

MINUTES

**TOWN OF NORMAL PLANNING COMMISSION
NORMAL, ILLINOIS**

**REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2021
5:00 P.M.**

Members Present:

Mr. McBride, Mr. Broad, Mr. Matejka, Ms. Lund, Mr. Tummala, Mr. Byars

Members Absent:

Ms. Widergren

Others Present:

Director of Inspections Greg Troemel, Town Planner Mercy Davison, Associate Planner Caitlin Kelly, Office Associate Hilary Houk

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chairman McBride and he noted a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Broad moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 4, 2021. Ms. Lund seconded the motion. The minutes stood as written.

Public Hearing:

- a. 21-12-13-PC: Amended Annexation Agreement with land use matters pertaining to: An Amended Preliminary Subdivision Plan with Variance for the Number of Attached Units.**

Ms. Davison reviewed the staff report. The Vineyards is a 94-acre subdivision located at the southeast corner of Raab Rd and Airport Rd. There are 5 platted lots for attached homes along Shepard Road at the south end of the subdivision. It is zoned R-1B, which typically contains detached single-family homes. Many years ago, the entire neighborhood was approved for alternative designs under an annexation agreement. The developer would like to re-subdivide these lots into 6. A preliminary plan lays out how the entire neighborhood is going to develop and when they come in with their final plat it gets approved by Council. In

this case the public saw a plan that was for 5 lots and since they want to increase that by 1, it will need to go through the public process again. Staff is not recommending in favor of the proposal, primarily because it is zoned as R-1B.

Mr. Troemel mentioned this was not a hard recommendation for denial. The unique situation in this case is that the surrounding lots are developed and occupied. Staff thought they should give those residents the opportunity to weigh in if they chose to.

Ms. Davison stated they did not hear from anyone in the area.

Mr. Byars asked what the logical step is in rezoning this land, and if it is rezoned does this affect other parts of the project overall?

Ms. Davison responded that one solution would be to approve the changes as requested and call it a variance. The only zoning that would allow for 6 attached units is R-3, and it would be unusual to have one small portion of R-1B subdivision zoned as such. The current process is the most straightforward for the developers.

Mr. Tummala stated he wanted to make mention of the messy traffic situation in this area although it had nothing to do with this request. After reviewing the plan, he noticed that there is no access from the south side of the neighborhood into the east side. He stated that another access point could potentially help some of the traffic issues. Also, there is no play area for the children.

Ms. Davison stated that the subdivision layout, street alignments, and green spaces are determined during the preliminary plan stage, and nothing along those lines can change at this point.

Mr. Byars asked if this is approved as a variance, is there a way to include those standards as part of the approval.

Ms. Davison responded that the developers would show the elevations of these buildings and as part of the conditions the commission could tell them what they would be required to build.

Mr. Troemel stated that staff tries to avoid doing this. The developer is prepared to show a rendering that will be attractive.

Mr. Broad stated the zoning allows a maximum of 5 homes in a row but wanted to know the Town's rationale on the limit.

Mr. Troemel responded that if it was truly developed as an R-1 PUD, they would be allowed 5 attached units; this is the limit the Town has had in place for R-1 for a long time. If it was zoned R-3 there wouldn't be a limit.

Mr. Broad responded that it seems the maximum of 5 attached units is intended to make a distinction in a neighborhood between multifamily and single-family.

Mr. Troemel responded that was correct.

Todd Bugg, 800 Smith Dr, Normal, IL, was sworn in by Chairman McBride. He stated that he is an attorney on behalf of Trunk Bay. They are asking the commission to approve this amended preliminary plan to allow the 6 units, which is a very positive plan. Trunk Bay Construction has always strived to provide innovative planning and building techniques to enhance the community and address the needs of the community. Mr. Trunk has been working with engineer Neil Finlen for a year with an eye toward this kind of structure. In this case, the 6 units are possible because of innovative planning that includes two car garages on the outside, and one car garages on the inside. This allows the 6 units to be very spacious without requiring extra ground.

The building plan was displayed on the screen.

Mr. Bugg stated the way that the garages are set up allows for more space to be used in this area. This approach accomplishes several priority points for the Town of Normal. It reduces residential footprints without sacrificing living space and provides much needed housing in the community. It has been brought to Mr. Bugg's attention that real estate agents in the area have prospective buyers but no sellers, making it clear that we need more housing in the area, which this provides. The proposed units would be sold for around \$280,000. Mr. Bugg stated the surrounding area is landlocked so there would not be an opportunity to build several more attached units such as this proposal. This is only to figure out to use this space.

An image was shown of the original preliminary plan, which had 136 dwelling units.

Mr. Bugg stated in 2010 the developer reduced that number to 99. This proposal is a slight departure from the preliminary plan in an area that they believe allows for this positive change.

Marty Trunk, 1310 Joan Way, Normal, IL, was sworn in by Chairman McBride. Mr. Trunk stated that he has been working on this design for about a year. When this ground became available, he jumped on it and wanted to do something different than Trunk Bay has done in the past. They did not realize there was a problem with having 6 units, which is why they're asking for the amendment. He restated the innovative character of the differing garage sizes and side entrances. The units will have an open floor plan and be about 1,600 square feet in size. Mr. Trunk stated they put their sign on the property, and he has had the chance to talk to people about his plans for the area.

Mr. Matejka asked if they went with 5 units, what would be the square footage?

Mr. Trunk stated that the units would not be any larger.

Mr. Matejka clarified that they would build 1,600 square feet regardless.

Mr. Trunk confirmed that was correct. There is a limit on the size of these units due to the expense.

Mr. Matejka wanted to clarify that the residential entrance for the two-car garages was located on the side of the structure.

Mr. Trunk confirmed that was correct.

Mr. Matejka asked staff what is located on either side of this property.

Ms. Davison responded to the west is 5 attached two-story townhomes and to the east is 3 attached one-story homes. The piece of land to the south could be either commercial or multi family when it is developed.

Ms. Lund stated that her concern with this is the space that the future owners and or renters will have. She stated that she was inclined to vote for 5 but wanted to clarify that regardless of the amount of units the living space will remain 1,600 square feet.

Mr. Trunk confirmed that was correct.

Ms. Lund asked where the difference is made up between the 5- or 6-unit structure.

Mr. Trunk responded that the difference is on the lot.

Ms. Lund asked if there are only 5 units, do they have one- or two-car garages?

Mr. Trunk stated it would still be a combination.

Ms. Lund asked if there is data on the size of the lots to the east and west. If 6 is approved, does it make it significantly smaller?

Ms. Davison responded that she did not have it written down but did not believe it was radically different.

Ms. Lund asked if all the units are connected with no yard between them.

Mr. Trunk stated that there is a small area of grass for the backyards.

Ms. Lund asked if the yard size would change at all with 5 units instead of 6.

Mr. Trunk responded no because they will not be changing the size of the unit. The usable ground would not increase by shrinking it to 5 units.

Mr. Tummala asked if the garages would face the north.

Mr. Trunk responded that was correct.

Mr. Tummala asked if the owners would have additional parking space other than the garage.

Mr. Trunk responded the driveways will be longer than some that you see at other units.

There was so brief discussion regarding the map and the traffic situation once the area is developed further.

Mr. McBride asked how the market looks for residences with one-car garages.

Mr. Trunk responded less is more and that is what people are moving toward. The target audience for this structure is young professionals.

Mr. Bugg stated that Trunk Bay has moved away from building homes with 3-car garages.

Mr. Trunk agreed that they have started building two-car garages with an extra bump out.

Ms. Lund asked if this is approved, what kind of precedent is being set for the neighborhood?

Ms. Davison stated this is part of an annexation agreement that from day one was an interesting variety of housing types. Depending on what is decided tonight, the Council would have to approve an amendment to the annexation agreement, approve the amended preliminary plan, and approve the final plat of the 6 lots. Ms. Davison stated she does not foresee this impacting any future subdivision changes.

