



A regular meeting of the Planning Commission was held Tuesday, April 2, 2019, at 6:00 PM in City Council Chambers, City Hall, 155 Johnston Street, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

MEMBERS PRESENT Randy Graham, Duane Christopher, Gladys Robinson, Keith Martens Nathan Mallard

MEMBERS ABSENT Justin Smith, Shelly Goodner

STAFF PRESENT Leah Youngblood, Dennis Fields, Bill Meyer, Eric Hawkins, Janice Miller, Amy Jo Denton

1. Approval of minutes of the March 5, 2019, meeting.

Mr. Christopher made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 5, 2019, meeting. Dr. Robinson seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by a vote of 5-0 (Smith and Goodner absent).

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

2. Hold public hearing and consider a recommendation to City Council on petition M-2019-06 by Vincent James, COGUM Global, to rezone approximately 63.24 acres at 596 & 614 Neely Road and adjacent right-of-way from Residential Development District I (RD-I) in York County to Master Planned Residential (MP-R). The subject properties are proposed to be annexed into the City of Rock Hill. Tax parcels 601-00-00-002 & -004.

Planning & Zoning Manager Leah Youngblood presented the staff report and clarified that workforce housing is no longer part of the proposal.

Mr. Tom Roper, 2129 Cavendale Drive, applicant's representative, provided a summary of the project. He detailed several aspects of the project, including the further extension and development of the existing trail system, the already-approved proposed Pennies for Progress road improvements, the plan to have the larger 75' wide lots placed to the perimeter of the neighborhood with the smaller 45' wide lots being served by rear alleys within the interior, the varied square footage of the homes being between 1600 and 2700, and the fact the development would be market rate with price points beginning in the mid-\$200,000. He noted that the South Carolina Department of Transportation had determined the Rawlsville Road and Neely Road intersection warranted a traffic signal due to the amount of traffic in the area. He further described other amenities of the project including fire pits, playgrounds, and gazebos, adding the project overall would be a significant improvement to the area, especially with its close proximity to three schools serving the area.

Mr. Christopher asked if all the homes would have attached garages. Mr. Roper stated they would as required by the design standards of the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Christopher asked for confirmation that the 45' lots were to be rear loaded. Mr. Roper stated this was correct and the garages for these would be located at the rear.

Mr. Max Bryant, 615 Neely Road, spoke in opposition to the request, specifically noting his house would face the back of the houses in the new development and the new development would affect his property values, adding he had been told when he built his house that the larger property would never be developed. He stated he was not in favor of the typical cookie-cutter designs used in new neighborhoods and since the adjacent Sweetwater neighborhood and Saluda Trail Middle School had been built, they had experienced a number of trespassers.

Mrs. Sue Rawls, 609 Neely Road, spoke in opposition to the request, noting specifically the decrease in property values. She also noted that she would lose property as a result of the need for additional right-of-way for sidewalks and road development. She expressed concerns over the added trash and traffic in the area along with the crime issues of the adjacent Sweetwater and College Downs neighborhoods.

Mrs. Becky Bryant, 615 Neely Road, spoke in opposition to the request, specifically stating there were many family memories associated with the area. She added concerns over having to face the rear of houses in the new development, trash and traffic, the lack of maintenance of the existing trail, and the non-operational street lights towards College Downs. She also stated she had experienced trespassers and the existence of stolen items ending up in the right-of-way.

Mr. Christopher asked if her property was located in the county. Mrs. Bryant stated it was. Mr. Christopher asked if the lights were located along Neely Road. Mrs. Bryant stated they were. There was general discussion as to whether the lights were located within the City or county limits. Mr. Bryant stated that the area is served by City power.

Mr. Christopher asked when the trail had been constructed. Mrs. Bryant stated it was built when South Pointe High School had been constructed. She noted it was a paved trail and was decently done but was not kept maintained.

