

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE OAK PARK PLAN COMMISSION
VILLAGE HALL- ROOM 101
Jan. 18, 2018
7:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Chair David Mann; Commissioners Glenn Brewer, Lawrence Brozek, Jeremy Burton, JoBeth Halpin, Greg Marsey, Kristin Nordman and Iris Sims

EXCUSED: Commissioner Paul May

ALSO PRESENT: Craig Failor, Village Planner; Gregory Smith, Plan Commission Attorney

Roll Call

Chair Mann called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. Chair Mann welcomed new commissioner Iris Sims. Roll was called. A quorum was present.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

None.

Public Hearing

None.

Other Business

Remanded Zoning Ordinance provisions – discussion

Design Guidelines – Single Family

Chair Mann said staff circulated about a dozen communities' design standards for review. He said they should have a discussion that attempted to balance individual property rights with design controls. He said staff asked each commissioner to focus on two communities to target the discussion. Commissioners reviewed the communities they selected to focus on. Many commissioners choose Park Ridge for the similar housing stock. Shaker Heights was another community cited as similar.

Mr. Failor said if this amendment was made to the zoning code, it would be enforced by the zoning officer. Appeals would go through the Community Design Commission. He reviewed why this discussion was sent to the Plan Commission by the Board of Trustees: concerns about scale and massing of additions; the relationship to adjacent buildings; and design materials.

Commissioner Burton said he was concerned about being too prescriptive. He said he has heard people in historic districts complain about regulations and while there was value in addressing the concerns discussed, he would like to see a light touch on this. He said it could lead to building off permit. Commissioner Halpin said the height and setback and massing on a block were worthwhile things to discuss without going overboard.

Staff clarified that the guidelines would act as an overlay to the zoning ordinance. Commissioners came to a consensus to limit the discussion to the three issues of scale and massing; compatibility to adjacent buildings; and design materials.

A short discussion ensued about determining a permissible height if there were a variety of heights on a street. Mr. Failor said typically it was determined through an average of the heights of adjacent properties. A short discussion ensued. Mr. Failor noted the draft Historic Preservation Guidelines had language that referenced fitting in with the character of the neighborhood. This then would allow for taller buildings in a one-story district with a roof slope and dormers if that would fit in with the look of the street.

Chair Mann noted the Park Ridge guidelines on height were very vague and open to interpretation. He suggested something more defined. Commissioner Burton suggested encouraging dormers and roof lines rather than proscribing an average on heights.

Commissioner Sims asked if they were focusing only on additions or if the guidelines would be for additions, teardowns and renovations. Mr. Failor suggested looking at additions to a home rather than building from scratch. Commissioner Marsey read from the Shaker Heights guidelines on height- an average of the buildings on the street; no taller than the tallest, no shorter than the shortest. He said he was comfortable with this as long as the roofline was also addressed.

Commissioners debated placing restrictions; some felt it could stifle creativity and impinge on private ownership. Others felt maintaining consistency and massing on a street was important.

Chair Mann suggested commissioners come to a consensus on issues to regulate and staff could then incorporate language from the various guidelines as well as the draft Historic Preservation Guidelines and bring this back for review at the next meeting.

Chair Mann noted there would be a public hearing in the future on the issue but offered to hear public comments from those who came to the meeting tonight.

Ms. Amanda Massie, 145 N. East Avenue, said she noticed brand new buildings in the village because they stood out from the rest of the buildings. She said architecture was important for those who live in the village; real estate flippers don't seem to care but neighbors do. She appreciated that the commission was struggling with the issue and said considering the look of the rest of the block was a good idea.

Ms. Laura Crawford, 1100 S. Gunderson Avenue block, said she has lived here long enough to see a lot of the housing stock south of I-290 turn over. She said the house next to her was renovated and flipped and everyone on the block was mortified by how it looks. She said the architecture in her neighborhood was not staying solid; there were a number of renovations that looked like a shipping container landed on top of a bungalow. She said there were also examples of additions that looked beautiful. She offered a tour of the southeast side.

Chair Mann suggested commissioners should forward photos to staff of problematic additions.

Ms. Sue Kehias, 1150 S. Lombard Avenue block, said a lot sold next to her that was substandard per the current zoning guidelines and a zoning variance was done. She said the commission was focusing on additions but was amiss to not consider new construction because it also had an impact. She said new buildings should have regulations that were in keeping with the block.

Mr. Brian Souders said there were a lot of bad additions south of the expressway. He said one home looked as if a mobile home has been slid on the side of the house; he said there were homes where the second story doesn't line up to the first story. He said south of the expressway had a lot of value and contractors will put up additions with no details, the same colored siding, no front porch, etc. and will be able to sell for a huge profit.

Commissioners asked staff to coordinate a possible tour of the southeast side.

Mr. Failor said he would look at the guidelines on the communities discussed as well as the Historic Preservation Guidelines draft to create a document for review by the Plan Commission.

Mr. Failor said there would be a zoning code amendment public hearing on February 1, 2018 on the accessory structure setback requirements. Attorney Smith would also have a report on the community residences discussion. On March 1, 2018 there may be a text amendment and special use application on the agenda.

Attorney Smith said he was working on the memo for community residences as requested by the Plan Commission. It will address zoning issues that courts have ruled are legal and not legal in relation to community residences to help inform the policy discussion; as well as the definition of family, the types of community residences regulated under state law, along with the number and location in Oak Park.

Commissioners chose January 27, 2018 at 9 a.m. for the southeast tour. Mr. Failor said the meeting would be noticed, once finalized.

Mr. Failor said CMAP, a regional planning agency, would be coming to an upcoming meeting to discuss their report, "On to 2050". Also, a planned development application was expected sometime in the spring.

Adjournment

Commissioner Burton moved to adjourn. Commissioner Sims seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Angela Schell,
Recording Secretary