

Planning Board Meeting
(meeting is being recorded)

On Tuesday, October 28, 2014 the Holyoke Planning Board held a Public Meeting in the 4th Floor Conference Room, City Hall Annex, Holyoke City Hall, Holyoke, MA 01040 at 6:00 p.m.

Attendance:

Planning Board

Mimi Panitch Chairman
 Christian LaChapelle..... Vice-Chairman
 Mark Joy..... Secretary
 Eileen Regan Member
 John Kelley..... Member

Planning Staff

Marcos Marrero..... Director
 Jeffrey Burkott Principal Planner
 Claire Ricker Senior Planner
 Sharon Konstantinidis..... Head Clerk

Stormwater Authority

Dave Moore Chairman
 Jose Garcia Member
 Matthew Sokop City Engineer

Others Present

Anne Darcy Holyoke Housing Authority (HHA)
 Dan Boulais Tighe & Bond, Consulting Engineers
 Jay Viamari Tighe & Bond, Consulting Engineers
 John Furman Vanesse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB)
 Alberto Cardenas DHK Architects

Others Present

Edward Owens 120 Front Street
 Zan Bross The Community Builders, Inc. Northampton
 Chris Schultz Copley Wolff, Boston, MA

OPEN

MIMI PANITCH called for a motion to open the Planning Board meeting at 6:07 p.m. A motion was made by JOHN KELLEY and seconded by EILEEN REGAN. The motion carried 5-0.

ZONE CHANGE/ SITE PLAN REVIEW/ SUBDIVISION/SPECIAL PERMIT

1. Approval Not Required - 933 Main Street, Marcotte Ford (BH)

JEFFREY BURKOTT stated that Brian Marcotte intended to dissolve the interior parcel lines. The requirements for an ANR were met as the property was on a public way, met the required frontage, and had access. A motion was made by CHRIS LACHAPELLE and seconded by EILEEN REGAN to approve the ANR. Mark Joy signed the plans.

2. Site Plan Review Continuation - Lyman Terrace Revitalization, 2-16 Court Street

Hearing continued until December 9, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

3. Special Permit – Section 5.4 Multiple Principal Structures, Lyman Terrace Revitalization

Hearing continued until December 9, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

4. Special Permit – Section 6.1.7.Reduction of Parking, Lyman Terrace Revitalization

Hearing continued until December 9, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

5. Zone Change – Greater Holyoke YMCA, 399 Appleton Street, DR to BC

The Public Hearing closed. (discussed after the recess)

6. Zone Change – Sections Related to Auto Related Uses

Hearing continued until November 25, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.

PLANNING BOARD BUSINESS

A) Project Updates/Old Business/New Business

Rail Platform - MARCOS MARRERO stated that he was moving forward on securing additional funding to begin construction in the next few weeks.

B) Meeting Schedule

The next Planning Board meeting scheduled was as follows:

November 11, 2014: No meeting due to Veterans Day

November 25, 2014: Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Ordinance Special Permits Auto Related, a Site Plan Review (SPR) for Marcotte Ford and possibly a SPR for Holyoke Hotel.

December 9, 2014: Zoning Ordinance continuation - Special Permits; Lyman Terrace Revitalization continuation; and possibly a SPR for a Pride Gas Station at Hampden & Pleasant.

C) Minutes

JOHN KELLEY noted that portions of the Planning Board meeting minutes drafted for September 23rd and September 30th appeared to be identical and asked that those minutes be tabled to allow they are reviewed and resubmitted. The Board agreed.

A motion was made by EILEEN REGAN and seconded by CHRIS LACHAPELLE to approve the Public Hearing minutes of September 30, 2014: Lyman Terrace Revitalization; September 30, 2014: Whiting Farms Road 18-acre; September 30, 2014: Special Permits of the City Council changed to Special Permits of the Planning Board; and the minutes of October 14, 2014: Special Permit to Increase Sign Size, H&R Block. The motion carried 5-0.

D) Other Business

There was no other business to come before the Board.

E) Correspondence

There was no correspondence to come before the Board.

