



City of Pleasant Ridge
23925 Woodward Avenue
Pleasant Ridge, Michigan 48069

**Planning Commission Meeting
July 24, 2017**

Having been duly publicized, Chairman Treuter called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Present: Commissioners Martin-Campbell, Stiffman, Schlesinger, Treuter, McCutcheon, Corrigan, Wilkinson, McAuliffe.

Also Present: City Manager Breuckman, City Commission liaison Perry.

Absent: None.

Minutes

PC-2017-1539

Motion by Commissioner Schlesinger, second by Commissioner Corrigan, to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as presented. Unanimously approved.

Public Discussion - Items not on the Agenda

None.

Concept Plan - 23675 Woodward Avenue

City Manager Breuckman was contacted by the new property owners about the possibility of this concept plan. Given the history of the site, which was the first proposed location of *Cork* a very long time ago, Brueckman suggested that the most appropriate course of action would be to bring the plan before the Planning Commission. It is not a site plan. There is no formal action being requested at this time. The purpose of the concept plan is to allow the Commission to become familiar with the development. The residents who live on Cambridge between Ridge and Woodward would be most directly impacted by this development. This meeting will allow input, comments and guidance from the property owners before moving forward with any approval process. There are a number of actions that will have to be taken before the project is ready to submit for actual approval, so bringing the plan to the Commission as early as possible will allow as much time as possible to incorporate any suggestions made into the final plan.

The property owners will present their plan. Breuckman will discuss any zoning requirements or restrictions and then the Commission will hear from some of the residents.

Mark Alfonsi and Brian Bolhuis from ABD Architects introduced themselves. Mr. Alfonsi made a presentation introducing their plan. He noted that they do not own the building at this time but are attempting to acquire it. They are interested in making improvements to the building as well as developing it for potential mixed use including offices on the first floor and residential on the upper floors. They want to maintain all of the parking on the site as much as possible. They originally wanted to add on to the back of the building because, while the radiant heat still works, the bathrooms are not up to date, one is broken, and they want to make them handicapped accessible. The plan was to add new bathrooms and a kitchen into the back without disrupting the radiant heat. There is enough depth there so it would not impact parking and it would be back from the face of the building and would allow for a modern loft above with a vegetative roof.

It appears that the plan is slightly in excess of what is required for parking by one but that does not include the valid parking on Woodward. They do not want to go past the building for parking and they want to set it up so you can pull in off of Woodward and turn around without having to go into the neighborhood by using the depth of the lot. They do not want to be bad neighbors or cause problems. They are trying to do the opposite.

Chairman Treuter inquired as to the number of employees. Alfonsi responded that there are currently ten employees. Treuter noted that there was, then, the potential for ten cars. Alfonsi noted that one person does not live far away and that there is a bike rack on the plan. Commissioner Corrigan confirmed that the offices that are included in the plan will be the offices for ABD Architects. Treuter noted that there could potentially be eight people living in the building who could each also have a vehicle. Bolhuis noted that the business would be open from nine to five and that the residents would likely return home after that. It was noted that that would work in many situations unless the residents are retirees. Corrigan inquired whether the residents would want a dedicated space. Bolhuis stated that they intended to give the residents the whole back part of the lot. The Woodward side would be the business side while the residents would have privacy including their own stairwell and back area of the building. Treuter confirmed that there would be one or two parking spots per unit. Commissioner McCutcheon inquired about the use of the spaces on Woodward for the business. Breuckman confirmed that MDOT would permit the use of those spaces for this purpose. Alfonsi noted that they would like to relocate the bus stop which is currently directly in front of the entrance. Treuter noted that that would be a difficult task. Corrigan inquired whether there were many clients that visited the offices. Bolhuis stated that there were not many clients that visited. They do a lot of design work electronically and communicate by email. He noted that the space was a little bit bigger than they need. Corrigan commented that they might then get more employees. Bolhuis stated that they needed larger individual work spaces. Alfonsi confirmed that not very many people visit the office and Bolhuis added that they typically go to their clients' offices instead. Commissioner Martin-Campbell noted that the required parking called for 13 spaces and they currently show 12 so they are actually short one space. The four spaces on Woodward brings them to 16. Alfonsi noted that there are more parking spaces on Woodward to the south but those have not been counted in the plan. McCutcheon noted that previous, similar plans caused problems with people using the parking on Devonshire to cut through off of Woodward. There will need to be some way to work around the AT&T box to get a couple more spaces. There were also concerns about backing into traffic.

