

**City of Alma
Planning Commission Minutes
July 6, 2020**

Commissioner Ayers called the regular meeting of the Alma Planning Commission to order at 6:01 PM on July 6th, 2020 on the Zoom video conferencing platform.

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

Absent: Gilkins

Others Present: Aeric Ripley, City of Alma Zoning Administrator
David Ringle, Public Works Director
Tony Costanzo, City Attorney
Katherine Roslund, City Assessor
Ryan Smith, Gemini Capital Management LLC
Brendan Kelly, Gratiot Area Chamber Director
Mary Anne Evans-Justin, Resident 305 Hastings
Julio Benitez, Resident 529 Gratiot
Micheal Selmon, Resident 614 Pine Ave
Stever Sommerfield, Resident 726 Gratiot
Other Zoom Nicknames in Attendance: KarenHogg, Maria & Lina, Joanne Gilbert, Dean, and RC Rens

A motion was offered at 6:03 PM by Pitts and supported by Mapes to approve the minutes of the Regular Planning Commission meeting held on June 1, 2020.

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

No: None

Public Hearing: PUD Preliminary Plan 319 E Downie St -

A Preliminary Plan Planned Unit Development Plan has been submitted by Gemini Capital Management IX, LLC for the property located at 319 E Downie Street (#29-51-344-577-00). The Procedure for Review requires a Pre-Application Conference, a Determination of PUD Eligibility, a neighborhood meeting, and the introduction of the Preliminary PUD Plan to the Planning Commission all these steps have been completed, the next step for the Planning Commission is the public hearing to review submitted Preliminary PUD Plan.

A presentation was given by Ripley.

The lot is 3.15 acres (137,214 sq. ft.) with a total of 40 units on the site ranging in size from 448 sq. ft. to 1,371 sq. ft., size breakdowns given later. The applicate is requesting a different density other than what is allowed as currently zoned, density shall be allowed at the discretion of the Planning Commission and City Commission, based on the Master Plan, surrounding land use, and demonstration that the proposed PUD provides quality design with minimal impacts to the surrounding properties. The proposed density is 9% under the maximum density allowed by ordinance of 14 units per acre. The additional density greater than specified may be allowed in the discretion of the Planning Commission based upon a demonstration by the applicate of design excellence in the PUD resulting in a material benefit to all or a significant portion of the innovative design producing significant energy efficiency, pedestrian or vehicular safety, or long

term aesthetic beauty.

Site Plan Residential Units Are Identified as Letters

Single Family **A** Units (2) Two Story, Three Bedroom – 1,371sq ft, Two Car Garage – 576sq ft (Footprint of Structure 625sq ft)

Duplex **B** Units (12) One Story, One Bedroom 448sq ft

Duplex **C** Units ADA (2) One Story, One Bedroom 638sq ft

Duplex **D** Units (8) Two Story, Two Bedroom 1,000sq ft

Single Family **E** Units (6) One Story, Two Bedroom 768sq ft, Two Car Garage 576sq ft

Single Family **F** Units (2) One Story, Two Bedroom 800sq ft

Duplex **G** Units (8) Two Story, Two Bedroom 1,088sq ft, One Car Garage 336sq ft (Footprint of Structure 54sq ft)

Lot Coverage with Structures

Homes, Garages and Porches: 25,375sq ft

Leasing Office & Storage Units: 2,000sq ft

Day Care Center: 7,135sq ft

Total: 34,510sq ft

Total Lot Coverage with Structures: 25%

Setbacks (Building to Property Line)

Downie Street – B and C Units are 15' from property line, the Day Care is 11' from the property line.

Pine Avenue: B, D and E Units are 15' from property line.

Hastings Street: A and G Units are 15' from property line.

Gratiot Avenue: B Units on the corner of Downie and Gratiot is 6' for the property line, the Management Office, B, D, E Units are 15' from the property line.

The porches on Units A, B, C, D, E, F, G are 8 ft., Units F, G are 7 ft.

Parking & Trash Removal

There are 40 units within the proposed development, the site plan shows 56 on site surface parking spaces, 6 of these spaces are handicapped accessible. There are another 24 spaces within the garages, for a total of 80 on site parking spaces. Located less than 250 ft. from the lease office is a municipal parking lot. Parking is allowed on street, except during the months of November 1st to April 1st between the hours of 2 a.m. and 7 a.m.

Trash Removal is provided for on the site plan with two dumpster enclosures toward the north and two enclosures near the management office and day care.

Landscaping Plan Provided

The landscape site plan currently shows 39 new trees around the perimeter and 41 new trees to the interior. A landscape design has been provided for each unit type in front of the unit and around the side of the unit. Elevation and aerial renderings have been provided to give a feel for what the development would look like with the structures and the plantings. The species of trees and plantings are provided for in the ordinance. A developer can request a species not on the list with approval of the City Forester.

