

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE OAK PARK PLAN COMMISSION
VILLAGE HALL- COUNCIL CHAMBER

Aug 22, 2017

7:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Chair David Mann; Commissioners Glenn Brewer, Jeremy Burton, Doug Gilbert, JoBeth Halpin, Greg Marsey, Paul May and Kristin Nordman

EXCUSED: Commissioner Lawrence Brozek

ALSO PRESENT: Craig Failor, Village Planner; Jacob Karaca, Plan Commission Attorney; Tammie Grossman, Development Customer Services Director
For Applicant: Andrew Yule, Albion Residential; Jason Koehn, Albion Residential; Paul Alessandro, HPA Architecture; Ben Skelton, Cyclone Energy Group Consultant

Roll Call

Chair Mann called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. Roll was called. A quorum was present.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

None.

Public Hearing(s)

PC 17-01: 1000 Lake Street; Albion Residential LLC, the Applicant, seeks approval of an 18 story mixed use planned development consisting of approximately 9,500 square feet of first floor commercial space, 265 dwelling units, 235 enclosed vehicular parking spaces, and 265 enclosed bicycle parking spaces. The applicant is requesting an allowance to increase the building height from 80 feet as required in Section 3.9.4 E(1) of the Zoning Ordinance to a height of approximately 199 feet, an allowance to increase density from the allowed 40 dwelling units as regulated in Section 3.8.3 A(1)b of the Zoning Ordinance to 265 dwelling units, and an allowance for setbacks and landscaping along the north property line from a required 10 foot setback to zero feet required in Section 3.8.3 B(2) and along the east property line from a required 5 foot setback to zero feet 3.8.3 B(1). The applicant is requesting no landscaping within the required setback areas 6.4.2 A. *Continued from August 10, 2017*

ALBION PLAT OF SUBDIVISION: The applicant is also seeking a subdivision of land as depicted on the Final Plat of Subdivision titled “Albion at Oak Park” submitted with the planned development application

Chair Mann explained the procedure for the evening. He asked if Commissioner Halpin watched the video of the last meeting. She said she listened to it.

Mr. Failor reviewed the information requested from staff, which included a memo from Village Manager Cara Pavlicek on impacts to municipal services and a memo from Assistant Village Attorney Rasheda Jackson on the parking credits for the proposed development. Mr. Failor explained there were two credits in the zoning code: one specific to the downtown area and one village-wide. The first credit allowed for taking two floors out of the calculation of the parking requirement; the second was a 25% reduction in

what was required by zoning code. This second credit was an incentive to developers to use other methods to reduce the parking demand through things like having bike parking storage on the property, being close to public transit and having employees use public transit. He reviewed how the two credits were calculated and said the total parking requirement was 170 parking spaces, which was what the development provided. For the tandem spaces, the village code does allow for tandem as long as both spaces were owned by same owner. He said the applicant would speak tonight on reducing some of the tandem spaces. He said both credits were allowed by the zoning code and were determined by the zoning administrator after consulting with the village engineer. These credits were calculated before the application came in.

Commissioner Gilbert asked how the two floor exception worked in residential spaces. Mr. Failor said it was based on floor square footage and would encompass all the units on the entire level. Commissioner Gilbert asked how the floors were selected. Mr. Failor said the applicant could choose as there was no requirement on which floor had to be selected. Commissioner Gilbert noted they could take out the commercial space as well. Mr. Failor agreed.

A short discussion ensued regarding parking space calculations with the deductions. Mr. Failor said generally, they had not seen developments with both the deductions but other developments within downtown have been on village-owned property and those negotiations included public parking components. This proposed development was entirely private.

Ms. Tammie Grossman, Director of Development Customer Services, said the village looked at the downtown area parking demands as the entire downtown area. Years ago, the village built Holley Court parking garage to have excess capacity to absorb increased parking demand. She said there were 1200 spaces in Holley Court, currently the village sells 543 24-hour permits, out of 605 available to sell; with 62 spaces available as 24-hour available to potential tenants as an option. She said one reason the green alley was developed was to make it walkable from that garage to developments. Additionally, the village has told all developers downtown that they were welcome to rent spaces from the village as competition was good. The 24-hour permits could also be increased through Board approval. She said the village sells 460 day permits out of 566; so there was excess capacity related to potential employee parking. Also, there was an employee incentive program to give parking at a discounted rate; the village would work with the developer to incorporate this with the retail staff and management staff. The village sells 25 night-time permits out of 100, so there was also excess capacity.

Ms. Grossman said the village was working hard on its valet programs and have had conversations with Cooper's Hawk to coordinate the valet to use Holley Court; they would coordinate this with the proposed retail tenant should the development get approved. She said she checked with the management of the Vantage garage on the impact of Cooper's Hawk and there was still a lot of capacity even at high peak times. She said given all this, staff felt the parking allowances allowed by the code were appropriate and there was capacity in the downtown area.