Mr. Broad stated that this is a classic Planning Commission decision in his view. He could see a good argument either way. Mr. Broad stated that he sees value in providing flexibility for developers and their creative thinking and problem solving. Planning Commission is always trying to decide where to be flexible and where to hold the line. The plan which has been in place calls for 5 homes instead of 6. Staff pointed out that the plan for 5 houses already provides more flexibility than typical development like this. The drawings are very appealing and solve problems in creative ways. Mr. Broad stated that when he sees the drawings, they have less of a single-family neighborhood feel and more of a multi-family. Given the plan calls for 5 homes on this piece of land which other developers in the area had to follow, he is inclined to keep the rule in place.

Mr. Byars stated he had the same thoughts when he read the packet. He stated that after hearing the presentation he is more inclined to vote for 6 given the need for housing in the community.

Ms. Lund stated that she was trying to keep an open mind. When she read the packet, her initial thought was to keep the 5 units thinking there would be smaller living space. Prices have gone up and the amount of living space that people get for what they pay feels like it is getting less. She was pleased to learn that regardless of if they vote for 5 or 6 units, there will still be the same amount of living space. That plays in favor of going ahead with 6. She stated

that she is currently on the fence. She believes that many time housing is crammed together, and she tends to vote for less density. Ms. Lund was very pleased to see there had been an amendment to the original map that reduced density. She is leaning toward fewer people and fewer cars in the area.

Mr. McBride stated that the community has continued to hear that there is a lack of housing diversity. It is a small contribution but still something a little different. For that reason, he would be in favor of 6 units.

Ms. Davison noted that all the regular notices were sent out to the public. Not hearing from residents that live right next door to something on the agenda is almost unheard of. It makes more sense to know that individuals have been talking behind the scenes.

Mr. Tummala restated the need for more housing is a priority and that is why he would agree to 6 units. Mr. Tummala wanted to be sure that this does not set a precedent for other developers to come in and request the same thing.

Mr. Matejka stated that his initial thought was to request a denial out of respect for staff and long-term planning. At the same time hearing from staff that this isn't a line in the sand opened his mind. Mr. Matejka did not see an immediate impact in terms of 5 or 6 units. This structure would be very attractive in an area like Uptown, where they could walk or bike to destinations. He also questioned what this will look like in 30 years, which cannot be predicted. At this point with the square footage and footprint staying similar he was leaning towards the 6 units.

Mr. Matejka moved, seconded by Mr. Byars, to recommend an approval for the amended annexation agreement preliminary plan for the attached units be allowed to have 6 instead of 5.

Ayes: Mr. Byaers, Mr. Tummala, Mr. Matejka, Mr. McBride

Nays: Ms. Lund, Mr. Broad

Motion approved 4-2

b. 21-12-14PC: Proposed Zoning Map Amendment, 1305 S. Madison Street

Ms. Davison reviewed the staff report. 1305 S. Madison St is adjacent to the railroad tracks and a couple blocks west of Main St. This property is currently zoned M-1, which is a lighter manufacturing district, but surrounded by B-1. This neighborhood has a few residential houses in it as well. Someone is requesting to use this property as a salon, which is not permitted under M-1 zoning. Staff is not asking the commission to decide based on the salon specifically just the broader idea of zoning it B-1. Changing the zoning in the area is not much of a leap. Staff finds that this does meet the provisions in the code for an approval.

Ms. Lund inquired about the signatures being redacted in the packet.

Ms. Kelly stated that it is for the privacy of the applicant.

Mr. Tummala asked if the building was remaining the same.

Ms. Davison said that was correct. The Commission's job is to make sure the zoning change is appropriate given the guidelines of the code. The building department would oversee making sure any future changes were up to code.

Seth Couillard, 2905 Hendricks Dr, Bloomington, IL, was sworn in by Chairman Zimmerman. He stated that he is a local real estate business owner. This property is in the process of being sold and to find a new use for it they're requesting it be rezoned.

Mr. Matejka moved, second by Mr. Broad, to recommend an approval for the rezoning as requested.

Mr. Broad stated this property is down the street from him and he supports the proposed change.

Ayes: Mr. Byars, Mr. Broad, Mr. Matejka, Mr. Tummala, Ms. Lund, Mr. McBride

Nays: None

Motion approved 6-0

Other Business:

There will be a Planning Commission meeting in January.

Adjournment:

There being no further business, Mr. Matejka moved to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Hilary Houk
Office Associate