

**Approved Minutes  
Planning Commission Meeting  
January 15, 2020**

**5A**

Chair Anderson called a Meeting of the Plymouth Planning Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 3400 Plymouth Boulevard, on January 15, 2020.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Marc Anderson, Commissioners Bryan Oakley, Donovan Saba, David Witte and Justin Markell

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Jaspreet (Jesse) Narr and Julie Witt

STAFF PRESENT: Planning Manager Barbara Thomson, Senior Planner Lori Sommers and Senior Engineering Technician Trevor Quast

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Ned Carroll

Chair Anderson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Plymouth Forum**

Chair Anderson introduced Alison Barrick, 4525 Merrimac Lane, who stated that she is part of a consortium of neighborhoods around the Hollydale Golf Course property that share concerns with the development of that property. She stated that the group has spent time listening to neighbors and other community members and have heard that the amenity desired most is undisturbed green space. She stated that a petition was created on change.org in November related to opposition of rezoning for residential development on the Hollydale Golf Course site and reported that as of today 1,300 signatures have been received. She stated that open space acreage is in severe decline, while residential development continues to increase. She stated that Hollydale Golf Course has always been shown as a public/park use in the City's comprehensive plan. She stated that the community clearly values protecting the environment and open space. She stated that in 2008 Plymouth was ranked number one of most livable cities in *Money Magazine*, noting that the outdoor elements contributed to the rating. She stated that the magazine issued a warning that the top-rated cities sometimes contribute to their own demise by overcrowding their population.

Chair Anderson introduced Susan Gaither, 16500 45th Avenue, who stated that she has been working with neighbors around the golf course, including the previous speaker, on the potential development of the golf course. She stated that a proposal that will soon come before the commission will be for 319 homes to be constructed on 130 acres. She stated that the surrounding 200 homes have been in existence for about 25 years, noting that this project would increase the density by 125 percent. She stated that as an infill development, it would have a huge impact on the neighbors. She provided an example of the Elm Creek development, a project by the same developer, which is about half the size of this proposed development and after six years is still not completely sold. She stated that the City's language clearly states that the City will not approve a

plan that does not meet the City's comprehensive plan. She stated that the existing zoning and land use for the Hollydale site do not support residential development. She noted that Hollydale is highlighted in the City's parks section of the comprehensive plan as an amenity of the City's park system. She commented that golf is one of the most popular sports activities for seniors. She recognized that the City has the ability to change the zoning of the golf course, but asked whether it should. She stated that no one, other than the buyer and seller involved, want the Hollydale development proposal to go through as residents value the green space and character of that area.

### **Approval of Agenda**

Motion was made by Commissioner Oakley, and seconded by Commissioner Markell, to approve the agenda. With all members voting in favor, the motion carried.

### **Consent Agenda**

Motion was made by Commissioner Witte, and seconded by Commissioner Oaldehy, to adopt the Consent Agenda that included the following items:

**(4.01)** Planning Commission minutes from meeting held on December 18, 2019.

With all members voting in favor, the motion carried.

### **Public Hearings**

**(5.01) Public hearing on zoning ordinance text amendments in the 1-1 and 1-2 districts for Avison Young. (2019083)**

Senior Planner Sommers reviewed the staff report.

Commissioner Oakley asked if the applicant could have requested a CUP rather than the zoning amendments.

Senior Planner Sommers replied that there is no availability for the applicant to request anything other than the zoning text amendments as the applicant's use does not meet the ordinance requirement that their use occupy over 50 percent of the structure.

Commissioner Oakley asked if there was a rationale for including the 50 percent threshold in the original requirements.

Planning Manager Thomson stated that she believed the purpose was to ensure that a sufficient portion of building area would be devoted to a commercial-type use.

Commissioner Oakley commented it would seem then that the requirement was created to prevent a building from having several different small uses within. He asked for clarification on

the suggested limit of 7,000 square foot and asked if there was a reason that limit was set, other than the fact that the number is higher than the 6,000 square feet requested by the applicant.

Senior Planner Sommers stated that the applicant only needs 6,000 square feet, but wanted to provide additional flexibility for other buildings within the city.

Chair Anderson stated that if approved, this would open up the possibility for other uses in the city and asked if staff would anticipate parking problems.

Senior Planner Sommers stated there would be a case by case site review, noting that staff would work with property/building owners to ensure there is sufficient parking for all the uses.

Commissioner Witte asked if there is information from landlords or commercial brokers related to excess supply of vacant light industrial space within the city. He explained that the applicant has stated that there is an issue, but noted that he did not see the same support from the industry.

Senior Planner Sommers stated that staff has not reached out to other landowners and does not have concrete evidence of that.

Commissioner Witte stated there is a counseling service right across the street from this proposed site and asked if that business provides the same type of service.

