

Special Plan Commission Meeting
Tuesday, March 9, 2021

1. Meeting called to order

Joe Minorik called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. at the Village Hall, 5043 Chester Lane, Racine, Wisconsin via ZOOM.

2. Roll Call/Introductions

Members present: Joseph Minorik, Thomas Knitter, Trustee Kevin Wanggaard, Bill Folk

Absent: Village President Jim Dobbs. Tim Just

Also Present: Development Director Peter Wagner, Director of DPW Tom Lazcano and applicant Nancy Washburn

3. Non-Public Hearing Items

A. PRELIMINARY PLAT REVIEW – Review a preliminary plat submitted by Nancy Washburn for the proposed Bluffside Subdivision located at 4727 Park Ridge Road (Parcel ID No. 104-04- 22-25-029-000 & 104-04-22-25-027-040)

Lazcano read from his Memorandum to the Commission that explains the history of the development of the area and the current subdivision proposal. The memo contains seven conditions of approval, including an Open Space Waiver Modification, which is a waiver of the 40 percent open space ordinance. The proposed subdivision has an overall open space of 12.15 percent. The developer plans to have donate or sell a 17.2-acre parcel that abuts the development to the south for park land or a conservancy. Because of this plan, the parcel is not included in the subdivision and the developer is asking for the waiver. With the parcel, the waiver likely would not be needed.

Washburn said received feedback from residents asking to preserve a walking path that offers connectivity from Blue Ridge Subdivision to Park Ridge Drive. The developer plans to leave path as a natural trail through woods so residents may continue to use it for walking.

Washburn said with the proposed development of all the remaining buildable parcels in Bluffside will be built out. Current owners will benefit from the requirement that the new development include a storm water management plan, which wasn't required when the pervious lots were developed. Currently, water flows to creek that is part of the part of the 17.2 acres to the south. The developer worked with Caledonia Utility District staff to formulate the plan, identifying basins and the lots that contribute water to the system. The Preliminary Plat of Bluffside shows Outlot 3 at the southern edge of the development is designated for a storm water pond. The owners of the 19 lots being platted will be required to create a Homeowners' Association that will be mandated to manage and maintain the pond, in perpetuity. The owners of existing lots will not share responsibility for the system. A Village Drainage Easement will be shown on the Final Plat.

Minorik granted a request by Karl Radke of 4950 Bluffside Drive to ask questions about the proposal. Radke asked about storm water management plans for water that flows off 4 Mile Road into the subdivision through the northeast corner of the development.

Washburn said the whole upper area was carefully reviewed for stormwater management and final grading, per Village requirements, to ensure those lots drain properly. She offered to share the plans with the resident.

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Radke asked what will be done with an old building on an outlot behind Lots 3, 4 and 5, and a live well located on Lot 5.

Washburn said the well will be abandoned per DNR regulations. No decision has yet been made about the building. There is no purpose for the building, and it could be razed. Radke said it is in disrepair. He was concerned the soil near the building may be contaminated because of the batteries that were used as part of an old railway switching station, noting the area may not be suitable for park land.

Minorik allowed additional citizen comment. Steve Bulik of 4661 Bluffside Drive spoke in favor of maintaining the pedestrian path and asked that developer maintain it. Washburn said she is confident the developer will be able to work out a solution on the final plat.

Knitter made a motion to approve the preliminary plat subject to the conditions set forth by the Engineering staff. Folk seconded the motion. Per a request by Washburn to make it clear that the Village is approving with the motion the Open Space Waiver Modification both Knitter and Folk agreed with the waiver modification (being part of the motion).

Motion passed 4-0.

B. ZONING CODE DISCUSSION – Review draft Chapters 1-5 of the Village of Caledonia Zoning Code

Wagner introduced the topic which is the process of formally adopting the Village of Caledonia Zoning Code under Title 16, Chapters 1 through 18. The Village previously adopted and used the Racine County Zoning Code. A red-line copy will not be available because the new code is in a different format and combines the former County Code with sections of the current Village Municipal Code. Wagner said he will highlight changes in the next sections. In this meeting, the first five revised chapters will be discussed, and the same process will be continued with the next sections.

The chapters cover basic measures which serve to establish a Village Zoning Code, such as identifying a Village Zoning Administrator to enforce the code, enforcing penalties, establishing an Official Zoning Map, and outlining the process to request a variance from the Board of Appeals. It codifies a Zoning Review as part of the Building Permit review process rather than requiring a separate Zoning Permit like those previously issued by the County.

The new code continues the practice of requiring a developer to pay a deposit when submitting development item for review. It addresses Developer Agreements and Design Guidelines including having requirements for building materials for commercial projects.

Wagner noted a proposed change in how the height of a building is measured and asked the Commissioners to discuss the topic. He would like to implement the change to simplify how height is measured and described different methods of measuring. He noted the maximum height may need to be increased if a change is approved, to prevent many existing buildings from being classified as legal nonconforming.

Wangaard stated his preference for the method that measures the height as the distance from the finished grade along the street face to the highest point of the building.

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Minorek recommended aligning the code with the IBC (International Building Code), which the State of Wisconsin enforces.

He also talked about standardizations for upgrading exterior building materials and establishing a baseline for what the Village would like to see moving forward. For example, parking lot materials – he asked if there is a way to expand upon the building material section to provide more clarity upfront without having to take it to super majority or a three-quarters vote? What is the vision of the other Plan Commissioners and the Village Board for what the Village becomes in the future? This code revision is an opportunity to discuss requiring quality materials such as brick, stone, and natural wood material. He wants the Village to be consistent and to communicate a consistent message to the public when they present a project.

Knitter agreed with Minorik that this is an opportunity to steer developers to upgrade their proposals from what has been seen in the past, such as metal structures. Staff and elected officials should keep this in mind while revising the code. Not saying to go for the gold standard but to move it up to a higher level, especially in commercial zones where it makes sense to look modern.

Wagner brought to the Commission's attention the protest section of the code. The state no longer requires a community to have such a code. However, if a community does not take it off the books, it still must follow the rules of the protest code. Wagner said he plans to omit this section. A resident would still be able to file a petition against a proposal but omitting the protest code takes away requirement of a super majority approval for a rezone request.

Wagner said all chapters of the final complete code will be brought back to the Plan Commission to sum up the changes before taking to the Village Board for final approval. The goal has been not to recreate the code but to convert the County Code and keep it relatively the same while bringing any changes to the attention of the Commissioners. He added that if they want to propose changes to email him and the items can be discussed at future meetings.

Minorik stated no action is required; the Commission may revisit Chapters 1-5 in future meetings.

4. Adjournment

Wangaard moved to adjourn, and Knitter seconded. Meeting adjourned at 6:08