

**City of Alma
Planning Commission Minutes
October 7, 2019**

Commissioner Ayers called the regular meeting of the Alma Planning Commission to order at 6:00 PM on October 7, 2019 in the Alma City Commission Room.

Present: Ayers, Gilkins, Pitts, Schooley, Mapes, Wheeler, Therrien, Richter, and Kulling.

Absent: None.

Others Present: Aeric Ripley, City of Alma Zoning Administrator
David Ringle, Public Services Director
Rosemary Horvath, Gratiot County Herald
Stefani Skidmore, Resident 1103 Marquette Blvd.
Frank Nevychel, Avalon & Tahoe Manufacturing

A motion was offered by Kulling, and supported by Mapes, to approve the minutes of the Regular Planning Commission meeting held on September 9, 2019.

Yes: Ayers, Gilkins, Pitts, Schooley, Mapes, Wheeler, Therrien, Richter, and Kulling

No: None

Tabled Item: Rooming House at 422 Hannah Avenue

A Special Use Permit Application was tabled on September 9, 2019 for the establishment of a Rooming House as provided in Section 60-60 (b) (4). The applicant, Chris Eibling, proposes to provide a rooming house for (4) four individuals, at the address commonly known as 422 Hannah. The property is zoned R-2, Two Family Residential. R-2 Districts do allow for rooming houses through the issuance of a Special Use Permit.

Chairman Ayers opened discussion on the tabled item at 6:03 PM

A presentation was given by James Wing, Michigan Works Region 7B. Wing communicated that he was tasked by the commission to present property value studies for the communities in which other rooming houses are operated by his program in other communities as required by the special use permit ordinance. However, he is unable to present that information as these types of studies have not been conducted in the communities in which his rooming houses are operating. Numerous structural and cosmetic improvements are made to a property at the time it is acquired by his program. It is his attestation that these improvements increase the value of the property and therefore the properties surrounding a property within the program. He conceded that property values are dependent on too many variables to measure in this circumstance. In addition, property values rise and fall with the general economy independently of other variables. The values of properties in the Midland neighborhoods where the program operates saw their properties increase in most cases, though some values did decrease. It was noted that no direct evidence was available to show that the rising or falling property values in the Midland neighborhoods were directly related to the Region 7B rooming houses operating within them.

Alma Planning Commission

October 7, 2019

Page #2

Wing reiterated that his program is vital to the success of his clients. Housing barriers create homelessness and greatly raises the chance of recidivism. There are rules in place for his program that increases the compatibility of his rooming houses within their neighborhoods. These rules and oversight at the property on Bridge St. has allowed the property to operate within that neighborhood to date without issue. He stressed that the property at Hannah St. has an identical zoning classification as the property already operating on Bridge St. It was communicated that Michigan Fair Housing Law prevents discrimination based on a person's criminal record.

Skidmore asked what types of offenders would be housed within the house.

Wing replied that the residents would be low-level offenders in a controlled and monitored program. He indicated that without this housing opportunity the same residents would likely be living in traditional rental housing without the controls and regulations of his program.

Skidmore stated that Wing should not be allowed to house sex offenders within this neighborhood as there is a school bus stop located on this block.

Schooley communicated that this is not a public hearing and that the commission is now tasked to examine the criteria of the special use permit and determine if they have been adequately met.

Mapes added that the commission has requested additional required information that the applicant has not adequately provided.

Wing commented that county equalization attests that the value of a property is based the appearance and construction of a home.

A motion was offered by Mapes and supported by Therrien to close discussion on the tabled item.

Yes: Ayers, Gilkins, Pitts, Schooley, Mapes, Wheeler, Therrien, Richter, and Kulling

No: None

At 6:10 PM, a motion was offered by Mapes and supported by Wheeler to deny the special use permit for a proposed rooming house at 422 Hannah Avenue.

Yes: Ayers, Gilkins, Pitts, Schooley, Mapes, Wheeler, Therrien, Richter, and Kulling

No: None

Site Plan Review: Avalon & Tahoe Manufacturing

A request has been received from Avalon & Tahoe Manufacturing. Avalon plans to expand Production Building A for a total of 16,333 sq. ft. of additional space for the facility. The property is zoned LI, Limited Industrial the proposed additions are permitted in the LI District and require a site plan approval by the planning commission.

