

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



MEETING MINUTES

DATE OF MEETING: **December 12, 2024**

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

7:00 pm

Village Hall Board Room
2020 Chestnut Street
Homewood, IL 60430

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Sierzega called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm and explained the procedure for the meeting.

ROLL CALL:

In attendance were Members Alfonso, Bransky, Cap, O'Brien, Castaneda, and Chair Sierzega. Present from the Village was Assistant Director of Economic & Community Development Noah Schumerth and Building Department Secretary Darlene Leonard. There were 2 members of the public in attendance, and 1 person on Zoom.

The public was able to watch and listen to the meeting via Zoom webinar.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Chairman Sierzega asked for any changes to the minutes from November 21, 2024.

Member Castaneda stated she is listed in the attendees twice and one should be removed.

Member Cap stated on page 3 in his comments at the bottom "drainage" should be changed to "storm sewer" above and below the comments from Mr. Kumar. On page 5 in his comments the middle of the page "is" should be changed to "if" and add "if other child care centers in the B-4 are non-conforming". And, on page 7 in his comments at the bottom add "front" to the sentence so it stated "someone else's front yard".

Member O'Brien stated on page 9 in Member Cap's comments at the bottom to replace "lark" with "large".

Assistant Director Schumerth stated on page 5 that "scone" should be corrected to "sconce".

Building Department Secretary Leonard stated on page 3 in Member Cap's comments at the bottom of the page "they" needs to be changed to "the" and in the adjournment ayes on page 10, the Chair needs to be "Chair Sierzega".

Member O'Brien motioned to approve the minutes as corrected from November 21, 2024; seconded by Member Castaneda.

AYES: Members Alfonso, Bransky, Cap, O'Brien, Castaneda, and Chair Sierzega.

NAYES: NONE

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ABSTENTIONS: NONE

ABSENT: Member Johnson

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

REGULAR BUSINESS:

Case 24-50, Special Use Permit for Multiple-Family Residence (>7 units) at 18240 Harwood Avenue and Case 24-51, Site Plan Review for Multiple-Family Residence (>7 units) at 18240 Harwood Avenue.

Chair Sierzega introduced the case, asked if there were any public comments, and swore in the Amrou Syed, the architect for the property owner.

Chair Sierzega stated there are 18 units, 27 parking spaces, and 1 ADA parking space proposed. Sierzega asked for background on what is being done.

- **Mr. Sayed stated the basement will not be occupied. It will be used for storage. They are keeping the brick exterior and modifying the interior for windows and egress for each apartment. There will be some new windows installed and some remain existing. They will not be painting.**

Member Sierzega asked about an accessible entrance, if the existing stairs at the front of the building would be used, and about entrances on the east side and rear.

- **Mr. Sayed stated there is no ADA-accessible entrance currently installed, and that they will add a lift at the entrance on the south side. And added that the entrance in the rear may be removed because it's not required by code, but can add it back in if it's needed. They will have a fire sprinkler system installed.**

Assistant Director Schumerth stated Fire Chief Grabowski mentioned 3 points of egress in the site plan meeting.

- **Mr. Sayed stated they had initially proposed 3 exits, but reviewed the code and believe that the code is met with just 2 exits. Mr. Sayed stated that if the requirement for three exits came from a Village amendment or change in policy, they can add an entrance back in as they want to meet code.**

Member Alfonso stated it is a good use of the building. There is some worry about the units in the back by the railroad, and asked if there would be any sound mitigation. Member Alfonso also asked about the trash enclosure and the target renter.

- **Mr. Sayed stated the only improvement currently planned for noise mitigation is replacing the windows, but that they can also review options for interior insulation. The trash enclosure is outside, and it is expected that residents will take trash out to the dumpster. Sayed said that**

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they can look into an interior common space for trash if needed. Sayed stated that they are targeting a “younger crowd” of renters.

Member Alfonso stated the occupancy load is 79 averaging 4 per unit, and if they are anticipating there to be children.

- **Mr. Sayed stated the occupancy is the average from code for the sleeping rooms and they are not anticipating children to be in residence based on the units and location.**

Member Cap stated that the project is a good idea. Cap asked if the basement would be partitioned off for the residents or just be one large space. Member Cap asked if the residents would be assigned storage space.