Alfonsi noted that they kept the green space away from the main side of Woodward so that there would be better visibility. Corrigan noted that all of the spaces, except the ones behind the building, are public spaces so anyone could park there. Some of the new spaces would be built by the

developer and so they would potentially own them. Breuckman noted that they could be restricted spaces for the office building. There is not a need for them to be publicly available. McCutcheon noted that most of the opposition stated in emails is related to the Cambridge parking spots. Martin-Campbell inquired regarding existing safety concerns. Breuckman responded that there is a baseline condition that exists with cars coming out of the gas station. A lot of people will pull onto Cambridge from the gas station and turn left rather than using the gas station driveway. As a result, there are cross-turning patterns occurring regularly. Additionally, during pick up and drop off times at the school all of the traffic is routed down Cambridge onto Woodward. This traffic pattern was created to avoid bottlenecks on Ridge which is only a two-lane street. Martin-Campbell indicated that it seemed that those problems would be able to be worked out with this type of use given that it would be business hours. Breuckman indicated that the morning hours would likely be the most problematic. School drop off is in full swing from 7:45 a.m. to about 8:05 a.m. and it would be 8:15 or later before all the cars were flushed out of the streets. The afternoon will be less problematic because, while it is more prolonged, it is less intense.

McCutcheon inquired whether they would consider leaving the sidewalk in the existing location. He also said it looked like then two more parking spots could be put behind the sidewalk. It was noted that the existing sidewalk is pictured. He then asked whether the sidewalk could be moved out. Alfonsi replied that, if they pushed the sidewalk north, there would not be enough depth for additional spaces. There was some discussion that adding a couple of more spaces might work with some modifications. Treuter commented that, if those spaces were used for employee parking, there would arrive, stay the day, and leave, and would not create a lot of traffic. Breuckman added that you might be able to add two spaces behind the sidewalk on the building side and then could potentially put a couple of parallel parking spaces on Cambridge which would eliminate some of the backing out problems. Alfonsi indicated that he was not a fan of the parallel parking because of people turning off of Woodward but Breuckman noted that there is an alley that people could turn into. Stiffman indicated that it would alleviate a lot of the concerns of the citizens on Cambridge if there was parallel parking. It was generally agreed that there are a number of options with regard to parking. The traffic engineers are still working on the project. Their report has not yet been completed. It was noted that moving the parking as far away as possible from Woodward would be the best as far as safety is concerned. Minimum length for a parking space is twenty feet pursuant to ordinance.

Breuckman walked through the powerpoint presentation. There are some scenarios that would not require Planning Commission approval at all. The zoning is commercial. Residential and office uses are principal permitted uses. Therefore, so long as they meet the zoning approval requirements, the project would have to be approved. Those requirements include parking, set backs and height. The existing building can be reoccupied without any approvals necessary. The fact that they are adding onto the building does require Planning Commission approval. Additional approval would be necessary to add the parking spaces on Cambridge which are in the PR public right-of-way. They could add spaces on Woodward without input from PR because that is in MDOT's right-of-way. MDOT has already indicated that the new spaces would be allowed. If the project were scaled back so that they did not need the spaces on Cambridge, the Commission would have very little to comment on.