A Units are shown to have 20 different plantings around the unit.

B Units are shown to have 22 different plantings around the duplex.

C Units are shown to have 20 different plantings around the duplex.

D Units are shown to have 24 different plantings around the duplex.

E Units are shown to have 13 different plantings around the unit.

F Units are shown to have 15 different plantings around the unit.

G Units are shown to have 22 different plantings around the duplex.

Staff Comments:

As part of the PUD review, pedestrian and energy efficiency are factors for consideration. The preliminary plan has provided for interconnecting sidewalks to all units to the publicly owned sides. The plan also includes the installation of two car charging stations and solar panels on all the structures to assist with the cost of energy.

The Public Services David Ringle has provided a memo on his review of the Preliminary Plan. Mr. Ringle the civil engineer continue to work on the details of the infrastructure for the project. According to Ordinance a public hearing notice is to go out to property owners within 300' of a proposed project. In this case staff sent notice and a letter with an explanation of the Preliminary PUD Plan to property owners within 500' of the proposed project. A total of 106 letters were sent and 6 were returned. The letter explained where to find the Preliminary PUD plan on the City of Alma website. Staff also provided email, and phone numbers in case someone did not have computer access or had questions or comments.

To date, I have received two calls for assistance on how to access the plan online and one correspondence from Mr. Benitez with questions about the project. I have provided the questions and the responses from staff and the developer. As staff, I really do appreciate Mr. Benitez reaching out with his questions before the meeting.

The plan appears to meet the criteria set forth in the PUD Ordinance for the PUD Preliminary Plan.

Included with the packet is PUD Ordinance and Amendment, of possible action recommendations by the Planning Commission, which are sent to City Commission following the public hearing: Approval, Approval with Changes or Conditions, Postpone, Denial. Whatever the recommended action the preliminary plan is submitted to the City Commission for their review.

A presentation was given by Ringle.

I appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on the revised set of plans for the new project proposed by Gemini Capital Management at 319 East Downie Street. Please find herein comments concerning the new development project located in Alma at 319 E. Downie Street. The plans dated April 2020 have been reviewed by the City of Alma Public Services Department.

1. The proposed drive approaches along E. Downie Street and Hastings Street are approved as shown. The location for these drive approaches and widths are acceptable as shown. The east and west drive approaches (one on Gratiot Ave. and the other along Pine Ave.) measure out to be approximately 12 feet wide from face-of-curb to face-of-curb. While the drawings show directional arrows, rarely are these ever followed in practice once installed. This is of concern because along Pine Avenue, a driver could be exiting the housing development, while another driver could be wanting to turn into the site. This could create two problematic situations: (1) being that it could create traffic back-ups along Pine Avenue and (2) potential of collisions between exiting cars from the site and drivers pulling into 319 E. Downie. There are (2) potential solutions. (1)

would be to widen the east and west drive approach out to a minimum of 16 feet wide. However, there would be an issue as to where the dumpsters could be re-located near those locations that would be serviceable with the trash removal company. Solution (2) is to place two 'Do Not Enter' signs at each approach on the owner's side of the sidewalk. One sign would be on Pine and face Pine Avenue and the other sign would be on Gratiot and face Gratiot Avenue. The signing suggestion would be the easiest solution. However, if traffic back-ups and collisions become a problem even with the signs, widening the drive approaches to accommodate two-way traffic may be required to be installed at the owner's expense in the future.

Since no proposed grades appear on the drawings, careful consideration should be given to accessing elevated drive approach slopes that may be created if connecting to the existing public sidewalks. If public sidewalk grades are to be changed, their slopes (both longitudinal and cross slope) shall adhere to ADA standards and handicap accessibility requirements. Drive approach permits are required for the four drive approaches.

There are several proposed trees along the City right-of-way's that need to be removed from the plan to help accommodate clear vision zones for vehicular ingress and egress.

Remove the proposed first tree north of the drive approach along Pine Avenue.

Remove the proposed first tree west of the drive approach along E. Downie Street.

Remove the proposed first tree south of the drive approach along Gratiot Avenue.

The walk approach west of the proposed management office needs to be removed because this is not a designated pedestrian crosswalk and should not be confused as one.

