprehensive Plan identifies the general commercial land use for the site.

The site has access to 4th Avenue and 25th Street. The site plan identifies a new access point off 4th Avenue and a second access point off 25th Street. The site is flat and slightly above street level.

The proposed addition will meet the building setbacks for the B-3 zoning district (which is 20-foot front yard and ten-foot rear yard). The site plan identifies a 108-foot east front yard and a 55.5-foot north front yard setback. The south rear yard will be in line with the south façade of the existing office building, which has a 45.5-foot rear yard setback. The entire structure (existing and new addition) will cover approximately 34 percent of the site.

The Zoning Ordinance requires one space for every 250-square feet of office area and two spaces per 1,000-square feet of warehouse area. The building floor plan identifies approximately 2,600-square feet of office floor area, which would require ten parking spaces and approximately 8,740-square feet of warehouse/shop space, which would require nine parking spaces. Total parking requirements for the use is 19 spaces. The site plan identifies parking for 45 vehicles.

The site is served by an eight-inch diameter water line on 4th Avenue (there is also a force main along 24th Street from the water intake facility to the north of the site). Sanitary sewer service is located along combination lines along 4th Avenue and 25th Street. Storm water detention areas have not yet been identified. The location and specific calculations to meet the City's Stormwater Ordinance will need to be provided to the Public Works Department.

The site plan identifies several “islands” where canopy trees and other landscaping will be located. Four Red Maple canopy trees will be located along 4th Avenue and three Red Maple trees will be located along 25th Street. Two additional Red Maple trees will be located along the south perimeter of the parking lot. Additional bush plantings are also identified in these island areas.

The proposed development will be the first phase of two-phase development on the city block. Phase One investment is estimated at \$950,000. The second phase of the entire development includes the purchase and renovation of the Rock Island Register Company structure to the south for additional space for the applicant and a portion available for lease to other businesses. Short term investment in Phase Two (next five years) is estimated at \$300,000, however, this investment could increase significantly if tenant space is occupied. Assuming a build-out cost of \$100 per square foot, at full development the Phase Two investment could approach \$2.5 to \$3 million. The Phase One project is expected to create 30 jobs and the Phase Two project is also expected to create 30 jobs.

The site will have adequate parking for the existing office area and the proposed expanded uses. Access is adequate and there are enough canopy trees to meet the Ordinance landscape requirement. Due to the narrowness of the parking area there is not adequate room to provide a ten foot wide landscape edge, but the island area concept is adequate. Staff believes that the site plan meets the standards of the Riverfront Corridor Overlay District in terms of property size, compatibility, site planning, open space, and traffic.

Staff recommends approval of the final Riverfront Corridor Overlay Site Plan because the proposed expansion of the structure and parking area are attractive, functional and well planned design for the proposed office/warehouse/light-assembly development that will have adequate access, parking and landscaping that meets the standards for the Riverfront Corridor Overlay District.

Chairman Levin asked for questions from the Commissioners for Mr. Fries.

Commissioner Peterson asked if the aerial view showed an overlap between the subject site and the site to the south.

Mr. Fries replied that the appearance of an overlap was caused by the projection of the lot lines in the map and that there is no overlap on the sites.

As there were no other questions for Mr. Fries, Chairman Levin invited the applicant to come forward.

Mark Miller, Bracke-Hayes-Miller-Mahon Architects , 1465 41st Street, Moline, addressed the Commission. He stated that the stormwater plans had been submitted and approved. There will be about 475 lineal feet of underground storm pipe due to the lack of surface area to accommodate a water retention area.

Chairman Levin asked for questions from the Commissioners for the applicant.

Commissioner Oestreich asked about the need for the larger number of parking spaces, and commented that it is not usual to have all the same variety of trees on the site due to the possibility of disease destroying all of them at one time. She also stated that the miscanthus sinensis grass plants are considered to be invasive.

Mr. Miller replied that the Phase I addition would add 30 new employees and the parking would be for them and that the Zoning Ordinance sets minimum standards. He commented that the red maple trees were very hardy in this area and chosen for their appearance. The ornamental grass will be grown in the restrictive confines of the islands and it will be difficult for the plant to spread from that environment as they spread by runners.

Commissioner Peterson asked about the siding material for the new addition, commenting on the attractive appearance of the existing building.

Mr. Miller said that the new addition would be a pre-engineered building, sided with a metal flat panel siding in a tan palette. He also said that the use of a single-sloped roof, the appearance would not be that of a normal pre-fab building.

