

FARMINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS
City Council Chambers
23600 Liberty Street
Farmington, Michigan
June 10, 2024

Chairperson Perrot called the meeting to order in City Council Chambers, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan, at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, June 10, 2024.

ROLL CALL

Present: Gray, Kmetzo, Majoros, Mantey, Perrot
Absent: Crutcher, Westendorf
A quorum of the Commission was present.

OTHER OFFICIALS PRESENT: Director Christopher Weber; Recording Secretary Bonnie Murphy; Brian Golden, Media Specialist. Beth Saarela, City Attorney

Chairperson Perrot welcomed Chris Weber. He thanked Kevin Christiansen for his dedicated leadership in championing the City forward in his tenure as Director of Planning and Economic Development.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Kmetzo, seconded by Mantey, to approve the agenda.
Motion carried, all ayes.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON CONSENT AGENDA

A. March 11, 2024 Minutes

MOTION by Majoros, seconded by Kmetzo, to approve the items on Consent Agenda
Motion carried, all ayes.

SITE PLAN REVIEW – SITE PLAN CHANGE – FREEDOM PLAZA, GRAND RIVER AND FREEDOM UD – PARCELS 2 & 4, 37085 GRAND RIVER AVENUE

Chairperson Perrot introduced this item and turned it over to staff.

Director Weber stated that the Planning Commission is being asked to review and approve a change in the site plan for the Grand River and Freedom PUD, for the removal of eighteen spaces and addition of landscaping. Approval will be subject to landscape materials being reviewed for sustainability, similarity to existing materials and ease of maintenance prior to permit issuance.

Perrot invited the Petitioner to the podium.

Jack Knowles, representing Grand Convenience who is the owner of the service station, gas station next door. And I was in front of you many months ago on the site plan for that matter. And at that time we were looking at replacing the retaining wall that was crumbling and as part of our overall project. Not long ago I received a call from Mr. Bowdell who had been approached by Mr. Potlouri, owner of the office building. And Mr. Potlouri was interested in was there a different alternative to the retaining wall. So, with our property, there was no alternative. But Mr. Potlouri was looking at eliminating the parking spaces along the west side of his property for us to be able to effectuate a slope from our property to his property in lieu of a 6 to 8-foot high retaining wall. So, after several discussions, a couple meetings, we thought it was a better solution, much more attractive, he didn't really want to be looking at a retaining wall no matter how much landscaping might be there so it was agreed that we were totally on board to eliminate the retaining wall and to do whatever pavement modifications were necessary to eliminate the parking and also to put in new curbing and so forth and quite honestly it was a savings to us and a much better solution for everyone overall. So that has brought us to where we are tonight and I guess in some ways if you've been out there you've seen that there's work going on, it's a bit of a mess right now, it's going to get cleaned up, so we're quite embarrassingly although after the fact, I think we probably jumped the gun on it, we weren't really thinking, we didn't have our planning hats on when these discussions were going on and we just thought boy, what a great idea. And Mr. Potlouri was anxious to get it going, so it got going. And that's where we are this evening. We've put together the landscape plan for that area and in basic terms Mr. Potlouri has the affinity for Yoshino cherry trees which he had some out in front of his building so we tried to kind of continue that theme on the slope and now there's four cherry trees, there's some screening at the very top of the slope opposite our loading area, some shrubs that will get 4-5 feet tall, they'll help screen whatever delivery trucks are in the loading zone. And then there's some other landscape material. We do have a low retaining wall, a 2-foot high retaining wall right at the bottom of the slope and that was really to be able to have a slope that was maintainable. The maximum on that is 3-1 and most of it is 4-1, so it's a very maintainable slope, mowable slope if needed. But at the bottom of the slope right behind the wall we have some different, a couple different materials. We have some low, native grasses and we have a few groupings of shrubs that happened to be called grow low sumac and that will help kind of just give it a more finished appearance behind the wall. So, with that, I'm open for questions.

Perrot thanked the Petitioner. He then asked Building Inspector Bowdell if he had anything to add.

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Bowdell stated the only thing that he would add is after we were just about done with the design Mr. Potlouri asked if he could have a landscaped looking stairway because everybody from his business goes to that store every day. So, rather than walk up the

grassy hill, if you notice near the front there's a like a landscaped area incorporated, that's the only thing I didn't hear Mr. Knowles mention.

Knowles replied that is accurate and the stairway will be, the lower 2-foot wall will be a modular concrete prefabricated material and the stairs will be fabricated out of that also.

Perrot opened the floor for questions from the Commissioners.

Majoros stated I think this is a nice looking proposal, it looks good, it seems to work, drainage, I'm assuming drainage is being managed, you had an issue problem before, you had a wall and however, but all the appropriate drainage is being done so a heavy rainstorm, but I assume that the 2-foot wall and grade that it's on, but also stormwater management.