Three emails were received. Two were from Cambridge residents who are concerned and one from a resident who is in favor. Approximately eight parking spaces are required if the building were to just be reoccupied. There are some modifiers in the ordinance that allow you to reduce your parking

requirement for commercial space only because there is on-street parking on Woodward. The project is within the range of feasibility at this point. Twenty spaces are required: twelve for the office and eight for the residential. Two spaces can be reduced per ordinance which leaves a requirement of eighteen spaces. McCutcheon asked whether that accounted for the change over in parking from the work day to residential needs. Ordinance also allows a reduction of one space if you have six bicycle spaces up to 20% of the maximum requirement. The DDA can also allow for a shared parking modification for dual use of office and residential. The multiplier that is often used for an office/residential mix is 0.8 so the parking requirement can be reduced to 80 percent. Breuckman noted that that is pretty aggressive. This project would then need two shared parking spaces to meet the requirement. So, by ordinance standards the project is close to meeting the parking requirement.

Brueckman described a slide that depicted the intersection at Woodward including the gas station. He discussed where the ideal location of the street parking spaces would be. He showed a slide indicting summer time traffic counts. He indicated that you could add two to three hundred cars coming and going during the school year. He discussed why there is a no left turn sign on Oxford. He then discussed trip generation which is based on studies in suburban settings. Pursuant to those studies you could expect the existing office to generate 36 trips per day and each apartment unit would generate approximately 6.5 vehicle trips per day. The proposed office space would generate about 13 more trips per day. He presented information regarding traffic by hour. He noted that the morning hours are always more concentrated than the afternoon hours because people typically go to work at the same time but return at different times.

McCutcheon inquired whether the project meets with all of the city's other design standards. Breuckman noted that they would need a variance for lot coverage. He indicated that the ordinance needed to be reviewed and potentially revised. It currently mandates a 40% maximum lot coverage for businesses along Woodward. There is 35% maximum lot coverage for single family houses. He stated that he did not think a 40% maximum lot coverage for businesses on Woodward made sense and he noted that a lot of existing sites already exceed that. So long as the buildings meet the parking and set back requirements, adding a maximum lot coverage requirement seems unnecessary.

Martin-Campbell inquired how they planned to address the lack of accessible units in the building, requirements for greenspace and rooftop unit screening. There is no requirement for greenspace and the nuisance ordinance addresses the rooftop screening issue. Corrigan asked whether the residential units would be rentals or purchased condominiums. Bolhuis responded that it was anticipated that they would be high-end rentals. They have a level of quality that they want to maintain similar to their other unit at 445 East Breckinridge. Martin-Campbell indicated that, at the next meeting, she would like to see renderings and examples of what the exterior of the building would look like. She noted that the residential units are shown as two-bedroom and she asked about the size. Bolhuis responded that they are now approximately 1400 square feet but that they may reduce that to 1100 or 1200 square feet before the project is finished. Martin-Campbell asked if they are looking to renovate any part of the existing building. Bolhuis indicated that they were planning to renovate and update all of the existing space. There was a discussion regarding the age of the building and the need to remove asbestos and modernize the materials. Martin-Campbell noted that the DDA had approved a site improvement grant for this site that included cleaning the stone and the parapets and replacement of the facia. She asked if the work had actually been done or was planning to be done. Alfonsi indicated that they and the current owner had been discussing doing that work. She asked whether the multi-purpose room on the second floor would be public or

private. Bolhuis indicated that it might be both. They intend to use it as a conference room for the office but others may be able to use it and the patio as well.

Public Comment

Paul Eisenstein, 22 Cambridge, has lived on Cambridge since 1985. He indicated that he liked the idea of having things done to the property but he sees a number of problems being created. He feels that dealing with the gas station is critical. He works unusual hours and noted that many people do not work a regular full business day. He feels that the study, which only measured vehicles going 13 miles per hour or over so the study spot was moved farther back, is missing the vast majority of traffic that turns at Woodward. He said that when you turn off of Woodward onto Cambridge it can be dangerous. He feels that there are more people at that corner that are exiting the gas station than are actually travelling up and down Woodward. There is also blockage due to people pulling in and out at the same time. Any additional street parking will narrow the road further -- perpendicular parking would be particularly problematic. He said that the cars are often travelling above the speed limit. He feels that any parking will cause serious problems during school hours. He feels that there will be many accidents at that location especially involving parents and children going to and from the school. He said that the number of trips will increase more because these businessmen said they go visit their clients rather than having their clients come to them. He was concerned about the potential loss of trees on the site. He noted that there were plusses and minuses, especially considering the additional tax dollars for the city, but is particularly concerned about the parking issue. He noted that there are already frequent fender benders at that intersection. He said he loves seeing people on bike and rides his bike a lot but felt that the parking variance for bicycles was not reasonable. Commissioner Wilkinson asked whether he would be less concerned if there were only parallel parking spaces on Cambridge. Eisenstein said he would be more comfortable with a couple of parallel spots but still feels that it is a dangerous spot because of the gas station. Alfonsi noted that they would also reduce the number of spots if it was parallel parking. Eisenstein wanted it known that he was not trying to stop the project.

Jennifer Quennville, 22 Cambridge, said she is not clear how the sidewalk is being handled. Alfonsi noted that the sidewalk would still exist without changes. She also asked how the bus stop was going to be addressed. Bolhuis said they would like to have it slid down the sidewalk a little so that it did not block the entrance. Breuckman has been in contact with SMART who indicated that they deal with bus stops getting adjusted all the time so after the development gets to the approval stage, they will work on finding a new location for that stop. Eisenstein noted that would be better for all concerned because the bus stop adds to the overall congestion at that intersection.

Gary Meiers, 1 Cambridge, echoed the concerns already expressed about the traffic. He added that there are concerns with traffic on the service drive (alley). He noted that currently the alley is primarily used by residents and there is very little traffic on it. People walk their dogs and ride their bikes on that street. He was concerned with it becoming more of a thoroughfare and the dangers that would pose to the pedestrians. He is also concerned with the height of the building. People on the third floor would be looking right into his windows. He noted that many of his concerns were personal to his own property and did not affect others on the street. They do not yet know what the price point for the residential units. He noted that there were similar apartments along the alley in Ferndale that are not very well kept. He would like to facility to be refreshed and would not mind a two-story facility. A two-story facility would also reduce the traffic and the need for parking.

Brian Church, 30 Cambridge, agreed with the concerns previously raised and indicated that the Commission and the City Council would likely receive an email about the loss of oak trees.

Sandi Marvar, 37 Cambridge, confirmed that there is an extremely high volume of traffic especially on the mornings of school days. She agreed with the previous issues that had been raised especially regarding the pre-existing condition of the gas station driveway. She asked whether there were any ordinances regarding the set back of parking off of Woodward. Brueckman said that there were regulations for off-street parking but the ordinances are silent regarding on-street parking. She noted that the farther back from the corner would be better. She also raised concerns regarding the additional workload that would be placed on the police department and the city offices. She also noted that there are people that are using the school that are also using the bus stop and asked that that be kept in consideration when looking at moving the bus stop. She said that parallel would be better than perpendicular although no parking at all would be ideal.

Open Discussion

McCutcheon noted that there were a lot of concerns with parking and traffic. He said that the Commission is certainly listening, but he stated that those concerns could also be raised about any other intersection in Pleasant Ridge that meets Woodward. It might be best to eliminate the gas station or install a speed bump. There was discussion regarding whether the access to the gas station needed to accommodate trucks.

Eisenstein stated that any vehicles coming southbound and using the gas station can run into a back up caused by vehicles using the pumps meant for northbound traffic. People pull onto Cambridge because it is safer than trying to pull onto Woodward but they cause problems by pulling in front of Cambridge traffic without looking. There was discussion regarding whether better signage would help. Eisenstein requested whether police officers could be directed to ticket drivers who do that.

Wilkinson confirmed that traffic can be pretty bad at any intersection with Woodward especially on school mornings. Treuter noted that problems with the gas station already exist and the project would only add two or three parallel parking spaces which is not a lot. Breuckman noted that they would not find an overall solution to the problem with the gas station at this time. McCutcheon commented that people would likely use the alley to access the parallel parking spaces. Treuter suggested that the alley could be made northbound only if necessary. It has been done with other alleys in the city.

