

## CITY OF SHEBOYGAN

### REQUEST FOR CITY PLAN COMMISSION CONSIDERATION

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**ITEM DESCRIPTION:** Bookworm Gardens time extension request to a previously approved conditional use permit to construct a new Nature School Yurt and restroom facility at 1415 Campus Drive. RA-35

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**REPORT PREPARED BY:** Steve Sokolowski

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**REPORT DATE:** July 8, 2022

**MEETING DATE:** July 22, 2022

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#### FISCAL SUMMARY:

Budget Line Item:	N/A
Budget Summary:	N/A
Budgeted Expenditure:	N/A
Budgeted Revenue:	N/A

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#### STATUTORY REFERENCE:

Wisconsin	N/A
Statutes:	
Municipal Code:	N/A

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#### BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:

On September 28, 2021, the City of Sheboygan Plan Commission approved a conditional use permit with exceptions by Bookworm Gardens to construct a new Nature School Yurt and restroom facility at 1415 Campus Drive. The Plan Commission approved the conditional use permit and variance with 20 conditions of approval.

The applicant stated the following:

- Bookworm Gardens is a botanical garden based on children's literature, and their mission is to inspire the love of books and nature in the young and young at heart.
- The proposed improvements are to be located in the vacant, sloping greenspace of the Bookworm Garden's site (northwest corner), bounded by University Drive on west/north, ravine on east and existing pathways/gardens on south. Improvements will include a new preschool use ("Nature School") based within an authentic yurt structure, a new restroom building, extended pathways and gardens, outdoor children's activity/learning areas, a pedestrian bridge, and a drop off at site entrance point for Nature School.
- The Nature School yurt is being sited on the high portion of the greenspace, to maximize visibility, allowing it to be a showpiece for Bookworm Gardens. The restroom building is sited on the lower portion of site. Both the Nature School and restrooms will be fully accessible from drop off, existing pathways and to each other.
- Located between the new buildings and west pathway will be an outdoor children's activity/learning area and extensions of the gardens. New lighting will consist of pathway

accent lighting and building wall sconce lighting (both to match existing lighting used on the grounds).

- The Bookworm Gardens Nature School is a program of Bookworm Gardens and shares the Bookworm mission to "inspire the love of books and nature in the young and young at heart." Using nature as a catalyst for learning, we aim to foster a sense of wonder through play and inquiry-based exploration.
- The Nature School will offer Tuesday and Thursday tuition-based class options for learners age 3 by September 1, 2022. Class sizes will be limited to 14-to-16 students.
- An additional preschool teacher will be joining the Bookworm team in 2022, providing a 1-to-7 or 1-to-8 teacher to student ratio. Bookworm education staff members will also offer additional environmental education teaching.
- All improvements are being mindful of the existing ravine and landscaping. The placement of new buildings is being done in such a way to avoid impact to mature trees along the edge of the ravine.
- The educational basis of Bookworm Gardens is an extension of, and is consistent with its neighbors, such as Sheboygan Area Lutheran High School, UW-Extension, and UW-Sheboygan.
- The proposed conditional use will be an extension and enhancement of the existing Bookworm Garden's use and mission, and the newly offered Nature School function will be an asset to the community.

The applicant states the following about the proposed architecture for the pre-school yurt, the restroom building, and the expanded activity/learning areas and gardens:

#### The Yurt:

- The pre-school "base camp" will be housed in an authentic yurt structure having a 24-ft radius with a small entrance attachment and boardwalk surround.
- The yurt will utilize traditional (flame retardant) roof and wall membranes, with two (2) entry/egress doors, multiple windows, and skylight for natural daylighting and ventilation.
- The entrance attachment to yurt will serve as a vestibule, coat/boot drop, and greenhouse activity space; the exterior of attachment will resemble the design of restroom building for aesthetic continuity.
- Connecting the yurt entrance to restrooms will be a set of steps covered with an open trellis structure.

#### The restroom:

- The restroom building will contain three (3) separate family restrooms, a mother's room, a staff restroom with adult changing area, and a storage room.

- The building is designed with curved walls to blend in with the yurt concept.
- Exterior finishes will include stone (matching the existing stone on administrative building), shake siding, architectural asphalt shingled roof (sloped) and membrane roof at flat roof (to match color of yurt roof).
- The single sloped roof over half of the building allows for added interior daylighting via clerestory windows, and provides a placement point for solar panels allowing a renewable energy source.

#### The outdoor activity/learning areas:

- The outdoor activity/learning areas will be placed in an area between the yurt, west walkway/entry, and restroom building.
- This area will include spaces for small group gatherings, a mud kitchen for tactile learning, and additional garden areas.
- The space will be divided into two (2) outdoor areas by an arched pedestrian bridge, connecting the drop off area to the yurt.

#### Other information about the proposed Nature School:

- Two day a week nature school classes will begin in September of 2022 for learners who are Age 3 by September 1 of 2022. 4 year old learners are also welcome.
- Classes will take place September – May.
- Classes will be tuition-based + some scholarship opportunities will be available.
- We look forward to nurturing a child's curiosity and helping them learn to love learning through nature and literature.