Senior Planner Sommers responded that she was not aware of the other business.

Planning Manager Thomson stated that the City completed an industrial use study a few years ago as it recognized that changes are occurring in the industrial market.

Commissioner Oakley asked if the study identified a vacancy percentage.

Planning Manager Thomson believed that was a part of the study, but did not believe that vacancy was a large issue for Plymouth.

Commissioner Markell asked if there was discussion related to keeping the threshold a percentage of the size rather than using a delineated square footage.

Senior Planner Sommers stated that staff reviewed that option, but given the variation in sizes of industrial buildings, a percentage could equate to a much larger size and therefore the size limit is proposed in square footage.

Commissioner Markell asked if it was intentional to use the word "therapy" rather than "counseling."

Senior Planner Sommers stated that the text amendment the applicant proposed was reviewed by staff, and the applicant intentionally used the word "therapy."

Chair Anderson introduced Joe Houseman, representing the building owner, who stated that his client has received more interest from smaller users as larger users have chosen buildings with

higher ceiling height. He stated that these types of flex office buildings often fit well for this type of use, as they do not fit well into traditional retail/commercial buildings.

Commissioner Oakley referenced the 7,000 square foot limitation. He noted that Mr. Houseman mentioned perhaps having four users within their 35,000 square feet and asked if a portion of the building would then remain unused.

Mr. Houseman stated that he has other tenants that would use the remaining space, noting that only one of the users would fall into this category.

Chair Anderson introduced Peggy Howell, representing the Lazarus Project, who stated that they would like to move into this space. She noted that the business has been a part of the Plymouth community for the past 15 years, providing therapy for children with autism. She noted that parents drop their children off for the day, and therefore they would not have large parking implications. She stated that the business is within a mixed use setting in other communities and likes how the setting works, which led to the business finding this proposed space.

Chair Anderson introduced Mark Evenson, representing the applicant, who stated that his company has worked with the business in other locations. He agreed that the mixed use setting in other communities works well, and the landlords of this business provide positive feedback. He stated that as a commercial real estate advisor, he has clients in this market and the city currently has a lot of low clearance height buildings within the light industrial district. He noted that landlords closely watch parking to ensure there will not be issues between tenants. He stated that this use would have drop off/pick up service and therefore would not cause an issue with parking. He stated that as buildings move through multiple generations and repurposing, the spaces become more unique. He stated they are excited about the space and hope that this request can move forward.

Chair Anderson opened the public hearing and closed the public hearing as there was no one present requesting to speak on this item.

Commissioner Witte stated that he was skeptical when he read through the language, but now believes this to be a good fit. He noted there have been changes in this type of space, using the example of recreational space and workout clubs. He said he was pleased to see the property owner represented and noted that he would be supporting this request.

Chair Anderson noted that adoption of this ordinance amendment would not only allow this project to move forward, but would open up the I-1 and I-2 districts to additional users.

Commissioner Oakley agreed that this would be a good use. He noted that this type of use would most likely not be requested for buildings with high ceilings, as those buildings would most likely remain industrial. He stated that the concern would not be with what occurs inside the building, but outside in terms of parking. He said he was unsure that issue was addressed in the ordinance language.

Chair Anderson noted that staff has stated that the reviews will be done on a case by case basis.

Planning Manager Thomson stated that the proposed regulation includes a caveat that the parking regulations would need to be met.

Senior Planner Sommers explained that the text amendment would require applicants to submit an administrative permit application, which would include information on parking needs, use, and space requirements. She noted that parking review would expand to the entire building to ensure that the new use would not create an issue with parking between tenants.

Commissioner Markell commented that he does support the use, but was a bit dubious in regard to the specific language.

Chair Anderson asked if staff could review that language prior to Council review to determine if the language related to therapy uses could be expanded.

Senior Planner Sommers reviewed the language that was included in the notice for the public hearing.

Chair Anderson explained that if that language is changed, a new notice would need to be provided with another public hearing.

Planning Manager Thomson explained that the scope could be narrowed from what was included in the notice, but cannot be expanded. She stated that non-substantive changes could be made.

Commissioner Markell suggested using the word "or" rather than "and" with reference to the listing of types of therapy allowed.

Commissioner Saba stated that it is becoming a reoccurring theme that the City is reviewing new uses for the industrial districts.

Motion was made by Commissioner Markell, and seconded by Commissioner Saba, to substitute "or" for "and" in the proposed zoning ordinance text amendments. With 4 members voting in favor, the motion carried.

Motion was made by Commissioner Oakley, and seconded by Commissioner Witte, to recommend approval of the zoning ordinance text amendments in the I-1 and I-2 districts as amended and associated findings of fact for the amendments for Avison Young. With 4 members voting in favor, the motion carried.