Mrs. Pia Mergenthaler, 588 Neely Road, spoke in opposition to the request, specifically addressing the loss of natural areas that had attracted she and her husband to the area.

Mr. Christopher asked the size of their lot. Mrs. Mergenthaler stated it was approximately 1 acre. Mr. Christopher asked if she was in the City or county. Mrs. Mergenthaler stated she was in the county.

Mr. Florian Mergenthaler, 588 Neely Road, spoke in opposition to the request, stating specifically their love for nature and desire to have their own well and septic system.

Mr. Jim Ward, 228 Ward Drive, spoke in opposition to the request, specifically addressing concern that his structure moving business would be adversely impacted by the development, especially if a traffic signal was placed at the intersection as he would have to pay \$3000 each time to have the light adjusted when he was moving a structure. He noted the school district would not send buses through the neighborhood because of its proximity to the schools so there would be an increase in foot and vehicle traffic. He asked if traffic studies would be done as accidents seemed to occur weekly in the area.

Mr. Graham noted a traffic impact study had been required and was part of the staff report.

Mr. Ward asked the timeline for the road construction. Mr. Roper stated that the

construction was on the Pennies for Progress program schedule and was currently out for bid. He noted the road would not be completed before construction began on the development. Mr. Ward stated the road construction needed to be done before houses constructed due to safety issues.

Mr. Christopher asked where Mr. Ward's business was located and why it would shut down. Mr. Ward stated his business was located on his property off Neely Road, and if a light was added, he would have to pay to have the traffic signal moved each time he needed to move a house. He added his work hours were already limited as to when he could move houses and the addition of a traffic signal would further limit his business.

Dr. Robinson asked why buses would not be able to go through the neighborhood. Mr. Ward replied due to the close proximity of the schools to the neighborhood, the school district did not run buses to neighborhoods within a certain distance.

Dr. Robinson asked if South Pointe was the closest. Mr. Ward stated it was as well as Saluda Trail.

Mrs. Dolly Bowers, 668 Neely Road, spoke in opposition, stating her concern over the widening of the roads which may cause her to lose oaks within her front yard. She asked about the three lanes proposed. Mr. Graham stated the three lanes included a turn lane for this project. Mr. Roper noted the Pennies for Progress project for this area had already been planned before this development project arose. He added the project would have minimal impact on the area and the SCDOT would install the traffic signal required.

Mr. Ward asked if the traffic study included the proposed three lanes or the current road. Ms. Sarah Shirley, American Engineering Associates, 8008 project engineer, replied stating the traffic impact analysis took into account current conditions and future planned projects.

Mrs. Sue Rawls asked for clarification on the location of the proposed three-lane road. Mr. Roper stated it would be for the entire area, not just to serve the development.

Mr. Christopher asked the timeframe for the project. Mr. Vincent James, COGUM Global, applicant, 1227 Saluda Street, stated initial construction would begin by the end of 2019 with sales beginning in February or March 2020. The plan was to have the project completely built out within four years but the hope was to have it completed within two, depending upon market demand.

Mr. Christopher asked if water and sewer was available. Mr. James stated it was.

There were no further questions. Dr. Robinson presented the motion to recommend to City Council approval of Master Planned Residential (MP-R) zoning on the property as proposed. Mr. Christopher seconded.

Mr. Martens expressed concern over the density proposed for the area, especially as it was mainly rural in character.

Dr. Robinson expressed her concerns with the traffic and exit points and the need to evaluate traffic flow within the area as well as the overall density of the project.

Mr. Christopher observed this development as being typical of those throughout the City with increased traffic and future connectivity problems.

Mr. Graham noted York County's Residential Development District I (RD-I) zoning classification was a comparable zoning district with the zoning district proposed for the project and while he understood the concerns, the Commission could not deny a by-right use.

Mr. Mallard asked if the Commission would be reviewing the site plan. Ms. Youngblood stated the site plan was part of the rezoning under consideration but the Commission would be reviewing the preliminary plat.

