

## Community Development Department

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**MINUTES**  
**PLAN COMMISSION**  
**March 2, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.**  
**Virtual and City Council Chambers**

Members Present: Dan Toland, Lisa Moody, Patricia LaRue, Hal Watson, Craig Hofland, Rebecca Prendergast, Chris Holtkamp  
Members Absent: None  
Staff Present: Amy Peterson, Crystal Raleigh, Brandy Howe, Sam Wessel, Keri Schreiner  
Others Present: Larry Kirch, Prologue Planning Group  
Jim Sullivan, 125 Cascade Ct  
Steven (Tyler) Kohlhagen, 123 W Park Street  
Dave and Sue Paulson, 1597 Commerce Court

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting convened at 6:30 p.m.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

1. M/Moody, S/Watson to approve minutes contingent on correcting the adjournment time to 6:57 p.m. Motion carried 5-0 (Holtkamp abstained due to not attending that meeting).

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

### **ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**

2. PC Resolution 2021-01 designating proposed boundaries and approving a project pan for Tax Incremental District No. 17, City of River Falls, Wisconsin

Schreiner gave a brief overview of tax incremental financing and how it's used in the City of River Falls, along with the types of TIDs and overview of the TID plan adoption process. Peterson gave an overview of proposed TID 17 to redevelop the Shopko property as a distillery and event center. Peterson mentioned projects within the ½ mile radius of TID 17: improvements for trailheads, trails, DNR river access, and stormwater management, as well as bridge/street maintenance, a new water tower, revolving loan fund, land acquisition, and Kinni Corridor Plan projects. The TID includes the Shopko property and the vacant property bordering it to the north. The City expects it to develop during the life of the TID but projected a conservative estimate of the future development's value. The TID Plan will be voted on by City Council on March 23 and the Joint Review Board on April 7. Staff recommends approval of the TID plan.

Mayor Toland thanked Peterson for mentioning that the City reached out to a dozen retailers since a lot of people want retail in this location, but with retail declining and Hudson so close, no one has shown interest.

Dave and Sue Paulson of Dave's Automotive and Transmission stated they want to be updated on any road closures, utility outages, etc. so they and other businesses can plan around the site's reconstruction. Dave also noted that his shop generates considerable noise and is concerned that it could be a problem for the new event center. Peterson mentioned that there will be coordination with neighbors when the site is being reconstructed.

Holtkamp discussed the email comment concerned about more traffic on Riverside Drive where neighbors have reported cars ending up in yards, mailboxes being destroyed, etc. Holtkamp feels that most traffic will go east to the interchange. Hofland asked why both properties were included in the TID district. Peterson mentioned because it's an attractive development site that's for sale, so it will likely develop and contribute to the increment in the next few years. Hofland asked how that was different than properties within a half mile radius, and Peterson clarified that properties within a half mile are eligible for projects funded by the TID, but properties within the TID itself can receive more incentives.

LaRue mentioned that she uses Riverside Drive as a shortcut and understands that more vehicles could easily use to get to the new distillery, so she is understanding of the neighbors' concerns. She asked if the site was being demolished or remodeled and how many jobs it would bring. Peterson said it was not being demolished, and Schreiner said the new business is looking to bring in 17 existing employees and increases that to 26 full time employees in three years. Eventually, they hope to have 100 part- and full-time employees for the whole complex. Hofland asked if there's a restaurant indoors and if it's the same the caterer, and Keri confirmed that the restaurant is there full time and will help with catering for events. LaRue remarked that Kinni Off Road Cyclists events could benefit greatly with their mountain bike events. Watson wanted the public to know that one TID project is to connect the site to the existing KORC trails. He also wanted to confirm that it was a blight TID and showed support for the project.

M/S – Watson/Holtkamp Motion carried 6-0.

## **PRESENTATION**

### **3. 641 S. Main concept review and discussion**

Developer Gordon Awsumb gave a brief history of his interest in developing 641 South Main Street which is owned by Jim and Teri Renslow. He presented a concept 30-unit, 4-story multifamily development which was included in the packet, but decided that it might be better to also create a concept of 8 cottage-style single family homes with 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 2 car garages, and attached front porches that would fit the surrounding neighborhood. The homes will be capable of eventually being net-zero energy, if not already being net-zero from the start. This design is in response to feedback from the community and his desire to provide a sustainable product. The units will be rentals for a 6 years for Awsumb to meet Opportunity Zone requirements and then would likely be sold.