- **Mr. Sayed stated that a storage area would have to be blocked off and covered to meet code, but otherwise the space would be open. Sayed stated that areas would be assigned and probably be divided with a cage or something similar. The units would have in-unit laundry, not a community laundry room.**

Member Cap asked about the size (square footage) of the units stating they may be on the small side and inquired about the exploration of other options or 2-story units, or reducing the number of units to make the units bigger.

- **Mr. Sayed stated they had thought about 2-story units, but couldn't meet egress requirements or lighting requirements. Mr. Sayed stated demand is increasing for the smaller units without a separate dining area, and a combined living and kitchen space with a separate sleeping area. Mr. Sayed stated if they remove units, it would only increase the size overall by a small amount, and the rental price goes up with the bigger space and fewer units. Mr. Sayed added that for the square footage and the type of renter the space would be adequate.**

Member Cap asked if a market comparison had been done with other rental properties in Homewood or other communities.

- **Mr. Sayed stated no and asked if the new building in the downtown was apartments.**

Member Castaneda stated they are apartments and that the 2-bedroom is almost double the size than the proposed units, not next to the train tracks, and has a lower rent than those proposed by the applicant.

Member Bransky stated these units could cause a lot of turnover because residents will outgrow it quickly.

- **Mr. Sayed stated the units meet a unique demand with a particular group of people.**

Member Bransky asked if they are a commuter apartment concept.

- **Mr. Sayed reiterated that they meet code and it is a valid product.**

Assistant Director Schumerth stated that decisions on the use by the Planning and Zoning Commission should be based on the special use standards, and focus should be on the design of use. Schumerth said the rent rate cannot be the basis of a decision; just if the use is specifically suitable for the property and the site.

Member O'Brien stated it is a wonderful project and is what was envisioned in the plan, and that it hits all the biking, transit, and walking scores. Member O'Brien stated #3 on page 28 says "uphold the goals of residential density" and asked what that meant. Member O'Brien stated it is a wonderful project, but it's not supported by the market.

Member O'Brien asked about the varying sizes for the in-unit mechanical rooms, the bathroom sizes, and the design.

- **Mr. Sayed stated he thinks the owner has done his due diligence and will make adjustments to meet market demand.**

Member O'Brien asked about the specific location of the lift as it may eliminate the 1 bedroom apartment entirely. O'Brien questioned if the square footage of bedroom 2 in one unit is sufficient, being only 92 square feet.

- **Mr. Sayed stated a lot of apartments in Chicago have bedrooms that are 10' x 10' and stated the sizes are reasonable. The unit size is a bit tight and they are planned for efficiency, and the price shouldn't hinder moving forward. Mr. Sayed stated the plans are more to get the project going and the owner wants approval for the zoning before putting more into it.**

Member Castaneda stated as long as there is no minimum size of the dwelling unit, the Commission cannot intervene, but encouraged the owner to do a market analysis. Member Castaneda asked since the owner does not anticipate tenants to have children would they turn away applicants if they have children.

- **Mr. Sayed stated of course not.**

Member Castaneda stated occupancy is 50 square feet per person and believes the bedroom called into question by O'Brien is undersized and needs to be looked into. Member Castaneda asked if the owner has any other multi-use housing experience, and if ADA-compliant ramps were considered instead of the lift.

- **Mr. Sayed stated the owner does not have multi-family residential development experience, to his knowledge. Sayed said ramps require a lot of space that isn't available on the site.**

Member Cap stated the lift is generously sized and asked if there is ramp space on the south side of the property.

Member Bransky stated a ramp could block access to the garbage.

- **Mr. Sayed stated the ADA space could be replaced to be closer to a ramp.**

Member Castaneda stated the Village Engineer is concerned about additional runoff and that permeable pavers have been considered with encouragement to use the unilever type as those give the best absorption. Member Castaneda stated the third egress would not be ADA-compliant.

Assistant Director Schumerth stated there is no third egress. The third point of egress was discussed in the site plan review, and originated from a comment by the Fire Chief wanting to see three points of egress.

Member O'Brien asked if a third egress would affect the unit sizes and about the lift and unit impact.