It is unclear if the owner is proposing to stripe for parking areas along Gratiot Avenue and Hastings Street. Regardless, these parking areas are not to be striped. I'm not sure if these parking areas were included in the parking area calculations, but it must be known these parking areas will not be available for parking overnight (from 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.) during the winter months (November 1 through April 1). Parking is permitted along the south side of Hastings Street. Gratiot Avenue is wide enough at 36 feet to accommodate parking along both east and west curbs. The drawings show a water main (size not listed) running north-south down the center of the block along with unlabeled sizes of water service lines connecting to it. As shown on the proposed drawings, all water lines, including the main line running north-south along the vacated alley as well as any service lines, will be privately owned and privately maintained, not a part of the City of Alma's system. The proposed water system is rejected as shown on the drawings in the interests of the long-term future of the City of Alma. It is highly likely that at some point in the future, someone will want separate billing of any one or a combination of buildings within this

property, and it would be impossible for the City crews to be able to access the curb stop boxes let alone maintain them. The curb stop boxes (shut offs) would also then be on private property.

If the owner wishes to now or in the future have the City of Alma separately bill each unit for water and sewage charges, the water supply system as shown on this drawing is rejected. If owner/developer wishes to have the City of Alma individually bill each unit, owner will need to utilize a plan similar to what is shown on the attached sketched site drawing. With what is shown on the attached sketch, the City can access, maintain, and ensure future access and maintenance at all times to all curb stop valves that serve each unit. The project's engineer will need calculations to determine the size of each water service connection required to be able to serve each duplex if 'wying' off a common service line and splitting creating two curb stops and two service lines from each connection. An analysis will need to be performed by the project's civil engineer to determine what size water connection could supply enough water volume to each unit. To reduce the size of the road cuts and perhaps help to maintain road traffic, the owner/developer may consider directionally boring all water service lines that are to be connected under street surfaces to eliminate open trenching across entire road surface and reduce impact on street surfaces. Water connection permits will be required as well as a meter and corresponding curb stop accessible within the City right-of-way. This is the approved method for this project and also eliminates the need to run a water line down the center of the development.

The drawings do not show any proposed storm lines, structures, or a collection system. Based on the drawing provided, the contour lines look to be existing site grade contours, so it is unknown/unclear where storm water will be directed. However, any storm water that falls within the property should be collected and contained on the property and directed to the City storm sewers. Due to the site's proximity the Pine River (within one block), this project's storm water system must be reviewed by and have an approved storm water plan and retention system approved by the Gratiot County Drain Commission prior to the issuance of any City of Alma permits. A storm connection permit is required by both the County Drain Commission as well as the City of Alma prior to the connection to any City of Alma owned storm structures and/or storm lines.

It should also be noted that the property owner will be responsible for the maintenance and removal of all snow and ice within the project area. The owner is also responsible to coordinate a location to re-locate any snow removed or the need to be relocated from their site (not to be relocated onto City owned property or right-of-way's).

2. The sanitary sewer for the proposed P.U.D. will be directed to proposed private sanitary main located in the center of the property underneath and within the recently vacated alley within that block that will flow from north to south and connect to the City's sanitary sewer in E. Downie Street. The connection within Downie Street will need a permit prior to connection to the City main. All

sanitary sewers as well as structures, including the north-south main collector and all service laterals, will be privately owned and privately maintained. All the lateral connections from these structures will be made on private property to the private sanitary main, therefore, no sanitary sewer connection permit for each building is required. However, as mentioned above, a new sanitary connection permit will be required to connect at E. Downie Street.

3. A Soil erosion permit is likely required and must be obtained from the Gratiot County Permits office and maintained to their satisfaction throughout the duration of the project.

4. Recently, the City of Alma vacated the north-south alley within this block, but reserved easement rights. I strongly recommend that in the near future, the City also vacate the easement rights of this vacated north-south alley to eliminate any future confusion as to who owns or maintains any utilities that reside within it.

A summary of all the required Public Services Permits is listed below and may be acquired either all at the same time or as needed by each associated trade that will be performing the work. However, because Pine Avenue is a major street, permits must be acquired no later than a minimum of (3) business days in advance of any of the work within the City right-of-way but may be requested much further in advance if desired. If Pine Avenue must be excavated to make the necessary water connections, the contractor will need a road closure/detour route approved by the Public Services Department prior to any road/right-of-way excavations.

Public Services Permits Required:

- Drive Approach Permit
- Water Connection Permit(s) for each unit requiring its own City utility bill.
- Major Street (Pine Avenue & E. Downie) and/or Local Street (Gratiot Avenue & Hastings Street) Opening Permit(s) (if any portion of the road surface is excavated or disturbed)
- Water Meter Permits for each unit that is desired to have its own utility billing through the City of Alma, as well as a separate curb stop valve accessible at all times within the City of Alma's right-of-way(s).
- Storm Sewer Connection Permit for each connection to a City of Alma Storm structure (catch basin and/or manhole).
- Sidewalk and curb restoration (if curb is disturbed) is to be replaced by the owner upon completion of utility connection activities. However, inspections must be performed and approved by the City of Alma's Engineering Department when forms have been placed, prior to the placement of any concrete.
- A list of approved tree species that are permitted to plant within the City right-of-way is attached with this document

Commissioner Ayers asked that public comments be limited to 5 minutes.