Commissioner Moline asked if this site improvement would benefit from the improvement of 25th Street.

Mr. Miller said that the street improvement would be a welcome upgrade.

Mr. Carmen added that there will be Tax Increment Funding money for this purpose and that 25th Street would be on the 2011 Capital Improvements Plan.

As there were no additional questions for the applicant and no others in the audience waiting to speak, Chairman Levin opened the floor for discussion by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Moline moved that the request be approved as recommended by staff. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion.

Chairman Levin called for the motion and it passed on a unanimous vote.

The recommendation will be presented to City Council on Monday, September 13, 2010 at 6:45 p.m.

Review of Elsberg Second Addition, two-lot subdivision with variances at 3700 11th Street.

Alan Fries presented the staff report.

The Elsberg Second Addition Final Plat is a two-lot minor subdivision located at 3700, 3704 and 3708 11th Street, zoned B-4 (highway business) district. Currently, there is a commercial structure located on the site. The property owner, Christine Elsberg, desires to subdivide the site so the rear commercial space, 3708 11th Street, occupied by the Illinois – Iowa Independent Living Center, will be located on a separate lot that can be sold to that organization for its potential future expansion. This lot split will require two variances since there will be a “zero lot line” in the rear yard of proposed Lot One and the front yard of proposed Lot Two (B-4 zoning requires a 20-foot front yard setback and a ten-foot rear yard setback).

Proposed Lot One will have an area of 11,033 square feet and a lot width of 91.01 feet. Ms. Elsberg’s insurance office and a second commercial space will be located on this lot. There are also parking spaces located on this lot that will have a 53’ parking and access cross-easement agreements with the new owners of proposed Lot Two.

Proposed Lot Two will have an area of 33,234 square feet and will have a 20.01’ “flag” access to 11th Street. There will be parking, access and a sign easement within the flag area of this lot. The proposed lot has additional parking and room for future expansion to the west (rear) of the lot.

Although there are two variances being requested, the subdivision will allow for the future separate ownership and expansion of an existing office space. The City Engineer has approved the final plat with some minor technical changes

Staff recommends the final plat be approved with the requested variances and subject to minor technical revisions required by the City Engineer because it will allow for separate ownership and expansion of an existing office and provide adequate parking and access for both lots through access and parking cross-easements.

Chairman Levin asked for questions from the Commissioners for Mr. Fries.

Commissioner Oestreich asked for clarification on the new lot lines as shown on the drawing. Specifically, what the dotted lines represent.

Mr. Fries replied that the dotted lines show the utility easement for the site.

Commissioner Creger asked what the tenant business was and if ownership of property would have an effect of their tax status.

Mr. Carmen replied that the Independent Learning Center is a services/support provider for people with disabilities. Their tax status might be impacted by the ownership of property, and they could apply for property-tax exempt status if they so choose.

Commissioner Peterson asked if a PUD would be a better choice for this property.

Mr. Fries replied that separate ownership is desired and that is why the lot is being subdivided. Also, a PUD needs to be at least 60,000 square-feet and this property does not meet that requirement.

As there were no additional questions for staff and no others in the audience to speak, Chairman Levin asked for discussion by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Johnson moved that the request be approved as recommended by staff. Commissioner Meegan seconded the motion.

Chairman Levin called for the motion and it passed on a unanimous vote.

The recommendation will be presented to City Council on Monday, September 13, 2010 at 6:45 p.m.

Other Business:

Discussion was held on the fact that churches are closing or moving due to high property maintenance costs and aging congregations. Their old abandoned buildings are falling into disrepair, and are not easily sold. It was also mentioned that some churches are moving out of their old buildings into vacant commercial spaces. If a building has building code violations, the City Inspections Department can take action, citing the owner for the violations and requiring the owner to either repair or remove the violations as well as pay fines for the time the property is in disrepair. The City could also support redevelopment of these unique buildings if they were converted into commercial or residential uses that were not of a religious nature and depending where they were located.

Other conversation revolved around the Spirit Partners area, and other buildings and sites in that area that have a long history of disrepair and blighted appearance, and how the Spirit Partners expansion can be utilized to spearhead additional improvements. Commissioner Moline cited specific properties, asking about the status of redevelopment or code enforcement.

The issue of temporary signage was also discussed; specifically multiple flu shot signs at the City's two Walgreen's locations. Alan Carmen said they violate the City's Sign Ordinance and that staff would make them aware of the regulations.

Adjournment:

Commissioner Meegan made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Peterson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan M. Carmen, Secretary
Rock Island Planning Commission