

On Thursday, January 26, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., Co-Chair McCloud reconvened a regular meeting of the Plan Commission from January 19, 2023. The meeting was called to order in-person and via Zoom. Roll Call. Present: Chair Rene Morris (via zoom), Carol Corwell, Aurelio Gallardo, Co-Chair Skip McCloud and Jamie Schwingle. Absent: Joe Strabala-Bright.

Also present were: Planners Dustin Wolff (via zoom), Building and Zoning Superintendent Amanda Schmidt, Attorney Tim Zollinger, City Manager Scott Shumard (via zoom) and Assistant City Clerk Monique Castillo.

Co-Chair McCloud reviewed the petition from Dan Koster and Peaceful Properties referencing the 2.5 Acre Parcel along Lynn Boulevard. It was noted although this parcel is outside city limits the City must give notification of any objections to Whiteside County.

Nik Jakobs, Peaceful Properties, gave a presentation in support of this petition. He is affiliated with Temple Shalom, currently located at 510 E 10th Street, Sterling. Jakobs noted the Temple has been in the area for more than 100 years and is currently in a dilapidating state. He reached out to McCloud and Associates to see if they could save the facility but it was recommended that building anew would be the best option. As a result, Jakobs started looking for possible sites to relocate (this journey dates back to 2020 as he had anticipated this outcome). He found several areas that would work but the asking price of these locations were well over market value. He noted he was even offered a gift of 5 acres, but that land was well outside the city limits and Jakobs is passionate about remaining close to the community where they have grown and contributed so much.

Jakobs went on to state their vision not only rebuilds a Temple for worship but will encompass a museum for all to enjoy. The museum will include artifacts from all over with a special focus on the Holocaust, which he feels is an important education tool.

Jakobs noted Mr. Koster was a key factor in the selection of this area, which is just west of New Life Lutheran Church. Jakobs also noted, the Church is open to sharing space with regard to parking and the Temple is open to sharing their new space with the Community. In addition, the new building will be open to the public daily, have a museum curator on staff daily and will collaborate with other museums and institutions to bring new ideas to the facility periodically.

Jakobs is excited about this project and anticipates annexing into the City in the future.

Wolff noted this is a large farm area and reminded the commission to be mindful of extra growth. He noted there are several areas in the community that would be ideal for this project. He stated we would like to see this area become residential when the time is right. He asked the commission to consider if this was the right time to build in this area

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and if it within the guidelines of the Comprehensive Plan. He further acknowledged that Jakobs is willing to be annexed into the City and will connect to city utilities which is a great bonus. Wolff challenged the commission to consider why other locations are not being considered when basing their decision to support or deny this request.

Wolff noted staff is supportive and recommends a letter of No Objection be issued to Whiteside County.

Morris made a motion to recommend the City Council issue a letter of No Objection to Whiteside County for Peaceful Properties to construct a new facility on the 2.5 Acre Parcel along Lynn Boulevard. The motion was seconded by Schwingle. Voting – Ayes: Morris, Corwell, Gallardo, McCloud and Schwingle. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Schmidt noted this recommendation will be submitted to the City Council at the February 6, 2023 meeting.

Co-Chair McCloud reviewed the petition from Peter Harkness referencing the property at 31382 Holly Road. It was noted that although this property is outside city limits the city must give notification of any objections to Whiteside County.

William Holt, NW, stated this is a statutory request in order for them to sell the farm and put the rest of the residential area on the market. He noted the area fits all the requirements of Whiteside County and they are requesting a letter of no objection.

Schwingle inquired if this land will be annexed. Schmidt noted there is no likelihood of that happening.

Wolff noted this property sits $\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the corporate city limits and reminded the Commission the long-range plan is to preserve farmland and noted this property is within the city's growth area.

Wolff noted the staff is supportive and recommends a letter of No Objection be issued to Whiteside County.