Commissioner Gilbert said his concern was from a public policy standpoint to generate large buildings that don't have adequate parking. Ms. Grossman noted the village strategically built Holley Court with excess capacity and said people say there was a lack of parking downtown but in reality it was maybe a lack of surface parking near the building a person may want to frequent. She said there was definitely parking in the downtown area and with the other development garages, there was flexibility to move cars around.

Commissioner Gilbert said there were complaints there was not enough parking downtown and people don't want to park remotely and walk to their destination. He was concerned for a residential building that it would devalue the units if there wasn't readily accessible parking. Ms. Grossman said the village was

working with a parking consultant now and that consultant said the trend was looking at finding alternatives to people using cars like public transit, car sharing, etc. She said they tell people you do not need to have a car to live in downtown Oak Park.

Commissioner Gilbert asked about the memo regarding the plan commission's authority regarding parking allowances and that this was not in their purview. He said as they were asking for a density allowance parking seemed relevant to the impacts of density. Mr. Failor said they could not use the argument that there was a need for parking in the context of density for not supporting the application. Attorney Karaca agreed.

Commissioner Marsey clarified the tandem parking spots were 112. Mr. Andrew Yule, Albion Residential, said they worked to reduce that amount to 84 since the last meeting and increased the single stalls from 123 to 152, so they added one-stall parking spaces to the project. Commissioner Marsey asked about convertible units. Mr. Yule said it was a hybrid between a studio and one bedroom; it would have a sliding glass door to separate the bedroom but no window, so technically not a one bedroom. Commissioner Marsey asked staff if the parking projection regarding these units meet the code. Mr. Failor agreed.

Chair Mann asked for the information requested from the Park District from the last meeting.

Ms. Jan Arnold, Executive Director of the Park District of Oak Park, provided the commission with a memo detailing possible tree and landscape replacement costs. She also provided information regarding the \$280,000 and \$120,000 estimates provided to Albion as well.

A short discussion ensued regarding the costs in the replacement planting memo. Ms. Arnold noted the landscape consultant fees would be more in the first year to do an assessment and baseline survey to track changes over a ten year timeframe.

Commissioner Brewer asked about the proposal to relocate solar panels to 218 Madison Street. Ms. Arnold said this was one of the options they came up with but it would take away the net zero status of the environmental building in Austin Gardens. Commissioner Gilbert asked if they would abandon the solar energy generation in Austin Gardens. Ms. Arnold said it was not desired but was one solution as the 218 Madison building had a new roof on it; they would also propose a solar panel on display in the south west corner of Austin Gardens for an educational tool.

Chair Mann asked about the entrance proposal to the west of 1010 Lake Street. Ms. Arnold said the greenway west of 1010 Lake Street building would create an entry point for the community to access Austin Gardens as it was the most direct entrance to the park; it was an option that would benefit the community. Commissioner May asked about the number of trees estimated to be replaced and a discrepancy in the report. Ms. Arnold said they would check with their landscape architect consultant and get back to the commission on the accurate number.

Commissioner May asked about their information regarding solar panels and shade time difference. Mr. Chris Lindgren, Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds, said they took into account weather and he reviewed how they did their calculations.

Ms. Arnold presented information and a video regarding tree damage due to winds on May 31, 2016. Commissioner Burton asked if an inspection was done on the trees to determine if there was disease or if the trees were healthy. Ms. Arnold said the wind caused the damage as they were not diseased.

Chair Mann moved to information requested from the applicant at the prior meeting. He noted that the two solar experts were asked to share their methodology regarding the different study conclusions; however, due to schedules and commitments they were not able to do so and it would be up to each commissioner to weigh each study on its own merits.

Mr. Yule reviewed the first floor plan. He said they updated it by pulling the building out with no inset areas in the rear and they added expression to the front corners with different brick pavers. He said there was an opportunity to do a gateway entry and they would work with the Oak Park Area Arts Council to energize that area. He said the property was now set back five feet at the rear, and the tower was set an additional five feet so it was now 30 feet from the park. He reviewed the parking plan and explained they rearranged the stalls to get remove some of the tandems.

Mr. Yule said they were agreeable to adding 10 solar panels on the roof of the development and donating the energy credit to the Park District environmental center to maintain net zero.

Chair Mann asked for commissioner questions based on topics, beginning with solar.

