



City of Aurora

2nd Floor Council
Chambers
44 East Downer Place
Aurora, Illinois 60505
www.aurora-il.org

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday
March 20, 2019
7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Pilmer called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The following Commission members were present: Chairman Pilmer, Mrs. Anderson, Mr. Cameron, Mr. Chambers, Mr. Divine, Mrs. Duncan, Mr. Elsbree, Mrs. Owusu-Safo, Mr. Reynolds and Ms. Tidwell. Mrs. Head called in and excused herself from the meeting. Mr. Hull was absent. Mr. Gonzales arrived at 7:05 p.m.

OTHERS PRESENT

The following staff members were present: Mr. Sieben, Mr. Broadwell and Mrs. Jackson.

Others Present: Jeffrey Gilbert (Hope for Tomorrow).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

19-0172

Approval of the Minutes for the Planning Commission meeting on February 20, 2019.

A motion was made by Ms. Tidwell, seconded by Mrs. Anderson, that the minutes be approved and filed. The motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Pilmer said if you are here for an item that does not appear on the agenda and you wish to speak to the Commission, we can give you 3 minutes to do so.

No one came forward.

AGENDA

19-0132

An Ordinance Granting a Special Use Permit for a Community Residence, Major (1520) Use on the Property located at 537 Hartford Avenue (Hope for Tomorrow, Inc. - 19-0132 / AU29/2-18.227-A/Su - SB -

Ward 4) (PUBLIC HEARING)

Mr. Broadwell said this is a Special Use for a Community Residence, Major at 537 Hartford Avenue. The Petitioner, Mr. Gilbert, from Hope for Tomorrow is here. They are requesting approval of this Special Use. Details of the request include continued use of the existing structure in compliance with the city's applicable standards for group homes that provide recovery assistance to clients with substance use disorders. A little bit of background. The property is currently in unincorporated Kane County. It is about 3.5 acres and it maintains a 2 story detached single family home that is approximately 2,000 square feet. There are 5 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and 8 beds. You can see more in the property research sheet. What's going on here is that Hope for Tomorrow, this social service agency, is in unincorporated Kane County and they are being annexed. There is also an Annexation Petition coming with this. The Special Use and the Annexation will meet up at the P&D meeting next week. The Petitioner is going through the Special Use approval process so that they can continue to use this property for this organization in a way that meets the city's standards for this type of use. The property will be annexed per the R-1 One Family Dwelling District and also be connecting to city water.

Ms. Tidwell said I just heard you say R-1 and I see that in here, One Family Dwelling zoning, but I also see Special Use for a Community Residence. Is that R-1 or is that a different designation?

Mr. Broadwell said it will be zoned R-1 with a Special Use. If it were just a home, it would be annexed as R-1, but because Hope for Tomorrow is in there, it is coming in as R-1 One Family Dwelling District with a Special Use.

Mr. Cameron said is the Special Use attached to the lot or to the use? In other words, if they were to move out, would it revert, or what happens?

Mr. Sieben said well the Special Use stays with the property, but if Hope for Tomorrow were to move, another group home major could move in if that were possible. It would stay with the property.

Mr. Cameron said and my understanding is that the primary reason for this is that the current well has failed or is failing and they prefer to have a more reliable source of potable water.

Mr. Broadwell said yes. The Petitioner is here and he can talk more about that as well.

Mr. Sieben said the answer is yes. This area south of Prairie between generally Elmwood over to Randall, the south side of Prairie, this area does have city water on most of those streets. They were done back in the 80's I believe. With these properties, when the wells go out, and if they are contiguous, we have had a policy of annexing them. The only reason this is coming through as a Special Use and not a simple annexation is because Mr. Gilbert's use does fall under the Special Use.

The Petitioner was sworn in.

