

Village of Riverwoods
Plan Commission Meeting
Meeting Minutes January 4, 2024

A meeting of the Village of Riverwoods Plan Commission was held on Wednesday, January 4, 2023 at Village Hall. Chairperson Laurie Breitkopf called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

Present:

Laurie Breitkopf, Chairperson
Karl Blalock
Sherry Graditor
Stephen Levin
Mike Marshall
Kathryn Romanelli
Carey Rothbardt

Also Present:

Vivian Hofeld, Deputy Village Clerk
Steve Witt, Director of Community Services
Kris Ford, Mayor
Michael Clayton, Village Trustee

1. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Graditor moved to approve the minutes from the December 13, 2023 Plan Commission meeting. Ms. Romanelli seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

2. Visitors wishing to address the Plan Commission

Trustee Clayton expressed his view that the Plan Commission should reconsider the minimum rental term provided in the Village's short-term rental ordinance. Some residents have asked the Board for reconsideration. He feels that the Village needs a well-founded reason for limiting an owner's use of their property. According to Mr. Clayton's review of Plan Commission minutes, the Commission discussed elements of a proposed short-term rental ordinance at a public hearing over three meetings and considered the maximum number of days rented per year for very short-term rentals but there was no testimony from potential short-term landlords at the public hearing. He stated that when the Plan Commission voted for the ordinance recommendation in July, it adopted the minimum length for a short-term rental of four weeks, which in Mr. Clayton's view was not consistent with the previous discussions.

3. New Business

There was no New Business.

4. Old Business

Continued discussion of sub-area plan amendment to the Comprehensive Plan for the Wolters Kluwer site, to consider possible land uses other than office and research – including use of planned unit developments (PUDs).

Mr. Witt explained PUDs are a means of land regulation used to promote innovative and creative design along with a sensitivity to the environment. They allow regulators to approve projects that may not otherwise be permitted through a strict enforcement of zoning district requirements. PUDs can sometimes be used to allow a higher residential density in exchange for additional open space, better construction materials or more creative design to benefit the municipality.

The current PUD ordinance was created in 1991-1992 for the Thorngate development and allows for PUDs with a minimum project area of 125 acres. The Thorngate development is 150 acres and the PUD governing the development allows approximately one dwelling unit per acre. Under the PUD, the Thorngate developer was granted a 25% density bonus for stormwater capacity which was designed in excess of the minimum requirements and a 50% density bonus for excellence in design and site planning, resulting in an increase in the number of homes that could be built from 149 to 289.

The proposed Lexington project site was approximately 10 acres, with much of the property devoted to stormwater management. This factor caused Lexington to propose higher residential unit density in the remaining acreage. Lexington requested modification of the Village PUD ordinances to a minimum project area of eight acres.

The Federal Life parcel was proposed to be rezoned to 1-R to allow multi-family dwellings because the parcel is adjacent to Meadowlake and multifamily is listed as a possible special use in that district. The developer proposed amendments as well to the 1-R special use because the text was inadequate to authorize a modern townhome project.

As part of the PUD process, the Village Board has an obligation to establish findings of fact as well as reasons to approve modifications to the Zoning Ordinance. The Village would like to create a more modern PUD ordinance which does not center around density, and which can be applied to both smaller and larger developments.

While touring developments in the area, Plan Commissioners found their perceptions of density were altered due to generous use of open space and creativity in building design.

For the next Plan Commission meeting, Mr. Witt asked Commissioners to review the characteristics of development that Teska added to the whiteboard during the last Plan Commission meeting, and choose the five best and five worst characteristics. By selecting certain characteristics, the Plan Commission would like to see incorporated into a revised PUD ordinance, the Village could have better control over project design that is appropriate with the character of Riverwoods.

Ms. Romanelli suggested that Commissioners drive through Thorngate. Mr. Rothbardt noted the only property in the Village that is being considered for development and that is 125 acres or more is the Wolters Kluwer site.

5. Staff Report

Mr. Witt noted staff would prepare a report for future meetings that would provide a summary and status update of projects as well as a heads-up on forthcoming projects.