Stiffman noted that the Commission needed to be concerned about the impact of a new project on the nightmarish problem that already exists at that intersection. He asked for more analysis regarding the impact of an additional twelve people coming in and out of this space. Breuckman said that realistically it is going to require using their judgment. He said it is not really a question of science in this case but rather whether the new office development, which adds two cars per hour, will really significantly change what is already happening at that intersection. Stiffman asked whether this new project would reach critical mass that is going to end the world. Breuckman said he was more concerned with the traffic flow -- what do cars have to do to get in and out of the new parking spaces. There was a general discussion regarding other options and ideas. Eisenstein agreed that the most dangerous action to consider was driver's needing to back up within feet of Woodward; especially considering the people leaving the gas station, the high-speed traffic on Woodward, the two alleys and the school traffic. Eisenstein felt it was reaching critical mass because it is already bad at any time of day and really bad during school hours, and you are adding to it.

Commissioner Schlesinger agreed that the traffic concerns are paramount and have been made clear. She asked Breuckman to describe the next steps. He indicated that they have to refine their proposal and come back to present it to the Commission. There will be a high level of scrutiny because the traffic engineering consultants will review it and present a report.

McCutcheon confirmed that the project will not include angled or perpendicular parking. He felt that it would be best if the sidewalk were moved to create more room for the parking. He asked what issues that move would raise. Breuckman stated that it did not really raise any issues. The sidewalk can be located anywhere within the right-of-way. Moving the sidewalk might actually solve a problem because it currently jogs across the alley and moving it would make it line up better.

Wilkinson asked whether the traffic engineers would consider looking at angle parking coming in off of Cambridge. It would then force people to circle around and come in off of the alley rather than trying to pull in straight off of Woodward. Breuckman stated that a car backing out of a 90-degree space is going to move into both lanes of traffic. A car backing out of an angled space could do so and only enter one traffic lane.

Zoning Ordinance Discussion Regarding Solar Power Systems

Breuckman noted that the city has been very focused on improving energy use at city facilities. They conducted a resident survey asking what home owners had done to improve their energy use and what were they interested in doing. He indicated that they got a lot of strong interest. The city is putting together an aggregate solar purchasing program focusing on the lower Woodward corridor. Right now, the ordinance allows you to put solar panels on your house so long as they are not visible from the street. There are competing interests with the historic preservation of the community and installing new technology. Almost all of the streets in the city are east/west so nearly half of residents would not be able to participate in a solar purchasing program. So, the question is whether the ordinance should be amended to allow placing solar panels on front-facing facades. Breuckman is not advocating one way or the other but feels that a community discussion needs to be held on the subject. No one has yet asked for a variance, but Breuckman noted that the level of interest is increasing. There was a discussion regarding that you could not install panels on a garage if it was visible from the street. There was discussion regarding alternatives and whether this was a short-term conversation because solar technology is evolving very rapidly to include shingles and sidewalks. Breuckman presented regarding some of the options with current technology rather than waiting on new technology. He indicated that an ordinance would speak to solar energy systems that generate electricity from the sun and then you set design standards that can be easily redefined such as only black panels. Stiffman inquired regarding cost efficiency of these systems. Breuckman indicated that, for a residential system, you are probably looking at a cost of \$3.00 per watt. With tax credits you would probably be looking at a payback period of eight or nine years. He suggested a community survey with some pictures and just a couple of questions including whether you think this is something that should be allowed in Pleasant Ridge. Then the Commission should look at the responses and decide how to proceed. The audience was polled as to their thoughts. There was discussion regarding whether this would work in a city with many trees. There was additional discussion regarding heating the pool. The Commission agreed that a survey would be a good idea.

With no further business or discussion, Chairman Treuter adjourned the meeting at 8:38 pm.

Chairman Treuter

Martha Schlesinger, Secretary

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