Corwell made a motion to recommend the City Council issue a letter of No Objection to Whiteside County referencing Pete Harkness and the property located at 31382 Holly Road. The motion was seconded by Gallardo. Voting – Ayes: Corwell, Gallardo, McCloud, Schwingle and Morris. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Schmidt noted this recommendation will be submitted to the City Council at the February 6, 2023 meeting.

Co-Chair McCloud reconvened the Public Hearing at 7:32 p.m.

Mike Gunderson, Vice-President/Owner of Mallard Manufacturing, is the contract buyer of the property located at 409 Avenue L/1204 W 4th Street. Gunderson is a resident of

Morrison, Illinois but has worked in Sterling for 30 plus years. He noted his business started out with only 14 employees, to date they now have 150-180 employees. They have utilized this facility for over 10 years and many of the components they use are shipped from over-seas, he is hoping to expand and bring these components back to the United States to be produced locally. He took a moment to explain his company makes custom gravity flow storage solutions for many of the distribution centers such as Amazon warehouses.

Gunderson currently rents the property located at 409 Avenue L/1204 W 4th Street from Mr. Mahboob Khan and noted Mr. Khan does not do much for the upkeep of this property.

Gunderson noted they do a lot of product testing at this location and customers do visit the location to review the test results. His vision is to make the facility more welcoming for visitors and the community. His plans include a major renovation to the exterior appearance of the facility, improve the parking area and add green space. He also noted PNP, a local factory that specializes in plastics, will assist with plastic components, which will continue to keep jobs local as well as product.

Gunderson acknowledged there is a lot of work to be done at this facility and he assured the facility will remain light manufacturing. He also stated he is willing to compromise and take into consideration the recommendations of the city referencing parking, fencing and lighting.

Corwell inquired on the number of employees this facility will have. Gunderson stated there are currently 8-10 employees but there is potential to add 6-8 more, working 2 shifts.

Wolff noted staff is absolutely supportive. There have been several attempts, in the past 12-13 years, made by previous owners to clean up this area that all fell through. Staff is confident, as an improvement has already been made, this potential buyer will succeed.

Wolff reminded the commission this property is considered Special Use and there may be issues with site improvements. We need to make sure the plan is feasible to both the owner and city. To avoid unnecessary setbacks and to assist in Mallard closing on this deal, we need to require a detailed site plan that lays out all improvements, a time frame for the work to be completed and show how this plan will work so the neighboring residents are not negatively impacted.

Gunderson stated if approved, he anticipates a completion date by the end of Summer 2023.

Wolff again stated staff is highly supportive with a detailed site plan, time frame and improvements are compliant with the zoning code but should things go south, different action may take place.

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Schmidt noted Gunderson has kept the lines of communication open and she is already seeing an improvement in the site and he does not even own the property yet. She feels the deadline requirement may be the anchor needed to fulfill this project.

Co-Chair McCloud noted publication has been made, fees have been paid, notification requirements have been met, signage notifying the public of the hearing has been placed at the site for at least two weeks and there were no written or telephone calls from the public for the record.

With no further business to discuss, the Public Hearing was closed at 8:04 p.m.

Schwingle made a motion to expand and change the Special Use at 409 Avenue L and 1204 W 4th Street to light duty manufacturing contingent to detailed site plans referencing lighting, landscaping and completion of project. The motion was seconded by Corwell. Voting – Ayes: Gallardo, McCloud, Schwingle, Morris and Corwell. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Wolff explained we may need to update a few zoning codes. Including the text amendments as we are finding a lot of buildings require larger accessory structures and home owners are using stables as sheds, instead of garages, as the current requirements are too restrictive. Fences with regard to height, placing and being able to see through them if in the front yard. Driveway regulations with regard to circular drives and parking pads. Also, may need some minor changes to the electronic message board code with regard to sizing.

Wolff encouraged the commission to pay close attention when driving through town and pay close attention to what people currently have.

The next Plan Commission meeting will be Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. We will discuss these zoning code updates in depth.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.



Monique Castillo
Assistant City Clerk