Knowles replied yes, and the former wall, part of what did that wall in was the hydrostatic pressure on that wall, so yes, that is being accomplished.

Majoros asked where the property line between Shell and Mr. Potlouri's.

Knowles replied it's a very light line on the plan, if you look at the southeast corner of the building, take a 45 off that southeast corner and you see a little circle, with a line going to the west and a line going to the north, that's the property line. And all of the work is being done by our forces at our expense.

Majoros said I think it was referenced but loss of parking spaces for that building is all within compliance of number of parking spaces for the building facility.

Knowles stated it's a PUD, so there's latitude there. I have been to that site, I can't tell you how many times, I've never seen that parking bay with more than a couple cars in it and I know it's Mr. Potlouri's feeling that he's overparked. And the building is full, and those bays are never full. The lot is never totally full, a lot of people park in the back, a lot of people park in the front, nobody has really parked at the side.

Majoros stated as occupied now, you've got they're a let's call them a Monday through Friday, 9 to 5 business. And others, you've got Vindu which Vindu does a lot of business, they do a lot of banquets, so it's overparked perhaps for the tenant structure as it exists today but it could be a different structure.

Knowles stated he is working on another project in Livonia right now, we have a similar, on this project we performed a parking study and where by ordinance over 600 spots are required, by going to different criteria by other organizations like the ULI, Urban Land Institute, and others that take into account, they look at things a little bit differently is what

It is. In our case down there it amounted to over 150 spaces less than the city requirement and the city is so far at least is going to look at that. And I think if we did that on this property, I think we would end up with a similar result. I'm sure you're familiar, you see a lot of communities that are going back and they're looking at their parking requirements. Because you look at, especially in the retail end, a lot of these retail centers, strip centers, the only time their parking lot is full is at Christmas or the day before Christmas. And a lot of them are looking at their parking lot and changing their ordinances. The city of Ann Arbor, it's a bit crazy over there, they eliminated any parking requirements for any projects in the city of Ann Arbor. There are no parking requirements.

Majoros said I forgot you've got that whole stub of parking that abuts Freedom and that's fifty, whatever, forty spaces.

Knowles said there's a lot of parking out there, there's also parking south of this site, you know it extends to the south behind the service station, there's probably twenty spots there and no one is ever in those parking spaces.

Perrot said this is one part of town as far out from the downtown that it is that has dramatically changed, dramatically changed over the years. And the glaring thing for me is that we're gaining greenspace versus just a row of parking spaces.

Perrot asked for further questions from the Commission.

Mantey asked with the loading/unloading at the edge, with that retaining wall no longer providing support to that is there any concern about the weight load there and disintegration over time?

Knowles replied, never, there's a flat area on top, we're not concerned.

Perrot calls for a motion from the Commission.

MOTION by Majoros, seconded by Mantey, to approve site plan change for Freedom Plaza/Grand River and Freedom PUD parcels 2 & 4, located at 37085 Grand River Avenue as outlined in materials submitted. I would Also note this would incorporate the removal of eighteen spaces and the addition of landscaping , the materials of which would

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be reviewed for sustainability, similar to existing materials and ease of maintenance prior to permit issuance.

Motion carried, all ayes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None heard.

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENT

Majoros asked for an update on Maxfield as far as timewise with the demolition.

Bowdell replied we've had a couple of meetings with the project Robertson Brothers and their demo contractor. As of last week there was still a couple of disconnects that they had to obtain, like gas and electric and so on. So, we're going to be issuing three separate demo permits, one for each home and one for the school. It's Robertson Brothers to get the school out of the way as soon as possible. They're going to try to demo the northern house first and then with the hopes of getting it out, backfilled and then demoing the south house on Grand River from the back side so there's no disruption. So naturally there's a bunch of permitting that has to go on with the State in order to make the grandiose entryway there and that's not complete anyway so they're going to stay out of the right-of-way on Grand River until the houses are gone and they hope to start that by the end of the month.

Commissioner Gray thanked the Planning Commission, at the end of March he took his Planning Commission training, it was a two-day online training, very insightful, very informative and he thanked everyone and for their support in training him to become more accustomed as to how we do business here.

Weber stated the City and the Planning Commission over the next couple of months will be looking at updating our Master plan, we're getting into the time to do that as well as updating our five-year Parks & Recreation Plan and our Downtown Master Plan. So, we're having some internal dialogue right now about putting out an RFP for those plans, what we're going to include in that scope, so I wanted to let the Planning Commission know.

Gray inquired about the results of the Plaza crowd funding efforts and Weber replied they exceeded the goal.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Majoros, supported by Mantey, to adjourn the meeting.

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Motion carried, all ayes.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary