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Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City of Rensselaer Planning Commission
First Floor Conference Room, Rensselaer Community Center, 62 Washington Street
February 8, 2010

Members Present:

Charles Moore – Vice-Chair (acting Chair), Frank Adams, James Ahlemeyer, George Farrell, Christine Van Vorst

Members Not Present:

Tom Cardamone, Bob Campano

Staff Present:

Marybeth Pettit – Director of Planning, Kevin McLoughlin – Assistant Director, John Spath – Deputy Corporation Counsel

Others Present

Bob Noel, Roger Murman, Thad Smith, Harry Adalian, Jim Van Vorst, Dan Dwyer, Dominick Tagliento, Stephen Safranko, Kenneth Weinman

Call to Order:

Acting chair Moore called the regular meeting of the City of Rensselaer Planning Commission to order at 6:30 PM. Roll call was taken, and it was determined there was a quorum.

Adoption of Past Meeting Minutes

The special meeting minutes of January 11, 2010 were approved as submitted and without amendment.

Communications

None

New Business

- 1. Public Hearing, Broadway Reconstruction** – Discuss and approve use of up to \$230,000 of City of Rensselaer economic development loan funds for a roadway reconstruction of Broadway from Partition to John Street.

Ms. Pettit described the project as implementation of a grant of \$627,224 in stimulus funds from the Office of Community Renewal for the reconstruction of Broadway from Partition to John Street. This neighborhood is one of Rensselaer's most impoverished with an LMI rate of 62.8%. \$50,000 of this total is allocated for engineering and design. Bids were opened on January 27, 2010 and were significantly higher than the original estimates due to cost increases in the two years since the grant was written. The low bid (of 12) received was \$1,037,542.

In consultation with the City Engineer, cost savings of \$258,685 have been identified through elimination of historic LED lighting, installing street trees through Capital District Community Gardens, and doing some work with DPW crews.

The remaining shortfall of \$230,000 (including contingency and construction inspection) would be covered by use of Economic Development loan funds. The City Economic Development Loan Fund currently has a balance of \$341,006. Low interest loans would still be available to small businesses interested in Rensselaer through direct application to the Office of Community Renewal in Albany.

A public hearing was opened at 6:45 PM to allow public comment on the use of economic development loan funds for roadway reconstruction. There was no one to speak for or against the project. The public hearing was closed at 6:46 PM.

Old Business

- 1. DeLaet's Landing / Marx Properties Redevelopment, 555-575 Broadway** – submission of revised design guidelines for consideration/approval and Site Plan approval for phase 1 drawings addressing roadways, utilities, and construction phase erosion & sediment control measures.

Mr. McLoughlin related that the applicant had hoped to present design guideline and site plan materials for discussion, but could not complete the work in time and expected to be ready for a requested 2/22 special meeting. He added the applicant had submitted a revised set of design guidelines which had been enclosed in the meeting notes which were closer to stated board expectations, but that the submitted guidelines still needed greater detail.

The board was informed that a meeting regarding design guidelines took place between the applicant and planning staff where Roger Murman presented an edited version of Clearwater, FL guidelines as an example of a thorough yet flexible set of standards. Roger Murman presented a further amended and refined version of this set of guidelines to the board for their consideration. He related that the applicant was still examining them and was expected to respond at the 2/22 special meeting.

Mr. McLoughlin noted that there was an invoice from Fraser for approval and informed the board that the applicant had made an escrow account contribution, but that owing to the backlog of unpaid invoices that the account was left with a low balance again.

Mr. Farrell moved to approve invoice #2.002-7 (Fraser) for payment and require applicant to maintain a minimum balance of \$5,000 in the consulting fee escrow account, and Mrs. Van Vorst seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

New Business (cont.)

2. Sharon Disarro, 8 Gregory Court – request for recommendation to the ZBA for Area Variances of 3.2’ from required 15’ side yard setback to allow a one-story extension to a residential dwelling located in the planned development (PDD) zoning district known as Partridge Run.

Thad Smith the owner’s builder reviewed the proposed plans for an extension to the existing building noting that a variance was required as small portion of the porch and the living space addition crossed the side yard setback line.

Mrs. Van Vorst noted that the applicant wanted to stay in the community despite being of retirement age.

Mr. McLoughlin observed that the variance requested was small and it was located next to an open lot.

Mr. Farrell moved on to make a positive recommendation to the ZBA for an area variance of 3.2’ from a required 15’ side yard in a planned development (PDD) zoning district, and Mr. Adams seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

3. Kenneth Weinman, 480 South Street – request for site plan approval for wholesale / retail heating, ventilation, and air conditioning business and electric motor repair located in a commercial industrial (CI) zoning district.

Stephen Safranko, attorney for the owner, briefly described the application and intended activity at the premises and provided photos of the site. He expressed that the owner was aware that the zoning signage limitations applied to the whole property and not each tenant.

Kenneth Weinman stated that one of his clients was located across the street from the proposed location, which was part of what made the relocation attractive. He stated that the number of current employees is seven, which represented peak employment.

Mrs. Van Vorst moved to approve submitted site plan for H/V/AC wholesale business and electric motor repair shop in a commercial-industrial (CI) zoning district, and Mr. Adams seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

4. Environmental & Fueling Systems, 42 Partition Street – request for use variance to allow rental of fire house property as a garage for commercial vehicle (water tank truck) storage in a multi-family (R2) residential zoning district.

Bob Noel described his desire to rent space in the fire house garage on Partition Street for a water tank/vactor truck. He noted that his vehicle was shorter and lighter than the fire truck that used to be stored there and it would be stored empty.

Mrs. Van Vorst asked if granting a variance would open the property to other commercial uses at the property or in the neighborhood. Ms. Pettit responded that if the Use Variance was narrowly drawn then any proposed use that expanded the use in some way (by activity or signage, e.g.) would require a new Use Variance and that the current application would apply only to this parcel and not neighboring properties.

Mrs. Van Vorst moved to make a positive recommendation to the ZBA for a Use Variance to allow storage of a commercial water truck in a residential neighborhood with the stipulations that the variance only covers rental of a parking space for a commercial vehicle and no commercial activities are allowed (including washing) nor signage on the premises, and Mr. Farrell seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

5. Cottage Hill Landing, 96 Partition Street

Mr. Moore moved to approve invoice #336750 (Whiteman, Osterman & Hannah) for payment and Mr. Farrell seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Other Business

None.

Adjournment:

Hearing no objections, Mr. Moore adjourned the meeting at 7:10 PM.

Next Meeting:

The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 8, 2010 at 6:30 PM.

Record of Decisions:

An official record of decisions noting the details of motions and votes from this meeting along with any conditions & stipulations of approval has been filed with the City Clerk and a copy maintained in Planning Department records.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marybeth Pettit
Secretary