Jim Renslow mentioned that the area is in need of redevelopment since the area between Downtown River Falls and the south end of South Main Street is aging, is unattractive, and the City would like more density along South Main Street. He feels that Awsumb meets all the City and neighborhood goals with this project. Professors and young professionals needing housing will find it a desirable place to live.

Jim Sullivan, 125 Cascade Ct, said that the properties had 2 single family homes in the past and they were purchased that way and then removed. With 8 homes, neighbors are concerned with traffic since they were told in the past there would be no Main Street access. They are concerned about the street's ability to handle the traffic and stormwater, and if street improvements would make them lose trees and yard space. He is in favor of 2 more single family homes because density is more oriented to profit than being the best use of the site.

Steven Tyler Kohlhagen, 123 W Park St, is concerned about traffic since he has 2 children who use the dead-end Cascade Court to ride bikes. They are also concerned of losing their yard to the street since they have put a lot of work into their house the last few years and don't want the value to decrease since they have a small lot to begin with. They also had issues with plowing and room for cars to get down the streets this past winter.

Mayor Toland asked Peterson if the road would be expanded with only 8 units. Peterson said the 25' lane width is adequate for 2 cars. There is also 50 feet of right-of-way which leaves room for expansion without taking away from peoples' yards. Staff will take a closer look at traffic impacts, but with lower density and a right-in and right-out driveway onto South Main Street, Cascade Court traffic is less of a concern.

Hofland mentioned there's a center turn lane and two travel lanes on South Main Street, so there's enough width to figure out South Main Street access. LaRue like the energy efficiency of the project and suggested placing masonry or other façade features on the buildings closest to South Main Street, and that the houses are much better than the apartments.

Moody asked for clarification on property lines. Awsumb mentioned the lines are shifted to show an additional 12 feet needed to widen the South Main Street bridge someday. More details will come when Awsumb submits full plans. Moody and Watson both agreed the 8-unit design is much better than the 30-unit design and thanked the developer for the new design.

Hofland asked why the houses were angled and Awsumb said it was so all the front porches can be seen from South Main Street. He also would like to see a nice retaining wall and trees on the South Fork side of the development rather than trails and a gazebo.

Holtkamp said he moved to River Falls to teach at UWRF two years ago and he would have loved to have a product like this to live in when he arrived. He would like to see more density on South Main Street but agrees that the site is challenging, and the design makes sense. Prendergast thanked the developer for the new design and for the other Plan Commission members for asking the questions she had in mind. Awsumb thanked Plan Commission for the feedback and will bring back a refined design. Peterson mentioned staff will work with Awsumb if the layout or setbacks are a concern since it will likely be a Planned Unit Development.

## **REPORTS/DIALOGUE**

### **Director's Report**

Peterson mentioned the Annual Report will be included in the April packet rather than the March one. She mentioned Wessel and Schreiner's work on the Available Sites interactive map that will be used for Economic Development purposes. Staff is also upgrading the GIS system to improve public-facing maps. Staff is working on the annual stormwater reporting and the 2021-2026 Capital Improvement Plan.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Hofland made a motion to adjourn at 7:47 p.m.

M/Hofland, S/Prendergast; motion carried 6-0

## **WORKSHOP: SPECIAL USE PERMITS**

Howe gave a short presentation on special use permits in the R-1 district and asked Plan Commission for feedback. The goal is to eliminate special use permits altogether or change them to permitted uses, possibly with standards. Howe suggested removing several non-residential uses from the R-1 zoning district and asked if two-family should be allowed in R-1 without the 1,400-foot spacing requirement. She listed possible noise impacts of non-residential uses to be retained in R-1 in case standards should apply, and if things like cemeteries and neighborhood groceries should be kept in R-1.

Holtkamp supported allowing duplexes and twin homes and R-1, Mayor Toland supported neighborhood grocery stores that are under a certain size. Holtkamp said coffee shops or neighborhood retail could be allowed too. He mentioned conditions placed on churches must consider religious freedom laws. LaRue also supported neighborhood-scale shops and uses to encourage social interaction. Howe mentioned that feedback about what other uses to include in R-1 are helpful for staff as the comprehensive plan project begins and zoning ordinances are amended in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samuel Wessel". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Sam Wessel, AICP, Planner