

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE WEST BRANCH PLANNING COMMISSION HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF CITY HALL, 121 NORTH FOURTH STREET, ON TUESDAY, JULY 25, 2023.

Vice Chairperson David called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Bob David, Yvonne DeRoso, Kara Fachting, Mike Jackson, and Rusty Showalter.

Absent: Josh Erickson and Cori Lucynski

Others officers in attendance: Acting secretary/zoning administrator, John Dantzer

All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

At 6:06 pm Vice Chairperson Bod David opened the public hearing to take comment on the proposed changes to the zoning ordinance which would rezone property ID #s 052-625-002-01, 052-625-002-02, 052-625-002-03 from multi-family to industrial.

C. Edward Liang asked what brought about the need for the rezoning for that area. Secretary/administrator Dantzer explained the property was originally planned for a housing development. The developer the City was working with backed out of the plans due to cost and the City has been unable to find anyone else that was interested in a large scale housing development. Since then, the City was approached by a manufacturing firm looking to expand. The City discussed the next best thing to bringing in more housing was bringing in more jobs. Mr. Liang noted he had no concerns and thought it was a great idea and was in favor of it because it would benefit the community by creating jobs for the area.

A letter was shared from William Carey of the Carey Jaskowski Law Firm on behalf of the Brook of West Branch noting their opposition to the change noting concern for the quality of life for the residents of the Brook and concern that it could negatively impact their property values.

Member Showalter noted he believed it is a great opportunity for growth in the City.

Member DeRoso noted there could be a buffer as part of the agreement with the manufacturing developer.

Member Fachting noted the increased activity could give the residents at the Brook more things to watch as they are sitting out.

No one else wished to speak on the subject.

MOTION BY DEROSO, SECOND BY JACKSON, TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING.

Yes — David, DeRoso, Fachting, Jackson, Showalter

No – None

Absent –Erickson, Lucynski

Motion carried

MOTION BY DAVID, SECOND BY FACHTING, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD MAY 9, 2023.

Yes — David, DeRoso, Fachting, Jackson, Showalter

No – None

Absent –Erickson, Lucynski

Motion carried

A sign variance was reviewed for Richard Spies of the West Branch Pharmacy. Mr. Spies was asking for a variance to increase the height from 6' to 8'4" and to allow a total square footage of 40 sf. Zoning Administrator/secretary Dantzer noted there is a grey area in the sign ordinance that deals with message board types signs and monument signs. The ordinance has square footage of each type of sign that is allowed in each district but doesn't state what to do if there is a combination of both types of signs. The board discussed that while the building is in the mixed use district it was in a commercial area and was located adjacent to the general commercial district. They noted they did not see any safety issues nor would it have any negative affect on neighboring properties. It was the consensus to discuss the grey area further during a future update.

MOTION BY FACHTING, SECOND BY JACKSON, TO APPROVE THE SIGN VARIANCE AS REQUESTED AND ALLOW A TOTAL HEIGHT OF 8'4" AND 40 TOTAL SF OF SIGN.

Yes — David, DeRoso, Fachting, Jackson, Showalter

No – None

Absent –Erickson, Lucynski

Motion carried

The Commission went over the Masterplan and discussed any changes that needed to be made. Zoning Administrator Dantzer noted they are scheduled for a complete update in 2024.

MOTION BY FACHTING, SECOND BY JACKSON, THAT THEY DID NOT HAVE ANY UPDATES TO THE MASTERPLAN FOR 2022.

Yes — David, DeRoso, Fachting, Jackson, Showalter

No – None

Absent –Erickson, Lucynski

Motion carried

Member DeRoso noted she would need to abstain from the vote on the rezoning change due to a conflict of interest.

MOTION BY JACKSON, SECOND BY SHOWALTER, TO ALLOW MEMBER DEROSO TO ABSTAIN ON THE REZONING CHANGE.

Yes — David, DeRoso, Fachting, Jackson, Showalter

No – None

Absent –Erickson, Lucynski

Motion carried

The Commission further discussed the potential change from multi family to industrial for the property noted in the public hearing.

Vice Chairperson David noted he was in favor of the rezoning with a greenbelt barrier. Member Fachting noted her concern that using trees or other types of greenbelts don't always hold up over time. The location of the greenbelt to provide the most protection was discussed and it was determined it made the most sense to have the greenbelt on City owned property which would make keeping up on the greenbelt easier because they would not have to rely on other property owners for the maintenance of it.

The Commission went over the future plans for the manufacturing company and noted there would be a large distance between the Brook and their buildings. It was further noted the distance buffer between the Brook property and Industrial property met the planning ordinance.

The Commission recommended reaching out to the owners of the Brook to discuss the plans. Secretary/Administrator Dantzer noted he was working on setting up a meeting.

Member Fachting noted her only concern was the trucks may use jake breaking which is noisy. It was discussed the trucks typically only run during the day and not at night.

MOTION BY DAVID, SECOND BY JACKSON, TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL THE APPROVAL OF THE REZONING WITH A GREEN BELT TO BE REQUIRED BETWEEN THE INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY AND THE BROOK.

Yes — David, ~~DeRoso~~, Fachting, Jackson, Showalter

Abstain - Deroso

No – None

Absent –Erickson, Lucynski

Motion carried

The Commission discussed the potential redevelopment of the old bicycle factory located at 201 N. Eighth St. It was noted that the developer did have an application for a Brownfield grant to help with the environmental review.

MOTION BY FACHTING, SECOND BY JACKSON, TO OFFER THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE BROWNFIELD GRANT FOR THE OLD BICYCLE FACTORY AT 201 N. EIGHT ST.

Yes — David, DeRoso, Fachting, Jackson, Showalter

No – None

Absent –Erickson, Lucynski

Motion carried

Vice Chairperson David noted how well the City looked this summer and commended the City staff for their work.

Member DeRoso gave an update on local real estate transactions in town noting the condo off of Fariview was finished and they had an open house, the condo in W. River Park was started, and she was working on a closing for the bicycle factory. She also noted she was looking at trying to develop a county housing commission to work on housing needs.

Member Fachting addressed wild turkey concerns within the City.

Secretary/Administrator Dantzer noted he did not have anything to address currently for the regular meeting on Aug 8th but did have a special use request that could be held during the time reserved for the second meeting of the month. It was the consensus of the Commission to cancel the Aug 8th meeting and only hold a meeting on Aug 22nd.

Vice Chairperson David closed the meeting at 7:09 pm