



PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, October 8, 2024, at 6:00 PM

APPROVED MINUTES

- Members Present:** Chair Dan Cary
Vice Chair Jennifer Shoemaker
Commissioner Scott Jacobson
Commissioner Ginny Carlson
- Members Absent:** Commissioner David Rosengard
Commissioner Charles Castner
Commissioner Brooke Sisco
- Staff Present:** City Planner Jacob Graichen
Associate Planner Jenny Dimsho
Community Development Admin Assistant Christina Sullivan
City Councilor Mark Gunderson
- Others:** Brady Preheim
Sabrina Moore

CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE

TOPICS FROM THE FLOOR (Not on Public Hearing Agenda): Limited to five minutes per topic

Preheim, Brady. Preheim was called to speak. He mentioned that he would still like to see Commissioner Castner and Commissioner Rosengard removed from the Planning Commission. He also talked about the political sign ordinance and said he felt the City should be enforcing their own rules. He said there were political signs in the right of way, illuminated, and breaking other rules according to the ordinance. He said if the City was not going to enforce the rules, maybe they should change them, or do away with this ordinance altogether. He also shared his concern with relocating the police station to a new location. He mentioned that it seemed irresponsible to keep looking at different locations versus just remodeling the current space.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. **Planning Commission Minutes Dated September 10, 2024**

Motion: Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion and Vice Chair Shoemaker's second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Draft Minutes dated September 10, 2024, as written. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Carlson; NAYS: None]

B. **Joint City Council & Planning Commission Minutes Dated September 25, 2024**

Motion: Upon Vice Chair Shoemaker's motion and Commissioner Jacobson's second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Draft Minutes dated September 25, 2024, as written. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Carlson; NAYS: None]

PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA (times are earliest start time)

C. **6:05 p.m. Conditional Use Permit, Unlisted Use Permit, and Variance at 58646 McNulty Way – AKAAN Architecture Design, LLC (Continued from September)**

Chair Dan Cary opened the Public Hearing at 6:07 p.m. There were no ex-parte contacts, conflicts of interest, or bias in this matter.

City Planner Jacob Graichen shared the staff report dated September 30, 2024. He shared this was a multi-faceted application. He said the Conditional Use Permit portion was the most significant portion of this application and would go into more detail of the development to take place on the site. He shared that the applicant had planned a building of around 5,200 square feet in size, but as things progressed, they had received more funding to expand the project and add a second building. Graichen mentioned this came to the table at the last minute and that the applicant would need to submit a new application for the Conditional Use portion of this proposal. He said the Planning Commission would be able to look at the Unlisted Use and Variance portion of the application to keep the project moving forward and they would continue the hearing for the Conditional Use Permit to a different time to be determined.

He said the Unlisted Use is used when the use does not quite fit with existing use definitions. It allows them to find a similar use, which in this case is an Intermediate Care Facility. That would be sleeping quarters and dwelling units with some degree of supervision. He said when looking at the uses that are allowed in the General Commercial area, multi-family is allowed (with no supervision) and Senior Convalescent Care with a great degree of supervision. He said the application fits right in between these two descriptions. He said this gives a basis for a similar use.

He talked about the Access Variance. He mentioned that Gable Road was an Arterial Street, which is why they had to take a closer look at the access points. He shared the portion of Gable Road that abuts their site has no frontage improvements and two access points. One of those access points has a driveway that serves the small shop on the property. He said this driveway was less than 200 feet from the neighboring driveway, which is the minimum distance needed between two access points on an arterial street. He said the Commission had the option to deny the application for variance but could also approve it with a broader scope that it would be connected to the interior of the site as well.

He showed the Commission some concerns with a few of their ADA parking spots that looked different in person than what was portrayed on the plans. He said in the conditions, he said they would need to clean up these issues.

He also talked about what would be required for the frontage improvements and the design that should go along with the Riverfront Connector Plan. He also discussed the tree plan.

He said the sanitary sewer is connected to the City sewer through a STEP system. He said there was a portion on the site that had utilizes an onsite sewer system, and they planned to get rid of that and connect to the City sewer. He also said there would be a sewer capacity fee. He said the utility poles were being used for a double purpose (holding wiring and site lights), but no new poles could be added.

He reminded the Commission there was a zone change on this property from Light Industrial to General Commercial which included a traffic tip cap of 700 average vehicle trips per day. The proposal estimates trips well under the cap.

