

Planning Commission
February 8, 2018
Special Meeting Minutes

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 4:32PM. The following members were present: Mr. David Miller, Mr. Pete McGory, Chairman Michael Zuilhof, Mr. Joe Galea and Mr. David Waddington. Ms. Casey Sparks and Ms. Angela Byington represented the Planning Department; Mr. Trevor Hayberger represented the Law Department; and Debi Eversole, Clerk from the Community Development Department. Mr. Jackson and Mr. Whelan were excused.

Mr. Galea requested that the 10/25/17 meeting minutes reflect that he will recuse himself due to representation of clients in pending litigation with Firelands Regional Medical Center. The clerk advised the changes would be made.

Mr. Miller moved to approve the minutes from the October 25, 2017 (as corrected) and the November 15, 2017 meetings. Mr. Waddington seconded the motion, which carried with a unanimous vote.

Mr. Hayberger swore in audience members and staff that wished to speak on any of the agenda items.

Ms. Sparks presented that Pete Daniel, on behalf of Ability Works, Inc had submitted an application for an amendment to the Zone Map from Limited Manufacturing to Public Facility. The existing use is Ability Works and the proposed use is for a safe and sober living facility for 80 individuals. There will not be any changes to the structure of parking at this time. Section 1149.05(b) requires one space per two beds which would be 40 spaces. The site plan indicates that there are approximately 60 spaces.

Staff recommended approval of the zoning amendment and requested to continue the open discussion regarding public access for the property.

Tim King, Erie Regional Planning Commission spoke on behalf of the plan. The facility is east of Lions Park and west of the Erie County Health Department. He stated that this proposal would be a down zoning since it will be a less intense use. The facility would be an 80 bed recovery housing facility for women who have been through detox from alcohol and chemical dependency. This facility will give the women extra time to physically and mentally recovery from dependency. Partners in this project include: Erie County Commissioners, Erie County Health Department, Lorain County Alcohol and Drug Abuse Service Center and Primary Purpose Center, a 501c3 out of Sheffield Township. The facility will offer a safe and sober living facility, recreational and leisure activities, chores and job training and placement as well as onsite alcohol and narcotics anonymous meetings. The facility will be staffed 24 hours. Priority will be given to Erie, Ottawa and Lorain County women. The key to the rezoning is the proximity to the Erie County Health Department which will provide other services to the patients. The projected occupancy is 85% daily for a total census of 67 per day. They anticipate 350 admissions per year. There are 4 ADA parking spaces and it is assumed that the facility is compliant with ADA.

Norris Gessinger, 620 LaSalle St stated that his property abuts the property in question. He asked why this property was chosen for this project.

Pete Schade, Erie County Health Department stated that logistically, the site became available and the patients at 420 Superior Street will be able to just walk across a parking lot to get to the next phase of their treatment. All of the female patients will be in active recovery so there will be no seeking drugs. There will be security via the Health Department during the night hours.

Mr. Gessinger stated that he had heard that the facility wanted to use a location in Perkins Township but he heard that the citizens of Perkins Township complained so now it is proposed in his neighborhood. He stated

that there are ex-cons on that side of Sandusky and he felt that a facility such as this might bring more crime into the area.

Pat Shenigo, Erie County Commissioner stated that the people that will be within these facilities on Superior Street have a medical condition. Although they may have turned to crime in the past to feed their addictions, they are not criminals. They need these facilities to try to get their lives back together. When the building at 301 Superior Street became available, it made sense. There will be no need for vehicles to transport from one facility to another. It will be a great service for the community.

Mr. Gessinger wanted to state for the record that he is against the proposal. He had lived in this area for 17 years. In those 17 years, the area had been plagued by drugs and other crime. He had found drug paraphernalia right at the fence line so what would stop someone from passing something through the fence to a patient. He added that there is a bar at the end of the street that could be a temptation to the patients. He stated that there were several properties between LaSalle Street and Monroe Street that he knew were raided for drugs. He said that he was afraid that there would be more drug dealers in the area where Lion's Park was just improved.

Mr. Shenigo stated that he remembered the same thing happening in Vermilion. There were similar concerns that more crime would be brought to the area, more drugs would be in the area. He added that the Vermilion residents soon learned that the patients were not all bad people. They had made some bad decisions and were trying to get their lives back together. He stated that drugs are everywhere. One of the highest heroin use per capita cities in the United States is Columbus. The problem is not exclusive to Erie County or Sandusky Ohio. The patients at the facility have made a commitment to get better and will have gone through the detox period and this will be the next step to recovery. Offer the tools to return to jobs and families.

Mr. Galea asked what they typical setting is in facilities like these in other communities as far as commercial or residential areas. Mr. Schade answered that in Lorain County, there is an apartment building next to a school in a residential neighborhood. There are also sober living homes all over the country. The difference in our facility is that we offer the detoxification unit. Once the detox phase is complete, we can offer the recovery services in a very nearby location. The success rate is very high due to the fact that they complete all of the phases of recovery including job training, academic training and financial training to be able to re-enter the community. To address Mr. Galea's question specifically, most if not all recovery homes are within residential neighborhoods.

Chairman Zuilhof stated that the commission is to vote based upon the facts given. He advised that anyone that had issues within their neighborhood should contact the authorities. The commission had heard comments for and opposed.

Mr. Miller advised that he would be abstaining from the vote as he is employed with Erie County.

Mr. McGory stated that all laws that apply to every citizen must be abided by all residents of the facility. If there ever becomes a problem, the laws still apply.

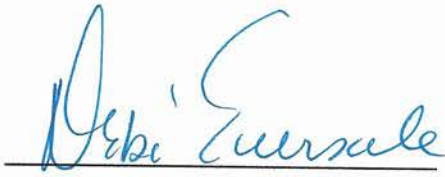
Chairman Zuilhof stated that if there are still things going on at the park, Staff could make note of those concerns and pass them to the appropriate department.

Mr. Waddington moved to approve the application as recommended. Mr. McGory seconded the motion. Mr. Galea asked if there would be another application for site plan approval. Ms. Sparks stated that if no exterior modifications are requested and the applicant is meeting the parking requirements that they would not have to return for site plan approval. She added that during her presentation, she stated that they do have the required one space per two beds so unless they modify the exterior of the building or the commission conditions the approval, they would not have to return. With no further discussion, the motion carried with a 4/0 vote, Mr. Miller abstained.

Ms. Sparks noted that there would be a regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting on 2/28/18 immediately followed by a Landmarks Commission meeting.

Chairman Zuilhof adjourned the meeting at 5:10PM.

APPROVED:



Debi Eversole, Clerk



Michael Zuilhof, Chairman