**(5.02) Public hearing on lighting zone amendment for the City of Plymouth for Northwest Greenway Trailhead shelter building site at 5205 Peony Lane. (2019108)**

**(6.01) Public meeting on site plan amendment for City of Plymouth for Northwest Greenway Trailhead shelter building at 5205 Peony Lane. (2018107)**

Senior Planner Sommers reviewed the joint report on these two applications.

Commissioner Oakley stated that the parking lots came forward the previous year and asked if there was mention at that time about a change to the lighting zone.

Senior Planner Sommers stated that the staff report associated with that request indicated there would be no lighting.

Commissioner Oakley stated that the 137-stall parking lot was approved with no lighting. He stated it would make sense to have the building, but was struggling with the lighting request.

Senior Planner Sommers provided additional details on the LZ-1 and LZ-2 districts and lighting for those districts. She stated that parks staff would like the change in lighting to ensure that the parks and playfields remain consistent.

Commissioner Witte stated that at the previous public hearing a number of neighbors voiced concern with this project and its visibility to their homes. He asked if this lighting plan would also include trail lights.

Senior Planner Sommers stated that she understood the lighting request to be for the parking lot and security lighting on the building.

Commissioner Witte asked if it would be possible to issue a variance for this request rather than rezoning the property for the lighting.

Senior Planner Sommers replied that this could only proceed as a lighting zone amendment.

Commissioner Markell asked the intended use of the kitchen and other amenities.

Chair Anderson introduced Recreation Manager Kari Hemp, who stated that the bathrooms would be set on timers to allow public use. She explained that the kitchen would be used for service purposes when the facility is rented. She reviewed the other amenities that would be available for events. She stated that 5K races could start from this point and be used for that purpose as well. She confirmed that the kitchen would not include appliances.

Chair Anderson stated that it appears the angle of the roof is in a southerly direction and asked if solar panels have been considered.

Senior Planner Sommers stated that would be a good suggestion. She said she did not believe that concept had yet been discussed.

Chair Anderson referenced the use of wood siding. He noted that most residential structures have moved toward a cement product, or something more maintenance-free as compared to wood.

Senior Planner Sommers stated that the type of siding has not yet been fully specified.

Chair Anderson opened the public hearing and closed the public hearing as there was no one present requesting to speak on this item.

Commissioner Oakley stated that he has an issue with the way this was handled. He explained that if someone would have submitted this application, other than the City, it would have been

deemed incomplete. He stated if the application was received all together, he believed that additional residents would have come to speak. He said he was disappointed in the manner this project was presented and challenged staff to think of that next time. He stated he would support the site plan amendment, but would not support the lighting zone amendment.

Chair Anderson echoed the comments of Commissioner Oakley, as he believed that the original application was incomplete, with the first phase coming forward with only a parking lot. He stated that the commission did not approve the larger amount of parking, but it did move forward and pass through City Council. He stated he believes the building to be a good and appropriate use and will therefore support the request.

Commissioner Witte agreed with the comments of Commissioner Oakley and Chair Anderson. He stated he was struggling with the details of the lighting request and believes that perhaps lower lighting fixtures/temperatures/colors could provide the same level of safety.

Motion was made by Commissioner Oakley, and seconded by Commissioner Witte, to recommend approval of site plan amendment for the City of Plymouth for Northwest Greenway Trailhead shelter building at 5205 Peony Lane. With all members voting in favor, the motion carried.

Motion was made by Commissioner Oakley, and seconded by Commissioner Witte, to recommend denial of the lighting zone amendment for the City of Plymouth for Northwest Greenway Trailhead shelter building and site at 5205 Peony Lane. With Commissioners Oakley, Saba and Witte voting in favor and Commissioners Markell and Anderson voting against, the motion carried.

## **New Business**

### **(6.02) Public meeting on site plan amendment for Wold Architects and Engineers for parking upgrades at Sunset Hill Elementary School at 13005 Sunset Trail. (2019049)**

Senior Planner Sommers reviewed the staff report.

Chair Anderson stated it appears there is room for about six or seven busses and asked if there is sufficient space for the busses.

Chair Anderson introduced Jon Deutsch, representing the applicant, who stated there are about eight angled spots, along with curbside bussing to fit 14 busses.

Commissioner Witte asked why the height of the light fixtures is proposed to increase.

Senior Planner Sommers stated that the applicant is not proposing to increase the height of the lighting. She noted that the original lighting plans did not meet the City's requirements, and the applicant has since submitted a plan that meets the lighting requirements.

Commissioner Markell asked if the ingress and egress for the busses would be marked.

Mr. Deutsch confirmed that those areas would be marked.

Chair Anderson asked if anyone from the public wished to comment on this application.