Remsburg, Mathew. Applicant. Remsburg is a facility maintenance technician for Columbia Community Mental Health. He shared that the ADA parking spaces were added and were already improved. He shared that the goal was to get all their facilities on to the City sewer system. He said it would be part of this project. He said they would like to keep the access (for the shop) the same as it is now. He said they plan to eventually replace some of the lights on the property.

Jacobson, Todd. Applicant. Jacobson is the Director of the Columbia Community Mental Health. He said they planned to have a sixteen-bed facility, built to Oregon State standards, for those in a crisis mental state due to substance abuse. This would also have a person on site monitoring these individuals. He said they received more funding to add additional space where they could have a detox center on site as well. He said the detox center is supported by the Columbia County Sheriffs office as well as the St. Helens Police Department. He said this was to get them back on their feet and become contributors to our society and tax base. He said Columbia County would have first access, but did not have a large issue with these types of individuals, so they would mostly serve those from Tillamook and Clatsop Counties. He also mentioned a small portion of individuals would come from Multnomah and Washington County.

Petersen, Al. Applicant. Petersen is the architect for the project. He said he was brought onto the project to help master plan the site and coordinate the challenges around utilities. He mentioned the utilities were all in the same location and they planned to expand those throughout the whole site. He mentioned this property had approximately 900 lineal feet of street frontage. He said they would have to upgrade this portion to meet the Riverfront Connector Plan. He said since they must develop that at a huge expense to CCMH, they would like to access their existing shop and keep the access point there. He shared some of the future projects they had planned. He explained that with the additional funding they wanted to change the scope. He said they were just asking for a similar use to be allowed that was not applied anywhere in any zone. He also mentioned they were willing to waive the 120-day rule for the Conditional Use Permit per the Planning Department rules.

In Favor

No one spoke in favor of the application.

In Neutral

No one spoke in neutral of the application.

In Opposition

Moore, Sabrina. Moore is a neighbor on the backside of the property. She said the self-imposed variance for the shop access should not be allowed, since the rules were in place for public safety. She said the door could be moved on the shop and they would not need the variance. They should have to abide by the regulations. She said there could be more issues if that access was tied into the whole property, as more people will be using the access point than just their maintenance staff. She felt they should be responsible for bringing in a public sewer line that the neighboring undeveloped properties could connect to. This would possibly allow for development that would contribute to the tax base, as opposed to non-profit tax-exempt development. She also expressed concern about the stormwater runoff and that there should be something put in to help with the overflow of water. She said she would also like to see the overhead power utilities be undergrounded now instead of more placed overhead while they are working on street improvements.

Preheim, Brady. Preheim was called to speak. He said that he thought this was being piece-mealed together. He said it was a huge project and they should come back with a whole new proposal and do it all at once. That way it could all be approved and done at the same time. He said there were lots of issues with this property, but he was mostly concerned about the sewer system and the impact on the system.

Rebuttal

Petersen, Al. Applicant. Petersen was called to speak. He said the utility plan will be added when they submit their plans for approval. He explained how the sewer STEP system would work to accommodate all the buildings that are currently there and the ones to be built.

Jacobson, Todd. Applicant. Jacobson was called to speak. He mentioned he works at the campus where this property is located and has never had an issue with getting out of the parking lot when he leaves work at the end of the day. He said he hears a lot about the congestion there at this intersection, but he says he has never had to wait more than five minutes to leave.

There was a small discussion about the access and why and how it was put in. They also discussed when Gable Road became a City Road to manage.

There was a small discussion of the neighboring property and the access to the property.

End of Oral Testimony

Motion: Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion and Vice Chair Shoemaker's second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Conditional Use Permit to be continued to a date and time uncertain. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Carlson; NAYS: None]

Graichen said the Conditional Use Permit hearing will be re-noticed as a new application with the public hearing date and time identified.

Close of Public Hearing & Record (For Unlisted Use and Variance)

Deliberations

Commissioner Ginny Carlson expressed concern about having the extra access point. She mentioned that currently, with the new apartment buildings that were built across the street, there has already been an increase in traffic and buses. She was concerned with the proposal of a facility that would house sixteen beds and staff this could impact the traffic more. Vice Chair Jennifer Shoemaker also agreed that access should be closed to the shop. She could see the potential of traffic issues. Chair Cary did not see a concern with the extra access. He said he thought the spacing was significant enough between the neighboring property.

