

MINUTES
COLUMBIA CITY PLAN COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING

June 1, 2020

7:00 p.m.

Whitley County Government Center
Commissioner/Council Meeting Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Larry Weiss, President
Patrick Zickgraf, Vice Pres.
Walt Crowder
Doug Graft
Chip Hill
Jon Kissinger
Don Langeloh
Dennis Warnick
Dan Weigold

MEMBERS ABSENT

STAFF

Nathan Bilger
Amanda Thompson

ATTORNEY

Dawn Boyd

AUDIENCE MEMBERS

Five visitors signed the Guest List at the June 1, 2020, Columbia City Plan Commission meeting. A copy of the Guest List is included with the minutes of this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mr. Weiss called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Thompson read the roll call with members present and absent listed above.

CONSIDERATION OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Weiss stated that the minutes of the May meeting were not yet complete and would be considered at a future meeting.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH

Ms. Boyd administered the oath to the audience members.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

20-C-DEV-1, Development Plan, Columbia City Senior Living, 616 N. Opportunity Drive

Columbia City Senior Living, LLC requested Development Plan Review for a 45,000± sf, 2-story assisted living facility to be located on the southeast corner of Connexion Way and Opportunity Drive. The 2-acre property is more commonly known as 616 N. Opportunity Drive and is zoned GB, General Business District.

Mr. Bilger summarized the Staff Report. He stated that assisted living centers are not an explicitly permitted use in the GB district, but past precedent and interpretations have permitted nursing homes and assisted living in the GB district. There would be 34 living units, which would have only kitchenettes, making the use more similar to nursing homes than apartments. He discussed the parking requirements, noting that there was a narrower setback for the parking lot than the 10' setback, which had been permitted as an alternate design before, but usually with additional landscaping in exchange.

He brought up the possibility of installing sidewalks in Armstrong Park as something the Commission should discuss, since this project, the hotels, movie theater, senior center, and apartments may benefit from additional walkability to connect them to the east.

He concluded by describing the staff's recommended conditions of approval:

1. With additional landscaping, to be discussed with the petitioner, allow the parking lot configuration proposed to serve as an alternate configuration for the required parking lot landscaping.
2. Follow the recommendations in the Soil and Water Conservation District comments.

Mr. Weiss expressed concern about having only one elevator in the multi-level building, as an elevator breakdown would leave residents stranded. Mr. Langeloh asked about the drainage on the site; Mr. Bilger stated that was generally discussed in the SWCD comments and why incorporating those comments were a recommended condition.

Mr. Weiss called for the petitioner or their representative to speak. Kevin Michel, engineer for the petitioner, presented updated copies of the development plan that incorporated some changes to the parking lots and landscaping. Mr. Michel explained he was working with Jon Gotz on the SWCD comments. He then introduced the petitioners Jason Yoder and Jim Gillen for their comments.

Mr. Gillen explained that their company is a regional provider of assisted living, specializing in rural and small town areas. He explained his research and market study that led to being interested in the community and stated that Whitley County has no equivalent housing opportunity for the increasing senior population. The center would have staff to assist a wide range of residents' needs, but they could not provide specialized nursing care, such as treating significant dementia, drug administration, feeding tubes, etc., found in a nursing home. Some nursing services would still be done by home health care or hospice providers. He explained that about 90% of residents reach the end of their lives within the facility without need for moving to another facility.

Mr. Crowder asked about the type of staff on-site. Mr. Gillen stated that there would be administrators, kitchen staff, and the assistance staff. Additional workers would be hired as the assistance levels warrant.

Mr. Weiss asked the petitioner about accommodations for the malfunction of the elevator. Mr. Gillen stated that there is a backup generator, but there are plans in case of emergency as well. He further explained that if need be, care and meals can be provided to each level separately. There was discussion about the sprinkler system and emergency systems.

Mr. Zickgraf asked about activities to be provided. Mr. Gillen explained that a variety of activities would be available, including bible study, exercise, trips, and so on. Mr. Graft asked about provision of emergency services; Mr. Gillen stated that would be by 911. There was additional discussion about the building design, parking lot design, and number of visitors expected. Mr. Gillen indicated that in his experience, only about 10% of the residents would drive, reducing the overall parking need. Mr. Crowder suggested that some residents may be interested in using golf carts instead since the City is a golf cart-friendly community.

Mr. Bilger asked for clarification on the landscaping within the strip parallel to Connexion Way. There was discussion about the number of trees required. Mr. Yoder stated that the landscape plan was a last-minute plan and could be updated as necessary.

Mr. Crowder asked about the plans for lighting, which were not specified on the provided documents. Mr. Yoder stated there would be freestanding parking lot lights and wall packs on the building. Mr. Bilger stated that lighting in commercial areas usually is not a problem, and he asked for a lighting plan to be submitted for staff review.

Mr. Weiss opened the floor for public comment. There was no one present to speak. Mr. Weiss closed the public comment and asked for discussion or a motion. Mr. Warnick made a motion to approve 20-C-DEV-1, with the two conditions stated by staff, plus that the developer submit landscaping and lighting plans, to be approved by staff. Mr. Zickgraf seconded. Mr. Graft asked if a secondary elevator was part of the motion. Mr. Warnick said he felt it was unnecessary if they had a backup generator. There was discussion about the provision of sidewalks, which Mr. Weiss stated likely could not be required by this approval, but may be a bigger effort. Mr. Bilger concurred with that statement and suggested that a couple members of the Commission could work with City departments to form a sidewalk committee.

Being no further discussion, Mr. Weiss called for a vote. Motion carried, 9-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Bilger reminded the Commission that there already were items for the upcoming July meeting.

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, Mr. Weiss declared the meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

GUEST LIST

1. Jason Yoder.....Brownsburg, IN
2. Kevin Michel4242 S. 700 East, Columbia City
3. Jim Gillen.....Greencastle, IN 46135
4. Susan Gillen.....Greencastle, IN 46135
5. Lucas Gillen.....Greencastle, IN 46135

GUEST LIST (WEBCAST)

1. None