Mapes inquired if the Downie St area near the daycare as drawn is a concrete drive up drop off zone is planned and if it is in phase 1 or 2 of the project.

Ripley confirmed that it is a drive up and drop off area in phase 2 of the PUD plan to alleviate traffic backups during peak hours of the daycare.

Mary Anne Evans Justin inquired about shifting the area of the daycare to be on the corner of Downie and Gratiot rather than Pine and Downie with a safer drop off lane on Gratiot. Her preference is to have the drop off lane in the interior of the block.

Ripley commented that the drop off area is off the street but is entered from and exited to the street.

Justin replied that is her problem as a drop off lane on a busier street would cause congestion and would be better on a less trafficked street such as Hastings or Gratiot.

David Justin commented that the exit onto Pine Ave will likely cause issues with traffic and pedestrians on Pine Ave particularly school related traffic in the morning and afternoon and suggests limiting exits to Downie, Hastings and Gratiot.

Julio Benitez agreed that this would not interact well traffic on Pine Ave.

Mr. Smith experienced audio difficulties at this point in the meeting and was unable to comment.

Benitez added that even though there is a drive way for dropoff and pickup a similar situation is used at our elementary schools and they cause backups onto the street during high traffic times.

Micheal Selmon commented that he was in support of the project. I likes this project better than the one presented a couple years ago. He commends Gemini Capital on their job listening to the neighborhood concerns. He states he also agrees with the possible issues statedconcerning the drop off lane and exit onto Pine Ave. Overall, he feels the plan is very good and fits with R-1 Zoning.

Ripley reviewed the steps remaining in the PUD process. The next step is for the City Commission to review the plan after which the developer has six months to finalize the plan. Once the plan is complete and signed it cannot be altered without going back through the entire process.

Evans-Justin asked if the B units Gratiot have walkways from their units to a parking area.

Mapes commented that extending the sidewalk from the middle of the block behind the management office could be extended a few feet to the Gratiot sidewalk completing a connection. Mapes requested it be added to the list of recommendations to the plan.

Smith apologized for his audio difficulties. Smith agreed to add a connecting sidewalk to the plan. The drop off is part of phase 2 of the project, is in the interior of the block and is contingent on the completion of the daycare, which is uncertain at this time. On the exit to Pine Ave, the intention is to utilize a right turn only sign and it is an exit only to alleviate traffic concerns on Pine Ave. Smith will add do not enter signs facing Pine Ave.

Justin comment that while a right turn only does alleviate some traffic issues it does not address the concerns with pedestrians.

Smith agrees it is a concern, but he has already greatly reduced the overall issue with pedestrian traffic by drastically reducing the number of driveway approaches on the plan.

Sommerfield inquired if storm water retention would be managed on site?

Smith replied that it would be managed on site in the green area near the office and the majority of storm water retention is underground which connects to the municipal storm water system.

Benitez inquired as to the probability of the daycare and if the daycare project does not materialize what would be utilized in that portion of the property?

Smith replied that if the daycare does not proceed the land will be vacant. Any future development must come back through this process.

Ayers asked what the deadline would be for phase 2?

Ripley replied that he would not have to build the daycare if he doesn't want to, but if he does he must build it as approved in the plan. Any alteration will require for the process to be conducted again.

Smith commented that he is unlikely to submit the daycare as part of the plan as the interested parties are now hesitant to sign a lease.

Benitez inquired about the hurdles to a potential daycare?

Smith replied that as the lessor of the property he was unaware of their business particulars.

Evans-Justin inquired if the addition to the sewer service to Downie with the addition of 42 buildings would effect that sewer's capacity.

Ringle replied that Downie is a major collector sewer designed to handle a sizeable section of the city.

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Evans-Justin thanked him for his answer.

Ringle commented he was in favor of Smith's plan to reduce the number of drive approaches on Pine ave to one from four or more. This reduces the number of conflict points improving traffic safety.

Smith commented that a single approach on one side of the street for an entire city block is far fewer than the average number on the average city block.

Smith apologized again for his technical difficulties.

A motion was made by Pitts and supported by Kulling at 6:41 PM to close the public hearing.

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

No: None

A motion was made by Pitts and supported by Kulling at 6:42 PM to recommend to approve the presented Planned Unit Development plan to the City Commission with David Ringle's recommendations.

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

No: None

Ripley commented that the next step was to include the memo, plan and recommendation in the packet to review at the next city commission meeting on July 14th.

Ayers inquired if there was any new business. None was expressed.

A motion was made by Wheeler and supported by Mapes to adjourn the regular meeting of the Planning Commission at 6:45 PM.

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

No: None

Respectfully submitted,



Aaron K. Hale

Planning Commission Recording Secretary