There was a small discussion about future developments that could affect this area with traffic.

Vice Chair Shoemaker said she would like to see sidewalks and correct cutouts for the whole development, as this was a gateway to downtown. Chair Cary agreed that there is a Riverfront Connector Plan in place, and it should be followed when development occurs.

There was a discussion about the access point being left to only the maintenance shop. Graichen mentioned if they wanted to use this access point for a broader scope, it would need to be reviewed as this variance was exclusive to the shop.

Chair Cary said he thought the staff had done a good job of finding similar definitions that match what is allowed in the zoning of this property. He felt the Unlisted Use application was valid. He said it seemed the best that could be done.

There was a small discussion about the type of facility and the Commission agreed that the definition provided by staff was appropriate.

Motion: Upon Commissioner Jacobson's motion and Vice Chair Shoemaker's second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Unlisted Use as recommended by staff. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Carlson; NAYS: None]

Motion: Upon Commissioner Carlson's motion and Vice Chair Shoemaker's second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Variance with the conditions that the access would be improved (paved), be exclusive to the shop, another variance would be required if there was expansion, and

frontage improvements, when warranted, would be required to extend to this area of property. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Jacobson, Commissioner Carlson; NAYS: None]

Motion: Upon Vice Chair Shoemaker’s motion and Commissioner Jacobson’s second, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the Chair to sign the Findings. [AYES: Vice Chair Shoemaker, Commissioner Carlson, Commissioner Jacobson; NAYS: None]

DISCUSSION ITEMS

D. Planning Commission Term Expirations

Graichen shared that he confirmed with Commissioner Rosengard that he would like to continue with his service to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Carlson asked how many absences were allowed in a year for this Commission. Graichen mentioned if there were three consecutive, unapproved absences, that could be grounds for removal.

Vice Chair Shoemaker mentioned she was not okay with moving forward with this approval as she felt there needed to be a discussion with all the members and their commitment to the Commission and the time needed to be a part of the group.

There was a discussion on the concern of absences and not being able to have a quorum for the group. Graichen said we should add this to the next agenda to discuss it with all the Commissioners.

The group agreed to table the motion to renew Commissioner Rosengard’s extension until there was a discussion on his attendance and commitment. It was noted that Commissioner Carlson was running for Council too, which could be another vacancy if she was elected.

Graichen also mentioned there was a deadline to recruit new members. He said they had three people express interest in the opening, and two were willing to interview for the position. He said he would like to discuss an interview committee, but it would need to be tabled until the next meeting to determine how many openings the Commission will have.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY REPORT

E. Planning Department Activity Report – September

There was no discussion on the Planning Department Activity Report.

PLANNING DIRECTOR DECISIONS (previously e-mailed to the Commission)

- F. Temporary Sign Permit at 2100 Block of Columbia Blvd – Heather Epperly Agency, Inc.
- G. Site Design Review (Minor) at 435 & 465 N Columbia River Hwy - Tussing
- H. Site Design Review at 230 S 1st Street – Eloise Properties, LLC
- I. Extension of Time for TUP.6.23 at 71 Cowlitz Street – The Klondike Tavern
- J. Site Design Review (Minor) at 144 S River Street - Carrier

There was no discussion on the Planning Director Decisions.

PROACTIVE ITEMS

K. Architectural Standards

Vice Chair Shoemaker shared an article on buildings that are worthy of historical preservation. She said she wanted to share that 325 Strand is part of the historic inventory, and she wanted the Commission to keep these things in mind when determining how to move forward with these renovations. She said it is the Historic Landmarks Commission job to protect these buildings.

- L. Vacant Storefronts
- M. The Plaza Square

There was no discussion on the Proactive Items.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION ITEMS

Graichen mentioned we were changing back to the Columbia County Spotlight to post the Planning notices, as the St. Helens Chronicle had closed their doors.

Associate Planner Jenny Dimsho mentioned the staff would be attending a training session on the new public meetings law. She said it currently was not open to the public, but if that changes, she would share the information with the Commission if they wanted to attend.

There was a discussion about political signs and the regulations about where to post them.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Christina Sullivan
Community Development Administrative Assistant*