- **Mr. Sayed stated yes, because a corridor would have to be added and an entire unit may need to be removed. The lift would impact just one unit.**

Chair Sierzega asked the type of HVAC units and what would be in the units.

- **Mr. Sayed stated they would be in each unit with the laundry in the mechanical room. The air conditioning units would have condensers on the roof.**

Chair Sierzega asked if the bike parking would be in the basement and if there is a single set of stairs going to the basement.

- **Mr. Sayed stated yes the bike parking will be located in the basement and there are 2 sets of stairs.**

Chair Sierzega asked if the basement would be sprinkled also, if there would be individual lockers and visitor space, and if there would be space outside for a bike rack.

- **Mr. Sayed stated the basement is already sprinkled, but it will be updated to meet code. Sayed said that an area could be assigned for visitor bicycle parking, and that there is space on the southwest side by the sidewalk for an additional bike rack.**

Member Cap asked if a ramp is considered if it would affect the parking and the site plan.

- **Mr. Sayed stated it would affect it if is on the exterior not the interior.**

Member O'Brien asked if they would see the new design of the units.

Assistant Director Schumerth stated interior changes would go through the building department, but exterior changes like the ramp would be seen by the Planning and Zoning Commission at a future meeting. Changes would not be seen if they did not affect the zoning review.

- **Mr. Sayed stated they would reevaluate the interior plan, provide the list of changes, and add a third egress.**

Member Bransky asked if the special use can be voted on and the site plan continued.

Assistant Director Schumerth stated this voting arrangement could be done. If approved, the special use permit would go to the Village Board for approval on January 14 and the site plan review would be

revisited by the Planning and Zoning Commission on January 9. Unless changes to the site plan are fundamental to meeting the special use standards in the view of the Commission, the special use permit could proceed to the Village Board before the site plan review.

Member Cap stated the decision comes down to density, and thinks the units are too small and the size affects the special use.

Member Bransky stated if looking at the standards on page 28 #2, being concerned about density, the last thing any Commissioner wanted to see is the owner spending money and then being unable to rent the units because they are too small. That is detrimental to the economic welfare of the community and violates the special use standards.

Member Castaneda stated the proposed special use is generally as a good idea, but not the number of units.

Assistant Director Schumerth stated the special use permit is for anything larger than 7 units. Schumerth stated the question is whether a multi-family residential use with more than 7 units is a good use of the site, and if the use as proposed meets the standards of the special use. The site plan is the “nitty gritty” and is when many of the questions from the Commission at this meeting are to be asked and answered.

Member Cap doesn't see how the approval would get a green light to accomplish the plan with the 18 units as proposed.

- **Mr. Sayed recommended approval of the special use and then then revisit the site plan especially the size of the units.**

Member Bransky motioned to approve Case 24-50 to allow a multiple-family residence (>7 units) as a special use at 18240 Harwood Avenue and incorporate the Findings of Fact into the record; seconded by Member Alfonso.

AYES: Members, Alfonso, Bransky, O'Brien, Castaneda, and Chair Sierzega

NAYS: None

Abstentions: Member Cap

Absent: Member Johnson

Member Bransky motioned to continue Case 24-51 to a future date; seconded by Member O'Brien.

AYES: Members Alfonso, Bransky, Cap, Castaneda, O'Brien, and Chair Sierzega

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

ABSENT: Member Johnson

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OLD BUSINESS:

Assistant Director Schumerth stated the Metra Station is open and traffic is filling back in.

Member Cap asked if the buses are back.

Chair Sierzega stated they are still finishing the paving work.

Assistant Director Schumerth stated there is no date yet.

Member Castaneda stated it needs artwork as it's starkly white.

Chair Sierzega stated the new parking signs are up and asked if the lot is free.

Assistant Director Schumerth stated the larger ones light up. The lot is a paid lot, but is free from 5-11pm. They are working on the signage for the hours and updating the app.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

ADJOURN:

Member O'Brien made a motion to adjourn; second by Member Castaneda.
The meeting adjourned at 8:38 PM

AYES: Members Alfonso, Cap, Bransky, O'Brien, Castaneda, and Chair Sierzega

NAYES: NONE

ABSTENTIONS: NONE

ABSENT: Member Johnson

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene Leonard

Darlene Leonard, Building Department Secretary