Chair Anderson introduced Daniel Jones, 12914 Sunset Trail, who stated that the bus exit is directly across from his driveway. He explained that when he constructed his home, he was instructed to move the driveway as far as possible from the curve on Sunset Trail. He noted that his neighbor has a shared driveway because of the curve. He expressed a safety concern with allowing busloads of children to exit close to the curve. He stated he is glad to see the field remain, as the previous proposal removed that element. He stated he would like to see a measure added for calming traffic. He stated there is currently a flashing school zone sign that would need to move up the hill to provide proper notice to drivers. He stated he was concerned with busses queuing on the north side of Sunset Trail as that would block the egress from his home and could block garbage/recycling collection. He stated he was happy to see that the issue of rain runoff has been addressed. He stated the building currently has security lights that are not screened or shuttered and are facing the homes. He asked that the light be controlled to a point where it could still be providing safety. He acknowledged plant materials that would be added on the back of the building and asked if additional planting would be added to the front to help shield the lighting.

Chair Anderson introduced Mike Roeder, 13010 Sunset Trail, who commented on the steepness of the hill on Sunset Trail. He stated it is difficult to get out of his driveway, and the traffic on Sunset Trail often travels at higher than posted speeds. He stated that the spot where the driveway is proposed often floods during heavy rains. He stated while the busses have an ingress and egress, there is only one access for staff and vehicles dropping off and picking up children. He stated the diagram does not provide specific information on the proposed additional lighting.

Chair Anderson introduced Sue Roeder, 13010 Sunset Trail, who stated her concern is that the flashing school zone sign needs to be posted further up the hill to better alert drivers. She suggested slowing the posted speed limit to 25 mph. She asked if something could be done to add a bar that would prevent vehicles from coming out of the ingress/egress for the busses. She commented that overall this is a good plan for the school, and that she is happy to see the ball fields remain.

Senior Planner Sommers stated that Engineering staff has reviewed the request closely, noting that the school is not proposing to add an access point and is instead widening an existing access point. She stated while this is not ideal, it would eliminate additional access points for vehicles. She also stated the school will have to monitor traffic to ensure the traffic circulation on-site is working. She stated the parking lot will now allow a large amount of stacking on the school property, rather than along the public roadway.

Commissioner Markell asked why the ingress/egress being removed was not elected to remain.

Chair Anderson introduced Valerie Peterson, representing the applicant, who stated that the access that remains creates additional stacking room for vehicles on-site.

Commissioner Markell stated it would seem that the applicant is favoring on-property stacking over the impact to Sunset Trail and the related intersection.

Ms. Peterson explained that morning drop off is more paced out, while the afternoon release is when the stacking occurs.

Commissioner Witte stated that under normal school conditions this plan would allow for staff and drop-off times. He referenced special events, like conferences, when parking is not adequate. He asked if there is a plan for that.

Ms. Peterson noted that during special events, the bussing area would have the potential to provide additional parking.

Chair Anderson noted that many times the bussing courts are striped in one color for busses and another color for vehicles, with signage that prohibits vehicle access during certain hours.

Planning Manager Thomson explained that the City does not control the posted roadway speed, as that is under State control.

Mr. Deutsch stated he will address the location of the flashing school zone sign with the City's Public Works Department.

Commissioner Markell asked if the busses would be coming from the same direction in the afternoon, and whether they would be coming from the left or right.

Mr. Deutsch replied that busses come from all different directions and placement occurs based on the order the busses access the site. He stated the school has discussed monitoring traffic on the site and possible controls that could be added to create added separation/control. He stated he is not aware that security lighting would be changed, but noted that after hearing the comments tonight, he will review that lighting to determine if better control could be added. He stated he could also review the option of additional plant screening. He noted they could have additional discussion with Engineering to ensure the storm water treatment is sufficient.

Commissioner Oaldehy asked if security lighting is regulated by lighting zone.

Planning Manager Thomson stated that existing lighting cannot be regulated, but new lighting would have to comply.

Chair Anderson stated that he welcomes the separation of the bus court and vehicle parking areas as that seems to be effective.

Commissioner Oakley stated it appears the biggest storm water problem occurs not on this site, but from water flowing downhill onto this site.

Senior Engineering Technician Quast commented that the project is not allowed to increase the current rate and does meet that requirement. He confirmed that much of the water is originating

from down the road. He confirmed that the applicant would be adding additional underground storage for storm water.

Motion was made by Commissioner Oakley, and seconded by Commissioner Witte, to recommend approval of a site plan amendment for Wold Architects and Engineers for parking upgrades at Sunset Hill Elementary School at 13005 Sunset Trail. With all members voting in favor, the motion carried.

### **Adjournment**

Chair Anderson adjourned the meeting at 8:58 p.m.