Mr. Martens noted that while the RD-I district zoning did allow for a variety of residential development, should the property be developed in the county rather than the City, a county planner would have discretion on whether the units proposed would be suitable. He reiterated his concern over the addition of 150 houses within the area.

There being no further questions or comments, Mr. Graham called for a vote. The motion passed by a vote of 4-1, with Mr. Graham, Mr. Christopher, Dr. Robinson, and Mr. Mallard voting in the affirmative, and Mr. Martens voting against (Smith and Goodner absent).

3. Hold public hearing and consider a recommendation to City Council on petition M-2019-07 by Vincent James, COGUM Global, to rezone approximately 6.83 acres at 750, 754, 758, 762, 766, 770, 782, & 784 S Heckle Boulevard, 1405 & 1439 Saluda Street, and adjacent right-of-way from General Commercial (GC) to Master Planned Commercial (MP-C). Tax parcels 623-01-01-013, -010, & -021.

Ms. Youngblood presented the staff report.

Mr. Graham noted any improvement would be positive but asked if a four-story building would be suitable in this location. Ms. Youngblood stated as development of the area occurred, more buildings of this size would be constructed making this particular one less prominent.

Mr. Mallard asked about the wetlands area. Ms. Youngblood stated the applicant was best to answer.

Dr. Robinson asked if a grocery store chain had expressed interest in the site. Ms. Youngblood stated the applicant was best to answer.

Mr. Martens asked if the apartments would be market rate. Ms. Youngblood stated the applicant was best to answer.

Mr. Russ Angelo, 2526 Plantation Center Drive, Matthews NC, project architect, provided additional information about the project, specifically noting the concept to encourage residential near retail uses and a stop planned for the location for the new City bus system. He added that parking would be placed near the entrances to the buildings which would be brick veneer with stucco and glass architectural elements. He stated the apartments would be of the same character as the retail buildings and would have interior corridors with a central common area.

Mr. Christopher asked if there would be more detail added to the commercial buildings than what was shown in the drawings submitted. Mr. Angelo stated the intent was to have the buildings in the same style as older buildings found throughout Rock Hill, noting that landscaping would be added to soften and enhance the exterior.

Dr. Robinson asked about the grocery store. Mr. Angelo stated they had spoken with several grocery store chains and were planning on doing a market study, noting the challenge for grocery chains was the number of surrounding households within a specific area.

Mr. Martens asked if the apartments would be market rate. Mr. Angelo stated this had not yet been determined.

Dr. Robinson noted that there is a lot of development proposed and asked if the site can accommodate all of the parking that will be needed. Mr. Angelo replied the buildings had been set along the street as close as possible in order to accommodate parking within the interior.

Dr. Robinson expressed concern over apartment dwellers' parking spaces being taken by retail shoppers. Mr. Angelo stated there was always an overlap of users in this type of space with residents typically using the spaces overnight and shoppers using the spaces during the day when residents would typically be at work.

Mr. Christopher asked if each apartment would have an assigned space. Mr. Angelo stated they would not but there was 1.5 spaces allotted for each apartment as required by ordinance.

Mr. Christopher asked about any stormwater issues. Mr. Matt Crawford, engineer, Keck & Wood, 300 Technology Center Way, stated there would be a detention area with pedestrian connection, which was yet to be determined as to whether it would be at ground level or utilizing a structure such as a bridge.

Mr. Graham asked if this was in the Old Town district. Ms. Youngblood stated it was not but was used as a comparison for the parking space calculations.

Mr. Christopher presented the motion to recommend to City Council approval of Master Planned Residential (MP-R) zoning on the property and approval of the Major Site Plan subject to staff comments. Mr. Mallard seconded.

Dr. Robinson expressed concern over the parking limitations.

Mr. Christopher stated the buildings needed more architectural details.

