

June 6, 2017

Proceedings of the Zoning Commission of University Heights, Iowa, held at the City Office, 1302 Melrose Avenue, subject to approval by the Commission at a subsequent meeting. ALL VOTES ARE UNANIMOUS UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED.

Chairperson Bauer called the June 6, 2017 meeting of the University Heights Zoning Commission to order at 7:16 p.m.

Present: Zoning Commission Members: Pat Bauer, Alice Haugen, Stepheny Gahn, Stuart Rosebrook and Larry Wilson. Staff present: City Attorney Ballard and Clerk Anderson. Also attending: Bill Boyd, Steve Boyd, Louise From, Jim Glasgow, Laura Hawks, Greg Stiltner, Carolyn Wells and Jerry Zimmermann.

The April 4, 2017 minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Consideration of Third Draft of Potential Sensitive Areas Ordinance: Chair Bauer reviewed the process the commission has completed to draft the sensitive areas ordinance. Bauer acknowledged the work of city Engineer Josiah Bilskemper and Commissioner Wilson in helping form the draft.

Bauer asked Attorney Ballard if there were items that needed to be “tweaked” before presenting to the council. Ballard stated he thought the ordinance was “well thought out and a major improvement” to the current ordinance. Ballard did not see any significant items that need to be changed and says the city has the authority to approve the ordinance as drafted.

Preliminary Discussion of PUD Application & Development Plan Submitted by University Lake Partners II LLC: Bauer reminded the commissioners that any conflicts of interests must be disclosed during discussion. Bauer also spoke to three “process points” he would like the commission to follow: 1) keep your mind open until all information has been presented, 2) disclose the substance of contacts they have with citizens outside of the meetings, and 3) give the reasoning behind your vote.

Ballard outlined the process and timeline for considering the PUD application. Ballard commented it is a collaborative process between developers, Zoning Commission and council. The commission has 45 days to make a recommendation to the council, unless an extension from the developers is granted. If the commission does not respond within 45 days, the application will be considered approved. If the commission approves the application, the council needs a simple majority to pass it, unless a certain percentage of adjoining property owners submit a signed petition against the proposal. If a petition is submitted or the commission does not recommend the application, then the council needs a super majority vote in favor of the proposal. Council will hold a public hearing(s) regarding the application.

Jim Glasgow, a partner for University Lake Partners (ULP) stated that he owns one of the rental properties adjacent to the proposed development site, as well as rental properties to the south of the site. They own the path to the west of the property, as well as the south portion. ULP recently purchased the Moyer property and has under contract property at 909 Melrose Avenue.

The proposal is to build a 140 room Marriott hotel on the site, very similar to the hotel they are building in Coralville. It would be five stories tall, with a bistro-type restaurant and have energy-efficient systems in the hotel. Glasgow distributed pictures of landscaping from the Coralville site that will be used on the property. Glasgow stated there will be a bike path on the west side of the property and they plan to tie-in to the Iowa City bike trail, assuming Iowa City approves the plan. The developers are trying to save as many trees as possible.

Commissioner Rosebrook asked about a shuttle and the impact of traffic on Melrose Avenue and if it has been determined there is one entrance and exit from the property. Glasgow stated there is an entrance to the south that will be used by staff and service vehicles and it may be gated. Bill Boyd stated there will be a 24-hour shuttle for the guests; it is anticipated the majority of trips will be to UIHC and VA hospitals. Greg Stiltner, a partner for ULP, stated MMS engineers could re-design the entrance further west of the bridge, if necessary. The developers are waiting on the MPOJC traffic study and will adjust the entrance, if needed. Glasgow stated they will be proactive to work with the city’s Visioning project.

Commissioner Haugen commented that the Flaum property is one of the few green pieces of property in the city, the neighbors are used to seeing green space and asked why should it be developed as a hotel. Glasgow responded that he is an adjacent property owner, knows the area well and feels “it is a perfect setting” for a hotel which would address the needs of the hospital.

Haugen suggested the property be turned into a park with football parking allowed during the season and asked the developers if they would be interested in being the proprietor to manage the parking. Glasgow replied that would be a decision by the city council to make it a park and he is in the hotel business.

Haugen asked how many people would enter and exit each day. Boyd commented that not every guest stays only one night but he would anticipate 50% checkout in the morning and the same for checking-in. He does not see there being a “social demand” (weddings, etc.) at all. Boyd also anticipates extended stays for guests.

Commissioner Gahn asked if the developers will be asking for TIF financing. Glasgow replied no, they would not ask for TIF and feel the project will “pay on its own”; estimated to be a \$20 million project.

Gahn asked what the differences are between a Marriott Courtyard, Residence Inn, etc., and why did the developers choose Courtyard for the site. Boyd stated the hotels are different price points with different amenities. The company has high expectations of the hotel franchisees. Inspections are held each year with required capital improvements, on an annual basis, and a 10-year capital plan.

Commissioner Wilson commented that the downtown Sheraton had issues with “outsiders” staying at the hotel for football weekends who were “really hard on the hotel”. Wilson asked how the developers will prevent the wear and tear on the property. Boyd commented the premium price to stay at the hotel on football weekends will help deter that situation. In addition, there will be two staff members working each night to address issues, as opposed to most hotels that have one front desk clerk. Boyd says it is a function of how you manage the property and holding guests accountable for damage.

Wilson asked if the three outbuildings on the property would be removed. Glasgow stated yes and the house under contract and the Flaum house would also be removed. Wilson stated there are several areas on the property being identified as flow-path streams on the city’s sensitive area mapping project. The developers plan to have MMS do an environmental study of the site.

Wilson commented that the trees along the east and south side border of the property are “important trees to save”. The developers plan to identify trees to save, but some of the trees are dying, dead or not in good shape. Discussion included saving existing trees versus planting new trees.

Wilson would like to see a map of the existing site showing what is staying and what will be removed. Wilson commented there are several potential areas of wetland identified on the site, as a result of the city’s sensitive area mapping project.

Wilson stated he is “skeptical” about the entrance from Melrose Avenue and wants to see the MPOJC traffic analysis report. Glasgow says they will see if they can address the issue issues, if that’s the determination.

Bauer feels the access off Melrose Avenue is a “linchpin issue”. Bauer stated the MPOJC report should be finalized by the end of June.

Bauer asked if the development will follow the sensitive areas ordinance under development. Glasgow stated they would follow those guidelines, even if the ordinance is not approved at the time of the PUD approval.

Bauer stated he anticipates a notice being sent to citizens alerting them to the potential development, as well as members of the city’s Visioning project.

The city can, by referendum, impose up to a 7% hotel/motel tax, which would need to be approved by the citizens. 50% of the tax must be spent on tourism promotion (many cities split such amount between convention/visitors bureau efforts and parks & recreation activities) and the remaining 50% can be allocated to the general fund.

The date for the next Zoning Commission meeting is to be determined. Possible dates and times are:

June 29 th – 7:00 – 9:00 pm	July 13 th – 7:00 – 9:00 pm
August 1 st – 7:15 – 9:15 pm	August 29 th – 7:15 – 9:15 pm
September 5 th – 7:15 – 9:15 pm	

The meeting was adjourned **by unanimous consent at 9:14 p.m.**

Attest: Christine M. Anderson, City Clerk

Approved: Pat Bauer, Chairperson