

Russellville Planning Commission Minutes

February 22, 2016 @ 5:30 p.m.

The Russellville Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Monday, February 22, 2016 at 5:30 p.m., in the Russellville City Hall Council Chambers.

Members Present

Chairman Dennis Boyd
Vice-Chair Doug Skelton
Nathan Barber
Council Liaison Freddie Harris

Mike Wilkins
John Whiteside
Peggy Stratton

Members Absent

Secretary Wendell Miller
Todd Meimerstorf
Shirley Hatley

Also present: Mayor Randy Horton, Alderman Bill Eaton, City Attorney Trey Smith, City Engineer Kurt Jones, Planner James Walden, Building Official Brian Holstein, Planning Assistant Lequitta Jones, Fire Marshal Richard Setian, David Garza/Barrett & Associates, Aaron Arndt, Lindsey G. Rye, Randy Barefield, and Gaye Croom.

Welcome

Chairman Boyd recognized Alderwoman Freddie Harris as the new City Council liaison and welcomed her to the commission.

The First Order of Business was a request to review and approve the January 25, 2016 minutes.

Commissioner Skelton made the motion to accept the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wilkins which passed unanimously.

The Second Order of Business was a request to approve a Large-scale Development for a proposed mini-storage facility, located in the 3700 Block of West Main Street. Submitted by Dave Garza of Barrett & Associates on behalf of Randy Barefield. (DV.16.02.141)

Planner Walden said this request is for a large-scale development approval to construct 19 mini-storage buildings on approximately 4.71 acres. The structures will have a combined square footage of 75,350 square feet. The site has been subject to a previously approved special permit application to operate a self-storage facility. When reviewing a large-scale development one of the things you often ask yourself is what type of traffic impact is this going to have. The site should generate approximately 200 vehicle trips per day. When you compare this to something like a Walgreens development which would fit on a site like this, it would generate 1400-1500 vehicle trips per day. So this is going to have substantially less traffic generation than you would

normally have with a retail type of use. The site covers a significant area with impervious surfaces so drainage is something that is really important to consider. The proposal is generally consistent with the comprehensive plan due to the location being indicated for commercial development. The recommendation for action by the staff is “Approval with Contingencies”:

- 1) Approval of the drainage plan by the city engineer.
- 2) Revise the site plan to include a dumpster enclosure outside of the gate.
- 3) Approval of a fire protection plan by the fire marshal.
- 4) File application for a one-lot final plat after the site plan is approved to convey needed drainage and utility easements.

Commissioner Skelton asked if the detention pond is going to retain water. Mr. Dave Garza said only for a short period of time. It is not going to hold water.

City Engineer Jones said the developer is proposing to enlarge that ditch structure and actually grade that low area where everything drains down to the east side of the site. Then they will restrict flow out of the detention basin with some kind of a release structure.

Commissioner Wilkins asked how the undeveloped property up toward the mountain would affect this drainage. Engineer Jones said there has been some diversions up there as far as how the storm drain diverts around and drainage diverts in that area currently. There is a ditch up there that most of that diverts. It does not go through this site and, consequently, would not go through this detention pond. That will be another issue that we will have to address as that develops.

Chairman Boyd asked Engineer Jones if he will ensure that the proposed development meets all of the other requirements of the Land Subdivision and Development Code before final approval. Engineer Jones said “yes.”

Commissioner Skelton made the motion to approve the request. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Whiteside and passed unanimously.

The Third Order of Business was a public hearing requesting review and a recommendation of approval for a Special Use Permit, to allow parking of trucks, equipment pertaining to house moving, and temporary parking of houses that are being moved, for property located at the corner of Hwy-7T and Jimmy Lile Road zoned C-2. Submitted by Shane Cantrell d/b/a Combs Home Builders, Inc. (SP.16.02.140)

Planner Walden said some of the comments that we had related to this request are being handled as a special use because of the similarity to the special use, *Construction Office/Building, Equipment Repair, Sales, or Contractor Storage Yard*. He noted that the site is located within a quasi-industrial area, but is additionally within 750 feet of a developing neighborhood which is just south of the high school. As it goes further west, it tends to transition more towards industrial. As it goes further northeast it has less than an industrial character. There is no clear definition of what would constitute, “*temporary storage and staging*” which, if you don’t put any conditions with it, could unintentionally lead to use of the site as a junk yard. Mr. Walden recommended that if this use is approved, you make some sort of condition of what “temporary”

actually means. While there are uses of similar intensity with potential to cause blight, the proposed use could intensify the industrial nature of the corridor and extend that character toward the new residential development occurring just south of the high school. This use is a type that, in many cases, intensifies over time. This concern is also based on some of the other similar industrial and quasi-industrial uses that have intensified over time in that area. If you look back to the 1992 - 2000 timeframe, the junk yard that is southeast of here was fairly small and now it is pretty substantial. In terms of looking at the comprehensive plan the designation for this area really doesn't apply because it is very outdated. The plan indicates single-family residential use in that area and that's not been the case for a long time. In terms of the comprehensive plan being used as the basis of making a decision, I would say it's not very strong in this instance.

Mr. Shane Cantrell, d/b/a Combs House Moving, said we have been in business for 80 years. We are trying to use the property. We have owned it since the late 1950s and in the last 10 years is when we have been randomly parking stuff there. We have never had any complaints except this year it has been so wet that we got dirt in the street because there is not a formal driveway. We just drive through the ditch. Mr. Cantrell said there needs to be a driveway.

Chairman Boyd asked if there were any members of the public who wanted to speak either in favor, or against, this application. Pastor Nicholas Davalaar of Covenant Presbyterian Church, located adjacent to the Combs' property, said the church purchased the property in 2010 and had never filed a complaint against them. Pastor Davalaar said he was here to speak against the proposed Special Use Permit. Getting the homes there and moving them around is taking a toll on their lot and the roadside especially due to all the rain. From this last spring, their activity has left ruts on Knoxville that are still visible. In the long term, I see that as a hindrance to meaningful improvements and investments in the immediate vicinity. We are on the edge of Russellville and the plan may be entirely outdated, but Russellville is growing even in our direction and I ask the Planning Commission to encourage that growth.

Commissioner Wilkins asked how this use can fit in with what we are trying to do now that we are upgrading our planning. This is a main thoroughfare in our City with a lot of industrial traffic. Also, at that particular location I'm not sure how many people have been killed there due to traffic accidents in that curve. Commissioner Wilkins said this does not even come close to approaching what we are trying to accomplish in our planning now.

Planner Walden replied that some of the concerns that are related to this application would be addressed with a site plan that would follow. I might redirect some of that question back to say that really is a determination that the planning commissioners have to answer.

Commissioner Wilkins said the way I hear you is that this is a real gray area in our comprehensive plan as it stands today. And certainly going forward, I don't think it would meet what we are hoping this commission, and our new comprehensive plan, is going to call for in this City as far as growth and development.

Planner Walden said the comprehensive plan indicates single-family residential that has gone by the wayside a long time ago. In terms of looking at it in that perspective it's not a good decision.

Commissioner Wilkins said we've got more and more single-family, and we recently approved a multi-family residential development near there – a quality development there. Planner Walden replied that when I said it's not really relevant in terms of the land use, when I looked for policies I really didn't see policies that either encouraged this use or really specifically said anything about encouraging this type of use. Commissioner Wilkins said I think there would be a better place for their business than this location.

Chairman Boyd asked about the possibility of using opaque protective screening or other special conditions. Planner Walden said when I was reviewing this and looking at it during the technical review, the questions that we had were about paving materials, how to secure the site, logistics of turning motions, dumpster onsite and how this could be screened. At that time the applicant said he wanted to see if he could get a Special Use Permit approved and then go through the site plan process to address those particular concerns. Since this is a Special Use Permit you can certainly impose conditions on approval regarding anything that may need to be addressed. Paving the site would be a challenge because of the large equipment. Realistically, the type of surface that you would have at that location probably would be something like gravel.

Commissioner Stratton asked how long, on average, a house would be located at the site. Mr. Cantrell said 90 to 120 days and no more than two houses at the site at any one time. It will mostly be equipment.

Commissioner Skelton told Mr. Cantrell that you have moved houses for me and I appreciate the service you provide. This is nothing against you personally, but the City's comprehensive plan is taking a new direction and this flies in the face of what the City is trying to do with respect to major thoroughfares.

Commissioner Skelton made a motion to deny the Special Use Permit. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wilkins and the motion passed unanimously.