I'm Jeffrey Gilbert, 479 N. Lake Street in Aurora, Illinois 60506. Thank you for inviting me tonight. Hope for Tomorrow has operated this home in its current capacity since 1999. About 6 months ago, we started running into issues with the well. We would come up with a very temporary fix. The problem would repeat itself. We would come up with a temporary fix. This went on. It was very costly. It was also just very inconvenient to the residents in the house. Most recently, probably 2½ months ago,

the fix wasn't working anymore and so that's when we contacted Michels Plumbing to find a solution. We have hooked up to the city water. It is a permanent fix. It is also some of the best water in the State of Illinois. Just to give you a history of what the house does. As I said, we've operated in that location since 1999. In 2008, I did my Master's thesis on Neighborhood Perception of Peer Lead Recovery Homes. What we found through a survey of the neighborhood was that people that lived within 2 blocks of the home did not have a problem with the home being there. People that lived further than 2 blocks away weren't even aware that they were there. So my thesis director and I interpreted those results as positive because if it was a problem everybody would have known about it. So when I established the policies and the rules for those houses, because I have another house on the street too, but that's another date maybe, we want to be community friendly. Our residents need to abide by all state, local and federal laws. They gather outside in the back, not in the front. They keep the volume down. They have to be substance free. We do not accept people with violent criminal backgrounds or crimes against children. We never have. We don't accept sex offenders. We accept men just like myself or other men that maybe have drank too much alcohol and want to get their life back together. We have a huge opioid epidemic in our entire country. What we see on an average is about 85% of Hope for Tomorrow clients report achieving the longest and/or best quality sobriety they've ever known in their entire life. What that does is it returns to society a productive, law abiding, substance free, mentally stable person in the community that's working, engaging, being involved with their children, being involved with their family and giving back to society. That is what Hope for Tomorrow does.

Mrs. Owusu-Safo said typically how long do people stay in the house, the rotation of new people that come in?

Mr. Gilbert said we require a minimum 6 month commitment. But I also tell them that I do not believe that's any near long enough. I do have people that have been in that house for this week, I think, going on 800 days. Every week I get the roster and we put the day they came in and today's date. We do that on Monday. As of Monday, we have residents who have been in that house for almost 900 days actually. Another one has been there about 500 and some days. So the rotation, I think the average is probably 200 to 300 days. Not everybody, because there are people that return back to the use and then they are not appropriate for recovering at that point so we refer them to a more appropriate level of care. We do random drug screens. We keep an eye on them. They have curfews. We have phases, different phases, as they advance toward their progress goals. They can go to a Phase 2 or a Phase 3, which a Phase 2 gives them an 11:00 o'clock curfew and a Phase 3 gives them a 12:00 o'clock curfew and we don't have curfews after midnight. I think we all know nothing good happens after midnight.

Mrs. Anderson said I have a question. How many individuals live in the house at one time?

Mr. Gilbert said a capacity of 8, but it depends on the time of the year. Sometime when it's really cold, we might have 8, but then it is 6 or 7 on an average.

Mrs. Owusu-Safo said are typically these men that are from the general area or are they coming from other places? I'm just trying to see what kind of support group they have in the home.

Mr. Gilbert said they have a fantastic support group, probably one of the best they've ever had because they have a group of men who are working together toward a

common goal. It is a support of community. I'm a counselor. I'm a Masters level counselor. My assistant is working on his Bachelor's in social work and he is a counselor. They have our support and everything too. They also have the 12 Step Communities. We work with faith based organizations to try to create a holistic approach to this.

Mrs. Anderson so do they have to be 21 and older?

Mr. Gilbert said 18 and older. These are adult men.

Ms. Tidwell said is there training in life skills for them while they are at the facility?

Mr. Gilbert said there is. Years back when Mayor Weisner put together that Homeless Task Force, we worked with Carpenter's Place and they developed the 13 Major Areas of Life. So we work with life skills, we work with job skills. Our residents all have to work full time. When they come in, most of them are unemployed. I tell them you have 7 days to get a full time job. They go I haven't worked in 2 years. There's your problem. You have too much time on your hands. You need to do a budget. You need to go to meetings. You are going to get drug tested on a random basis. Some people say we are pretty strict.