Mr. Graham added his concern regarding the amount of parking, asking if there was a limit on the use if parking was an issue. Ms. Youngblood stated the uses could be limited if there was not enough parking to serve the proposed use.

There were no further questions or discussion. Mr. Graham called for a vote and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5-0 (Smith and Goodner absent).

NEW BUSINESS

4. Consideration of a request by Civil Engineering of Columbia for Major Site Plan approval for Catawba Crossing Apartments. (Plan #20171241)

Planner II Dennis Fields presented the staff report.

Mr. Christopher asked if the Commission had seen this project previously. Mr. Fields stated they had seen it during the rezoning process, noting the difference between the proposed sketch presented at that time and the current plan was due to the discovery of wetlands forcing the reduction in the size of the building.

Mr. Christopher asked if the plan shows the maximum number of apartments that could fit on the site. Mr. David Christmas, 125 Old Chapin Road, Columbia SC, applicant, stated there will be 75 parking spaces for 50 units and it meets the City's requirement of 1.5 spaces per unit. He added they were not aware of the wetlands initially during the rezoning process and this created the need to push the building and parking to the edge of the site.

Mr. Mallard presented the motion to approve the Major Site Plan subject to staff comments and the addition of a sidewalk to connect to the nearby Gold's Gym. Dr. Robinson seconded, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5-0 (Smith and Goodner absent).

5. Consideration of a request by MCG Rock Hill LLC & VCP Rock of Charlotte for Major Site Plan approval for the redevelopment of the Kmart site. (Plan #20190063)

Mr. Fields presented the staff report.

Mr. Graham asked if there would be adequate parking for the site given the size of the Kmart building and the new buildings proposed. Mr. Fields stated there was a reduced parking demand with the use of the Kmart building transitioning to storage and the parking proposed for the rest of the site was adequate for the proposed uses of those buildings.

Mr. Graham asked if another retailer comes in to use the Kmart building before it is converted to a storage facility, would the plan have to come back to the Commission. Mr. Fields stated it may depending upon the proposed use of the other buildings on the site.

Mr. Christopher stated the site seemed to have more parking. Mr. Fields stated there were approximately 442 parking spaces proposed, and that parking would be dedicated depending upon the uses of the new buildings, adding that storage did not require all the spaces indicated on the plan.

Mr. Christopher asked if the parking layout would be constructed before the other buildings. Mr. Fields stated this was correct, that the parking was to be established first and other buildings could be phased in.

Mr. Christopher asked if there was a residential component to the site. Mr. Fields stated there was not as the site was zoned General Commercial (GC) and this zoning district did not allow residential uses.

Mr. Ben Johnson, 306 College Avenue, applicant's legal representation, stated the site plan and concept presented were a feature of the settlement agreement between his client and the City of Rock Hill.

Mr. Jeff Mangas, 301 McCullough Drive, Charlotte, project engineer, was available to answer questions. Mr. Christopher asked if the Kmart building would be demolished. Mr. Mangas stated it would not, that the current building would be upfitted for storage.

Dr. Robinson presented the motion to approve the Major Site Plan as submitted subject to staff comments and City Council lifting the existing moratorium on self-storage facilities. Mr. Christopher seconded.

Mr. Mallard asked if the Commission could approve the major site plan as presented without City Council lifting the moratorium. Mr. Bill Meyer, Planning & Development Director, stated the project was presented in this manner so it could move forward as the process for the moratorium moved towards its end in May, adding there were still some legal issues needing to be resolved. There was general discussion regarding the process for approval of this project.

There being no further questions or comments, Mr. Graham called for a vote and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 5-0 (Smith and Goodner absent).

6. Other Business.

Mr. Meyer introduced Senior Planner Amy Jo Denton of the department's Long Range Planning Division, who would be in charge of developing the City's 2020 Comprehensive Plan.

Mrs. Miller noted a continuing education event coming up on Friday, April 6.

7. Adjourn.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.