Commissioner Marsey asked how the solar donation would work. Mr. Yule clarified this would be in addition to the escrow and donation to the Park District. Mr. Ben Skelton, solar consultant for the applicant explained the solar donation concept. He said the panels would generate renewable energy credits and that became a certificate unique to the site. This could be sold or transferred in the marketplace. Commissioner Marsey asked the Park District for their thoughts on the proposal. Ms. Arnold said it was important to stress the environmental building was a learning tool on how to make homes sustainable and net zero and also a learning tool for youth; it was most important to them to have building stay the way it was, however, they would have to look into this and get back to the Plan Commission. Chair Mann asked about efficiencies in panel technology and how quickly was it changing. Mr. Skelton said it was changing rapidly. Chair Mann suggested contributing more efficient panels to make up the difference due to possible shade. Mr. Skelton said in his professional opinion he wouldn't take the panels off the center he would still use them for educational purposes and it would still be near net zero, plus the added panels on the Albion development would make up any difference.

Commissioner Gilbert asked if the changes in setback would change the shadow studies. Mr. Skelton said he didn't believe it would be significant but could recalculate if necessary. Commissioner Gilbert asked Mr. Tom Bassett Dilley, the Park District's solar consultant, his opinion. Mr. Bassett Dilley said the greater setback would help but he noticed a change in the width so likely it would be a trade-off. He said he believed the applicant's report was likely different from his report because the building model was shifted to the north. He said their objective was to make a carbon neutral society and that's what the environmental building was about- when you start shading buildings and moving solar to other buildings you lose the opportunity. Chair Mann asked him about swapping to more efficient panels in the future. Mr. Bassett Dilley agreed the suggestion was good. Commissioner Burton asked about the donation of solar credits proposed by the applicant. Mr. Bassett Dilley agreed solar credits were swappable.

Commissioner Gilbert said he was concerned that as the building form has changed the impact studies might have changed; and as this seemed to be a key element he would like an updated study based on the new massing. Commissioners debated whether the impact studies should be updated. Mr. Skelton said he could rerun a model. Commissioners requested the solar study updated by the next meeting.

Chair Mann moved to a memo from SB Friedman, a consultant for the applicant, regarding projected school enrollment from the development. Ms. Fran LeFor Rood, SB Friedman, gave an overview on the memo. Chair Mann asked about the differences in school age children for Oak Park Place versus the Albion development as Albion was projected to have about 11 school aged children while Oak Park Place

has 19. Ms. LeFor Rood said they relied on previous studies done in Oak Park, census data and other developments similar in scale. She said it was based on unit mix in each development and typically, you really only see school-aged children in more than one bedroom units. As Oak Park Place has more units with more than one bedroom, plus the units are slightly larger, this was why there was more school-aged children. Chair Mann noted a reduction seemed likely but this was almost half the rate. Ms. LeFor Rood said the Albion development was trying to create a high amenity development and that wouldn't attract people who have kids. They might have babies and move out after a year or so. Ms. LeFor Rood said they also projected property tax revenue generation and the costs to the school district and concluded the project would generate more revenue compared to the cost to the school district.

Chair Mann moved to parking and traffic. Mr. Javier Millan, the applicant's traffic consultant from KLOA, presented data from other communities regarding vehicle ownership near public transportation. He said the closer to a train station the less dependence there was on vehicles.

Chair Mann asked for a short break at 9:28 p.m. The meeting resumed at 9:39 p.m.

Chair Mann moved to questions on the design of the project.

Commissioner Marsey asked about the western edge of the greenway and how to improve the view to the parking garage. Mr. Paul Alessandro, the applicant's architect, said the intent would be to have greenery with screening material and create a vestibule; it was still under discussion but could have some sort of art incorporated.

Commissioner Marsey asked about the loading area for the 1010 building. Mr. Yule said it would be housed within the Albion building. Commissioner Marsey asked if they were anticipating three point turns for trucks to exit and this could be problematic in the summer because of children present. Mr. Yule said they will look at the space's depth to see if a truck could pull straight ahead. Commissioner Marsey asked about the residential and retail loading and noted the 19th Century Club has reported trucks pulling into Forest Avenue because trucks weren't able to fit in the Vantage area. Mr. Yule said the retail establishment will be notified of the dock sizing. Commissioner Marsey urged them to get it right so that a similar situation doesn't occur. Mr. Yule agreed.

Commissioner May asked about bike storage and street access within the building. Mr. Alessandro reviewed the current plan. Commissioner May suggested an entrance for bikes into the alley rather than the public sidewalk now that a larger setback was planned. Mr. Alessandro agreed. Commissioner May confirmed the balconies would be segmented. Mr. Yule agreed.