The Fourth Order of Business was a public hearing requesting review and a recommendation of approval for a Special Use Permit to operate an automotive repair shop and towing service, for property located at 407 North El Paso zoned C-2. Submitted by Aaron Arndt. (SP.16.02.142)

Planner Walden said this request is to reestablish an automotive repair and towing use, including an impoundment lot, on the site. The applicant is not proposing any improvements to the site. The site was previously used as Boulder Car Clinic. The application would reestablish a similar use to the way it was previously occupied. The proposed use is inconsistent with the Downtown Master Plan adopted in 2013. The plan calls for the use of the site as an aquatic center that is actually being proposed at a different site. However, in looking at the planning principles for that plan there are several here where it demonstrates inconsistencies with that plan. The first one of the planning principles is that streetscapes should be attractive, safe, and interesting. This use would detract from the aesthetic quality of the corridor and discourage pedestrian use of existing improvements on N El Paso Avenue. A second planning principle is to accommodate parking without degrading downtown's appearance and function. The proposed use will detract from the aesthetic quality of the corridor and future function of the corridor as a mixed-use destination by creating a space that will separate the remainder of the El Paso corridor from downtown. One big goal about that plan is encouraging connectivity between Arkansas Tech

and downtown. The proposed use would create a dead space in between that would discourage pedestrian use in that area. A third planning principle is to providing a rich mixture of shopping, dining, and entertainment. The proposed use could discourage further development of the corridor to meet this aim. The recommendation for this item is “Denial based upon its inconsistency with the Downtown Master Plan.” The reestablishment of the use could be detrimental to further development of the El Paso corridor. The proposed use and existing form and site design is not compatible with the type of mixed-use, pedestrian friendly environment that the plan encourages.

Mr. Aaron Arndt said in the Technical Review Meeting that he misunderstood the whole upgrading of the property as referring to only the building. As far as the impound yard, there is already a fenced in area. We will be cleaning up the impound yard. The fence would be opaque. So as far as the impound yard you wouldn't actually see the vehicle that was impounded. The fence would be repaired and would not be an eyesore as it is now.

Chairman Boyd asked if there were any members of the public who wanted to speak either in favor, or against, this application. There were none.

Commissioner Whiteside said that we have a jewel on El Paso in our future tying Arkansas Tech to downtown to make it something very special for Russellville and I don't think this proposed use fits.

Commissioner Wilkins said the City just spent millions of dollars on El Paso, putting in the bike paths, lighting, improved sidewalks that have enhanced the value of the property. Also, there has been property selling up and down that area and in that general area. I don't think this comes anywhere close to fitting the goal that the City established by their actions with our City Council's desire to improve El Paso. We are blessed with a wonderful institution like Tech that has made it clear that they want to see the area between Arkansas Avenue and El Paso developed in the future and connect to downtown Russellville. I have nothing against this business in any way, but this absolutely does not fit in the City's plans for that property when they invested the millions of dollars in improving El Paso. The traffic on El Paso has picked up substantially. He told Mr. Arndt that he had nothing against his business.

Commissioner Wilkins made a motion to deny the request for a Special Use Permit. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Whiteside and passed unanimously.

The Fifth Order of Business was a public hearing requesting review and a recommendation of approval for a Special Use Permit to operate an automotive repair shop, for property located at 915 East 3rd Street zoned C-2. Submitted by Dave Garza of Barrett & Associates on behalf of Michael Gilbert Automotive. (SP.16.02.143)

Planner Walden said this application involves a request to use the site for an automotive repair business. It has been used for this use in the past. The structure on the site was designed for the proposed use, there are similar uses of greater intensity near the site and the site is located within a solidly commercial and quasi-industrial area where the proposed use would be compatible. The comprehensive plan, again for whatever reason, indicates the area for single-family residential for future use. That designation is not consistent with what the area is zoned. I would

say the plan is just outdated. The recommendation would be “Approval and a comment that could be a condition would be requiring a dumpster enclosure at the site.”

Mr. Dave Gaza said he knew Michael Gilbert personally and he would do anything you asked him to do.

Chairman Boyd asked if there were any members of the public who wanted to speak either in favor, or against, this application. There were none.

Commissioner Wilkins asked Mr. Garza if there would be any wrecked cars, engines, or things like that stored in the parking lot. Scott Sanders said he was the property owner and would not allow it. Mr. Garza said this site is an overflow for Mr. Gilbert. His actual operation is at Trucks Unlimited and everything at this site is indoors.

Commissioner Stratton made the motion to approve the request with the condition that no exterior storage be allowed on the side or front of the building. Commissioner Wilkins seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned.

Chairman Dennis Boyd