

On Thursday, May 19, 2016, at 7:00 p.m., a regular meeting of the Plan Commission was called to order. Roll Call. Present: Chair Rick Andersen, Karen Chevalier, Eric Larson, Aurelio Gallardo and Steve Munson. Absent: Rene Morris and Mike Mellott.

Also present were: Planner Dustin Wolff, Building and Zoning Superintendent Amanda Schmidt, City Attorney Ron Coplan, Assistant City Clerk Monique Castillo, Sterling Main Street Director Jana Groharing, Alderman Retha Elston.

Steve Munson made a motion to approve the minutes of November 19, 2015 as presented. The motion was seconded by Karen Chevalier. Voting – Ayes: Chair Andersen, Larson, Chevalier, Gallardo and Munson. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Chair Andersen asked the staff is there were any reports of Council Action. Amanda Schmidt noted the request from Greg Majeski was approved.

Chair Andersen opened a public hearing at 7:03 p.m. to hear from petitioners Gregory and Barbara Majeski, owners of 1702 E 3rd Street. The Majeski's are requesting the City vacate a portion (11 feet) of the right of way on 17th Avenue for a parking lot.

John Watts addressed the commissioners as the representative of Majeski Motors and provided them with a drawing of the proposed plan. Watts explained they want to keep uniformity in the area, working down towards 3rd Street as the right-of-way was way deeper and shrinking space.

Planner Wolff explained the North and South streets are very wide, typically 80-100 feet. Wolff noted the last request to vacate a right-of-way was received from the Historical Society, just last year. Wolff also noted the set-back for a new parking lot is 12 feet. Wolff recommends the City vacate 10 feet on each side of the road from East 4th Street south to East 1st Street.

Chevalier was in favor of expanding the vacation further south to do more at one time.

Munson inquired about the use of the parking lot, wondering if it would be utilized for employees or extra inventory. Majeski stated it would be for extra inventory.

Chair Andersen noted publications were made, fees were paid, notification requirements were met, signage notifying the public of the hearing was placed at the site for at least two weeks, there were no written comments received, but one phone call was received (please see attached letter. There were no public comments.

In reference to the attached letter, Mrs. Gonzales initially objected to the vacation until she was informed the parking lot may be used for employee parking and she would get an additional 10 feet of property. There was an apparent misunderstanding of how the lot would be utilized and the resident may not have understood the reason for the vacation.

Majeski stated it was never intended for employee parking. Schmidt noted in the beginning it was suggested it could be for employee parking and obviously the visioning changed. Majeski stated the parking lot would be used for extra inventory and not employee parking.

Munson inquired about the wording of the petition as vacation footage recommendation differs from footage requested. Per Coplan, wording of petition is fine since recommendation is less than what was requested in the petition.

Wolff's recommendation to the Plan Commission, grant relief but limit the vacation of the right of way to 10 feet from East 4th St south to East 1st St on both sides of the right of way.

There was a brief discussion regarding the use of the parking lot with reference to the letter of concern by Mrs. Gonzales. Watts noted that by adding a second entrance traffic congestion may be eliminated. Munson noted employee parking may generate more in and out traffic making it more inconvenient for surrounding residences. It was noted Mrs. Gonzales may have misunderstood the reasons for the vacation and if she is hoping for less traffic, a parking lot for inventory may be more suitable than a parking lot for employees.

Karen Chevalier made a motion that the City vacate no more than 10-feet of right-of-way on each side of 17th Avenue between East 4th Street and East 1st Street, conditioned upon confirmation that no public utilities will be impacted. The motion was seconded by Aurelio Gallardo. Voting: Ayes – Andersen, Larson, Chevalier, Gallardo and Munson. Nays – none. Motion carried.

With nothing further to discuss, the public hearing was closed at 7:31 p.m.

Chair Andersen opened a public hearing at 7:33 p.m. to hear from petitioner Scott Hibbard the owner of 224 East 3rd Street. Hibbard is requesting 25' of the right of way be vacated to allow for a combination of green space and possible outdoor seating areas for future development.

Hibbard submitted a site plan to the commissioners creating a vision of the project and explained in detail the work he has completed to date. The new development will consist of mostly eateries, a gas station and long term leases with the Pawn shop and US Bank regarding parking as well as parking

Chevalier expressed her excitement to see the finished project and asked what the anticipated time line was. Hibbard stated work is currently underway in the Feldman building (center) and could take a few months to plan and budget for.

Hibbard would like to eventually put archways/pillars on each side of the right of way in order to close off the street for special occasions. He is currently working with Jana Groharing of Sterling Main Street to bring in businesses once project is complete.

Hibbard noted a curb on the north side of the building, stating it would be utilized for a drive-thru for Lenhart Plumbing building. He further noted this project is ideal for the area being it is a TIF district.

Wolff explained currently the right-of-way is at 100-feet. He suggested the commissioners maintain consistency. While a 100-foot right-of-way seems excessive, staff is hesitant to go less than 80-feet. Allowing for a 25-foot vacation would take away that public realm which is essential to the area.

There was a brief discussion regarding the public vs. private use of the sidewalk and how a 25-foot vacation would affect use. Wolff noted the current code offers several options to accommodate the development and emphasized the opposition of vacating on Brinks Circle and not allowing more than 10-feet on 3rd Street.

Chevalier has the same concerns with vacating on Brinks Circle but is excited the City is willing to work with Mr. Hibbard.

Schmidt noted at first she was shocked by the request for a 25-foot vacation as public sidewalks are pertinent to the area with the number of events in Grandon Park.

Chair Andersen noted publications were made, fees were paid, notification requirements were met, signage notifying the public of the hearing was placed at the site for at least two weeks, there were no written comments received and no public comments were made.

Discussion continued regarding the sidewalks and parking. There are obviously different perspectives however, everyone is excited to see the development of this project.

Wolff stated there is not enough information to recommend more than he has already recommended.

Munson suggested to eliminate parking and reconfigure the roadway, granting an asymmetrical vacation of right-of-way.

Munson made a motion to table the petition to seek further commentary from City to reconfigure the roadway. The motion was seconded by Chevalier. Voting: Ayes – Larson, Chevalier, Gallardo and Munson. Nays – None. Motion carried.

The public hearing closed at 8:21 p.m.

Schmidt noted Commissioner Mike Mellott recently married and moved out of the general area of Sterling and thus has resigned as a Plan Commissioner.

Meeting next month will regard re-zoning of 10 or so properties.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Monique Castillo
Assistant City Clerk

May 19, 2016

Judy Gonzales
305 17th Ave
Sterling, IL 61081

Mrs. Judy Gonzales of 305 17th Avenue, contacted office today in reference to a letter she received regarding the public hearing for Majeski Motors at 1702 E 3rd St., Sterling.

Mrs. Gonzales is unable to attend tonight's meeting for medical reasons, but wanted to express her concerns.

She is a 40 year resident at this location and very opposed to the idea allowing Majeski to vacate the right-of-way as she is concerned about excessive traffic. She went on to explain she feels like she is being run out of the area/her home.

I explained the vacation should not impact her negatively and in addition will increase her property by 10 feet. I further explained it is my understanding the area may be utilized for employee parking only.
This she would be ok with.