The public input portion of the public hearing was opened. No witnesses came forward. The public input portion of the public hearing was closed.

Mr. Broadwell said staff would recommend approval of the Ordinance granting a Special Use Permit for a Community Residence, Major Use on the property located at 537 Hartford Avenue.

MOTION OF APPROVAL WAS MADE BY: Mrs. Duncan

MOTION SECONDED BY: Mr. Chambers

AYES: Mrs. Anderson, Mr. Chambers, Mr. Divine, Mrs. Duncan, Mr. Elsbree, Mr. Gonzales, Mrs. Owusu-Safo, Mr. Reynolds, Ms. Tidwell

NAYS: None

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Is the proposal in accordance with all applicable official physical development policies and other related official plans and policies of the City of Aurora?

Mr. Chambers said these are listed in the staff report.

2. Does the proposal represent the logical establishment and/or consistent extension of the requested classification in consideration of the existing land uses, existing zoning classifications, and essential character of the general area of the property in question?

Mr. Reynolds said I believe the proposal is a wonderful use for the property.

3. Is the proposal consistent with a desirable trend of development in the general area of the property in question, occurring since the property in question was placed in its present zoning classification, desirability being defined as the trend's consistency with applicable official physical development policies and other related official plans and policies of the City of Aurora?

Mr. Reynolds said it is consistent.

4. *Will the proposal maintain a compatible relationship with the traffic pattern and traffic volume of adjacent streets and not have an adverse effect upon traffic or pedestrian movement and safety in the general area of the property in question?*

Mrs. Owusu-Safo said there should be no impact or change to the current traffic volume or patterns.

5. *Will the proposal allow for the provision of adequate public services and facilities to the property in question and have no adverse effect upon existing public services and facilities?*

Mrs. Anderson said these are already in place.

6. *Does the proposal take adequate measures or will they be taken to provide ingress and egress so designed as to maximize pedestrian and vehicular circulation ease and safety, minimize traffic congestion, and not substantially increase the congestion in the public streets?*

Mrs. Owusu-Safo said again, there should be no change to the current conditions.

9a. *Will the special use not preclude the normal and orderly development of improvement of surrounding properties due to the saturation or concentration of similar uses in the general area?*

Mr. Cameron said it is a continuation of a previous use and is occurring because it needs to be attached to the City of Aurora in order to receive water.

9b. *Is the special use in all other respects in conformance to the applicable regulations in the district in which it is located, except as such regulations may in each instance be modified by the City Council pursuant to the recommendations of the Plan Commission?*

Mr. Chambers said yes it is.

Mr. Broadwell said this will next be heard at the Planning and Development Committee on Thursday, March 28, 2019, at 4:00 p.m. on the fifth floor of this building.

A motion was made by Mrs. Duncan, seconded by Mr. Chambers, that this agenda item be Forwarded to the Planning & Development Committee, on the agenda for 3/28/2019. The motion carried.

PENDING

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A) Amendments

B) Grant and Award Research

C) Comprehensive Plan

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Sieben said in 2 weeks on April 3 there will be 2 ZBA matters, variances for the ZBA members. It will be at 6:30 p.m. Then we will have Planning Commission at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Cameron said I have a question also. Have there been any changes in the signage requirements for political candidates?

Mr. Sieben said no. There are no time limits, etc.

Mr. Cameron said they have to be on personal property? You can't be on the right-of-way?

Mr. Sieben said correct, no public right-of-way.

Mr. Cameron said and it is restricted to 2 by 3?

Mr. Sieben said you can have a maximum of 6 square feet on a residential property. We don't care what it says for the most part, but personal expressing, political, whatever.

Mr. Cameron said what about business property? Is any size allowed?

Mr. Sieben said it would be limited to whatever that business property would have. Typically the little bit larger political signs are okay on business property.

Mr. Cameron said I've noticed there are a lot of 3 by 4's.

Mr. Sieben said those are okay as long as they are on private property.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Chambers, seconded by Mrs. Anderson, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by voice vote. Chairman Pilmer adjourned the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

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