Brunch Factory – At the October 5, 2023 Plan Commission meeting, the Commission made a recommendation for approval of a video gaming special use with two conditions. First, the video gaming area must be substantially screened to protect minors and keep that area segregated from the remainder of the restaurant. The applicant accomplished that requirement with drawings showing a small dimensional change. Second, the applicant was asked to provide an updated parking plan so the Board can consider the parking needs of the entire Colonial Court shopping area. The Village met with the property owners and managers more than two months ago regarding the requested parking plan, but it has not yet been received.

Camp Bow Wow – At the November 7, 2023 Board meeting, the Trustees were asked for direction on a dog day care, training and boarding facility to be developed in The Shoppes of Riverwoods. The consensus of the Board was to direct the request to the Plan Commission. Staff informed them that a parking study would be required as part of the special use permit application, but a parking study has not been submitted.

Baby Vegas – This tenant space would be the first facility centered around gaming in the Village. The special use was approved and a building permit for the interior build out was issued in July of 2023. There has been very little construction activity and the project is moving very slowly.

2611 Milwaukee Avenue (open property near the Extra Space Storage facility) – The Village has been approached by a realtor about a business that provides products and services in the area of self-care focused on nutrition, activity and wisdom sharing. The business wants to grow food locally, offer activities such as yoga, and foster interaction between generations by providing both adult and child day care at the site. Staff has not met with the developer yet.

3200 Orange Brace Road and 567 Juneberry Road – The property owner wants to combine the two properties and then subdivide them into three properties so they can build an additional home. They will have adequate lot area as well as street frontage.

Home rentals – The topic continues to be at the forefront of building department activities. Based on discussion at the last Board meeting, the Trustees are not immediately interested in revising the minimum rental requirement of four weeks. Commissioner Romanelli had notified Mr. Witt of a provision in the Thorngate Declaration requiring a six-month minimum for home leases. Owners in Thorngate have been happily complying with the Declaration. Ms. Romanelli is on the Thorngate Board and discusses these regulations with new owners. The Declaration is a legal document that cannot be changed by the Thorngate Board of Directors. The only way to change the Declaration is for 2/3 of the homeowners to petition and approve the change.

Federal Life property – Mr. Witt reported Lexington Homes is no longer under contract to proceed with a development on the Federal Life property.

Mr. Rothbardt asked who was responsible for the parking study for The Brunch Factory. Mr. Witt explained the current property owners are responsible for providing the parking study. Mr. Rothbardt questioned whether the Village is waiting for Baby Vegas to complete its build out before approving the video gaming application at The Brunch Factory. Mr. Witt said no. Baby Vegas has potential issues with licensing. It has a building permit and is meeting the bare minimum requirements of that permit, which requires construction activity to get an inspection. The permit is only valid for one year, which means construction at Baby Vegas must be finished by July 2024. At that time, the Village may or may not extend the permit. Mayor Ford explained that the delay in the build-out of the Baby Vegas facility has nothing to do with approval of The Brunch Factory application. Initially, the Board wanted to wait a year before embarking on another gaming license, but it has been two years since Baby Vegas got its license. The Brunch Factor delay is solely based on the lack of a parking plan.

Baby Vegas is not subject to the parking issue faced by The Brunch Factory and Camp Bow Wow, because it is not impacted by the proposed construction of the Anytime Fitness facility in Colonial Court. The Village has heard concerns that Anytime Fitness may not have adequate parking during certain times of the day. Mr. Witt explained the property owners must propose a solution for parking. Ms. Graditor asked what would happen if the owners do not come forward with a parking study. Mr. Witt explained that without a report to show that parking is sufficient, there might be violations of the zoning ordinance.

6. Comments from the Chair

Ch. Breitkopf believes the staff report is a great addition to the Plan Commission meeting.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business or discussion, Mr. Rothbardt moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Blalock seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 pm. The next scheduled meeting of the Plan Commission is February 1, 2024 at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeri Cotton