Commissioner Burton asked about the Park District's request to create a walkway from the 1010 building into Austin Gardens. Mr. Yule said they've had conversations with the building owner about improving it. Commissioner Burton asked if there would be signage and lighting. Mr. Yule said they would prefer to focus on their greenway. Commissioner Burton asked about the transition into the park. Mr. Yule said they planned to do signage at Lake Street created with the Arts Council, and signage by the fence to indicate the Frank Lloyd Wright walking tour and the park.

Commissioner Gilbert asked about the façade expression materials on the lower base area. Mr. Alessandro reviewed the materials: structural glass window wall, above was a transom-area back lit with frosted glass, metal panel cladding and a series of panels that alternated with frosted glass and bronze metallic, then a porcelain panel that looked like stone.

Chair Mann said he was concerned about the character of the building and how it fit in the site; given this was a very important corner architecturally and retail-wise what was the context and what were they

trying to connect with. Mr. Alessandro said it was a transitional area with more vintage to the west and modern buildings to the east with 1010 in between. He said they were trying to create a dialogue between the two styles; the punched window wall and shifting of volumes east and west and more modern window walls on tower. Chair Mann said the same firm produced a building at 640 North Wells in Chicago and it was very similar to this, so how could this be unique to Oak Park. Mr. Alessandro said architects tend to use motifs over and over again; the Chicago building was plainer and prismatic while here offsets were used more like masonry buildings. Chair Mann said this was an important position and asked them to think deeper as this was not the progressive design Wright left us with.

Commissioner Gilbert said he was troubled that it was a prominent corner; those walking by would see a parking garage. He appreciated the effort to dress that up but it was a void in the downtown while everything else was alive. He said it was a big concern. Mr. Alessandro said it was a matter of how you cover the parking that would make the building feel integral to the community.

Chair Mann said he appreciated how they looked at massing in relation to Austin Gardens, but because of that the whole massing of the building was at Lake and Forest and wondered if other options to soften the corner and push that back a bit was possible; suggesting creating a gateway to Lake rather than Forest. Mr. Alessandro reviewed the other massing options and reasons why they oriented the L in this direction.

Commissioner Marsey said there was a perception in the community that the architectural heritage was being sold off one piece at a time; he had no issue with buildings of this scale if it was in the right location but this was an entrance to the Wright corridor. Mr. Alessandro said they had several conversations with the village's consultant architect and this design was from several iterations; they tried to address concerns but could not guarantee they will please everyone.

Chair Mann said the podium design doesn't do it; there seemed a disconnect from the top of the building and the base and the motif at the base didn't connect to Lake Street. He asked the applicant to look at alternatives at the podium as it looked like two buildings sitting on top of each other. He said Oak Park would be left with the legacy of this building and it should be an award-winning building.

Commissioner Gilbert agreed that the base and tower didn't relate and the base didn't relate to the downtown. He noted the Vantage building was a good example of how to contextualize in a modernist way. He said the base at this design was not exciting and this was a major, important intersection.

Mr. Failor asked for clarification for the applicant on next steps. Chair Mann said they should relook at the podium design.

Chair Mann moved to discussion on density and asked about the variance requested. Mr. Yule said it was due to construction costs as fewer units could work in a suburban area with a wood framed building but they were using a hybrid glass system, which was a much better glass system. Also, projects with these elements were expensive in Chicago as well as concrete. Mr. Yule said they believed 265 units would be successful as it was more of a function of rentable square footage.

Mr. Jason Koehn, President of Albion, said they did an analysis showing three different options from a financial standpoint: an 80 foot building, a 12 story building and the proposed developments. He said the 80 foot building took into account the parking and construction costs and found even if the land was free the project would still be worth less than what it would cost to build it.

Mr. Koehn said a 12 story building was even worse financially because of the cost of steel and concrete. He said they also considered a wood frame building as an alternative and that was not feasible financially.

Commissioner Gilbert asked about changing unit types from studios to one or two bedrooms and how that would change the dynamics. Mr. Koehn said they have been very successful building smaller than anyone else; bigger units tend to cost less to build but they were trying to get to the price point where more people could pay the rent. A lower rent means more demand for that type of unit. He said they have run into trouble with 3 bedroom units and have a policy not to let those leases expire in winter because they can be hard to re-rent and sit empty. When someone moves out of a studio with a lower price point the refill time was shorter. He said he doesn't believe the market would pencil out returns on the deal for it to be feasible to have larger units.

Commissioner Gilbert asked about the 37 parking spaces to be shared with 1010, if that agreement didn't exist, how would the parking change? Mr. Yule said it wouldn't matter much as they had to have three floors of parking and with drive aisles it wouldn't make much of a difference.

Adjournment

Commissioner Burton moved to continue the meeting and adjourn. Commissioner Halpin seconded. The next meeting will be August 29, 2017. The meeting adjourned at 10:46 p.m.

Angela Schell,
Recording Secretary