A presentation was given by Ripley. The expansion presented is for Production Building A. The new proposed lot setbacks are 13 ft from the front property line matching the current setback of the newly constructed dealer room, 90 feet from the east property line, 50 feet from the west property line and 380 ft from the rear property line. The lot size is 6.85 acres. The new lot coverage is 37.58% of the 40% allowed within the district. A building permit will be required for the project. A review of drainage requirements will be conducted by the Public Services Department.

Nevychel commented that the proposed building will match the slope to the current building to the east. The proposed building will not project beyond the newly constructed meeting room.

At 6:15 PM a motion was offered by Wheeler and supported by Kulling to approve the presented site plan review.

Yes: Ayers, Gilkins, Pitts, Schooley, Mapes, Wheeler, Therrien, Richter, and Kulling
No: None

Public Hearing: Ordinance Amendments (Off-Street Parking)

Draft amendments to Article 8 Off-Street Parking, Loading and Unloading Requirements have been proposed. The amendments provide more specific standards for residential off-street parking. A draft of the amendments and the full ordinance for Off-Street Parking have been available on the City of Alma Planning and Zoning Page, under Documents and Links on the City of Alma Website.

The public hearing was opened by Ayers at 6:18 PM.

A presentation was given by Ripley. Ripley stated that the ordinance modifications allow for greater specifics within the current regulations allowing residents to park on the area of their drive pad located in the front yard area between the home and the street. The modification would also require that all vehicles parked on property outside of an enclosure be parked on a

defined parking pad. A parking pad or driveway would be further defined as a durable surface of at least 4 inches in depth constructed of concrete, asphalt, flagstone, brick, crushed concrete with aggregate of at least 6 mm in diameter or other durable material designed to resist erosion and tracking deemed suitable by the Public Services Director.

One e-mail was received in support of the ordinance changes, no further correspondence was received regarding the matter. No members of the public were in attendance during the hearing to comment.

Mapes inquired if the current proposed changes would still allow for a property owner to install a circle drive. Ringle replied that to qualify for a circle drive the lot must have at least 110 feet of property line frontage with the street to allow for a second drive approach. Hale and Ripley replied that the Zoning Department would work with property owners developing lots with the required frontage to install a circle drive if so desired. It was commented that few vacant lots located with residential neighborhoods would possess enough frontage to allow for a circle drive on the property.

Hale commented that if the discussion for ordinance modification were to be recommended to the city commission, it is important to include a proposed roll out of enforcement in that discussion. As the parking pad requirement affects hundreds of property owners within the city, it is important to go slowly starting with an educational campaign informing everyone of the changes and a grace period allowing citizens to make the required changes on their own accord before proceeding with enforcement action to effect the change.

At 6:31 PM a motion was offered by Mapes and supported by Pitts to close the public hearing.

Yes: Ayers, Gilkins, Pitts, Schooley, Mapes, Wheeler, Therrien, Richter, and Kulling

No: None

A motion was offered by Kulling and supported by Therrien to present to proposed changes to the city's Off-Street Parking, Loading and Unloading Requirements to the City Commission at its next regular meeting.

Yes: Ayers, Gilkins, Pitts, Schooley, Mapes, Wheeler, Therrien, Richter, and Kulling

No: None

Ground Floor Residential Information

Ground floor residential materials have been provided to the commission for review. A presentation was given by Ripley.

Ripley stated that after further research, it is his opinion that the option of allowing residential uses in the ground floor rear areas of properties within business districts is worth exploring. He suggests the commission visit a community that has enacted a ground floor residential ordinance to see the concept in use. He proposed that such a use could be regulated by right within the district or with a special use permit. Regulating with a special use permit requires additional information be presented by the developer and gets that information to the public prior to approval. Use by right would be an automatic process constrained by the requirements set within the district.

Kulling inquired as to which communities are currently allowing such uses?

Ripley replied that locally both the cities of Ithaca and Breckenridge have recently adopted amendments to allow for ground floor residential uses in commercial districts. He also commented that the cities of Clawson, Whitehall and Imlay City have allowed these uses for some time.

Commissioners Pitts and Therrien expressed that the City of Clawson would be a good choice to visit for comparison.

Mapes commented that this might better be handled through a conditional rezoning process for truly unique cases allowing the commission to try the concept without completely cutting it loose to developers.

A motion was offered by Wheeler and supported by Gilkins to adjourn the meeting at 6:43 PM.

Yes: Ayers, Gilkins, Pitts, Schooley, Mapes, Wheeler, Therrien, Richter, and Kulling
No: None

Respectfully submitted,

Aaron K. Hale
Planning Commission Recording Secretary