Recess

JOHN KELLEY, at 6:23 p.m., made a motion to recess the Planning Board meeting for the purpose of opening up the Joint Public Hearing with the Stormwater Authority for Lyman Terrace Revitalization SPR continuation. The motion was seconded by MARK JOY. The motion carried.

Resume

MIMI PANITCH, at 9:41 p.m., called for a motion to resume the Planning Board Meeting. A motion was made by JOHN KELLEY and seconded by EILEEN REGAN. The motion carried 5-0.

ZONE CHANGE/ SITE PLAN REVIEW/ SUBDIVISION/SPECIAL PERMIT

5. Zone Change – Sections Related to Auto Related Uses

Hearing continued until November 25, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.

6. Zone Change – Greater Holyoke YMCA, 399 Appleton Street, DR to BC

MIMI PANITCH asked the Board members if they were prepared to vote on considering a recommendation for the Zone Change petition from DR to BC.

MARK JOY stated that he was not in favor of the zone change as it was spot-zoning and the change is not in the best interest of the City.

EILEEN REGAN stated that she was in favor of the zone change. Although technically it was a spot zone, she felt that it was in the best interest of the City to change the zone. Regardless of the character and safety of the neighborhood, her decision was mainly because of the elderly and children that have to navigate the snow banks, icy conditions, and traffic as a result of parking on the street.

JOHN KELLEY stated that more people spoke in favor of the zone change, one in particular having lived there for over 50 years and many stating that the YMCA was a good neighbor. He was unsure of Olivia Mausels position but assumed she spoke as an individual and not on behalf of the Historic Commission. Of those that spoke against the zone change, many were new to the City or from out of town. The reality was that the building was no longer there and as a vacant lot, it would attract debris and criminal activity. Rehabbing a vacant lot was a better alternative and the YMCA has been there for over 140 years.

MIMI PANITCH stated that the zone change to BC would be spot-zoning. The City just adopted a redevelopment plan that identified the goal for that area was a dense, walk-able, non-suburbanized neighborhood with no parking expansion. By tearing down the building, the YMCA has created the current situation that the City can no longer identify viable options for the building, or eliminate the rumors that it was not "economically viable" to rehab. They rejected meeting with potential tax paying entities to discuss a purchase offer for the property; they clearly had no other goal in mind but a parking lot. Now the YMCA is seeking approval from the City for a zone change, after they disregarded the City's request to pursue a zone change prior to the demolition of a historic building. The proposed parking lot would only yield an additional 20 parking spaces, hardly a dent in their plans, and would go against the revitalization plan for the neighborhood. She added that approval of the zone change would send the message that if you are politically connected, not willing to compromise, and knock down a building, you can ask for mercy later. The City needs the newcomers that John Kelley mentioned. The fact that some have only owned their property for only 8 or 10 years should not be a consideration to be weighed against the fact that they have the same right in zoning as anyone else does, which is not to have it overturned because "people love the YMCA". She added that she would have preferred that the Public Hearing remained opened to have acquired possible evidence of when and if there was parking issue.

JOHN KELLEY responded that he could attest that the parking lot was always full. In addition, there were neighbors that spoke in favor of the zone change.

MARK JOY reminded the Board members that the Zone Change was for the use of the parcel and not a project. He added that he was not in favor of the Zone Change because the proposed zone is not the best use for the parcel or consistent with the neighborhood. The Board should focus on the "use" and not the former "Farr mansion" or the benefits of the YMCA. He asked if the zone was consistent with the surroundings.

EILEEN REGAN added that the proposed zone was not consistent with zoning nor was it consistent with the economic redevelopment plan. She added that she may be voting with her heart and not her head, and approving the zone change would be granting a spot zone and potentially put the City in peril; she considered changing her opinion.

JOHN KELLEY asked if scheduling another meeting date would allow the Planning Board the additional time to decide. The Board agreed to meet on Thursday, November 13, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Planning Board, MIMI PANITCH, at 10:03 p.m., called for a motion to close the Planning Board Meeting. A motion was made by EILEEN REGAN and seconded by JOHN KELLEY. The motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Joy, Secretary