#### Bookworm Gardens values:

- Play as Learning
- Seasonal Exploration
- Respect for the Natural World
- Hands-on Discovery

Based upon seasonal changes, our nature-based curriculum includes daily outdoor discovery of the Gardens that incorporates:

- Social Emotional Learning
- Art, Movement, Music + Dramatic Play
- Cooking + Food Experiences
- Science + Math Discovery

- Language Exploration
- Large + Small Motor Skill Development

#### **STAFF COMMENTS:**

Section 15.905(9), Conditional Use Review and Approval, of the City of Sheboygan Zoning Ordinance states:

*The start of construction of any and all conditional uses shall be initiated within 365 days of their approval by Plan Commission and shall be operational within 730 days of said approval. Failure to initiate development within this period shall automatically constitute a revocation of the conditional use. **Prior to such a revocation, the applicant may request an extension of this period.** Said request shall require formal approval by Plan Commission and shall be based upon a showing of acceptable justification (as determined by Plan Commission).*

Today, the Plan Commission is reviewing the attached June 20, 2022 time extension request letter that states the following:

- A conditional use permit for the Bookworm Gardens projects was approved by the Plan Commission on September 28, 2021. Their plan was to build in the spring/summer of 2022.
- Because of current uncertainty with the construction start date, we are requesting this extension request be placed on the next plan commission agenda for review.

#### **ACTION REQUESTED:**

Staff does not object to the Bookworm Gardens time extension request and approval of a new deadline date of **September 1, 2023**. If the applicant does not apply for a building permit by September 21, 2023, the approved conditional use permit is null and void (a new conditional use permit would be required).

Staff recommends approval of the conditional use permit and exceptions subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicant shall obtain all licenses and permits as well as meet all required codes including but not limited to building, plumbing, electrical, HVAC, fire, water, sewer, storm drainage, health, DNR, etc. (Applicant shall be in contact with building inspection, fire, police, etc.). An occupancy permit will be granted only at such time as the applicant has met all requirements.
2. It is the applicant responsibility to insure all construction takes place outside of the areas designated wetlands. Applicant may only impact areas designated as wetlands if and only if they have written documentation (license, permit, etc.) from the DNR permitting them to do so.
3. Submittal/approval of a proposed storm drainage plan prior to building permit issuance.
4. Submittal and approval of a landscape plan prior to building permit issuance. Landscape plan shall provide a legend that shows how the four (4) landscape criteria are being met (create a legend along with the landscape plan site plan). Landscaping shall be installed prior to issuance of an occupancy permit.

5. If dumpsters are to be used, the dumpster(s) shall be screened/enclosed and constructed of like materials and colors of the facility. Dumpster enclosure shall be completed prior to issuance of an occupancy permit for the first apartment building to be occupied.
6. Outdoor storage of materials, products or equipment shall be prohibited.
7. All ground level and rooftop mechanicals shall be screened and/or enclosed and constructed of like materials and colors of the facility (HVAC equipment, etc.).
8. All new lighting shall be installed per Section 15.707 of the City of Sheboygan Zoning Ordinance. There shall be no spillover light onto adjacent properties or the streets.
9. Applicant shall work with staff with regards to appropriate signage. Only at such time as the sign package has been reviewed and approved may the applicant obtain sign permits to install the proposed signage. If staff has any concerns with proposed signage design, the matter may be brought back to the Plan Commission for their consideration.
10. Applicant shall install individual letter signs – no cabinet or flat panel signs.
11. Applicant shall be permitted a freestanding monument sign for the site. Minimum setback of a monument sign is 12 feet. Maximum height of the monument sign is 8 feet. Sign shall be located outside of the 15 foot vision triangle.
12. All areas used for parking/maneuvering of vehicles shall be paved.
13. All areas that are not required to be paved shall be grass and/or approved landscaping.
14. Any work within City of Sheboygan Public rights-of-way shall be discussed with the City Engineering Department and constructed to standard City specifications (including, but not limited to, new and old ingress/egress driveway openings, curb, gutter, sidewalk, pavement, utilities, street trees, grading, etc.).
15. Applicant will provide adequate public access along all streets and sidewalks and will take all appropriate actions to minimize the time period that adjacent properties and streets/sidewalks are impacted by the development (utilities, streets, etc.).
16. Applicant shall immediately clean any and all sediments, materials, tracking, etc. that may be spilled off-site on private or public lands and streets.
17. Streets and infrastructure damaged and/or disturbed during construction of all private and/or public improvements shall be promptly repaired by the applicant.
18. Applicant is responsible for working with all private and public utilities in order to adequately service this apartment complex development proposal (applicant will need to provide the necessary easements and/or relocate utilities as necessary).
19. Prior to building permit issuance, the City of Sheboygan Architectural Review Board shall review/approve the proposed building design.
20. If there are any amendments to the approved conditional use permit (including but not limited to site plan, architectural design, use, etc.), the applicant will be required to submit a new conditional use application reflecting those amendments.

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

Conditional Use Permit Application and required attachments.