

PLAN COMMISSION

Time and Date: The Plan Commission met on February 19, 2013, at 5:00 p.m. in the Common Council Chambers of Wausau City Hall.

Members Present: Marquardt, Radtke, Nutting, Bohlken, Oberbeck (arrived at 5:02 p.m.), Valitchka (arrived at 5:10 p.m.)

Others Present: Lenz, Hebert, Jacobson, Craig, Rice, Duncanson, Engen

In compliance with Chapter 19, Wisconsin Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and transmitted to the *Wausau Daily Herald* in the proper manner.

Noting the presence of a quorum, at approximately 5:00 p.m. Marquardt called the meeting to order.

Approve minutes of the January 15, 2013 meeting.

Bohlken motioned to approve the minutes of the January 15, 2013 meeting. Radtke seconded, and the motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Oberbeck arrived at 5:02 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING: Amend Title 23 of the Wausau Municipal Code by creating Section 23.02.407, "Sign, integrated merchants", and adding Section 23.34.030(j)(5), "Integrated merchants sign", as a conditional use in a B4, Central Business District.

Mark Craig, 814 Adams Street, said when someone is coming into the downtown area from Stewart Avenue, there isn't any signage for the Jefferson Street Inn. The current ordinance does not allow for signage on adjacent properties. This amendment would be a good tool.

Debbie Rice, 1307 North 13th Street, said that Jefferson Street Inn is the gateway to the downtown and they have thousands of travelers and guests every year. Many times, visitors are sitting on the intersection near the library calling asking how to get to the hotel. Typically, large hotels have a sign on the corner of a lot guiding people in. The amendment to the ordinance would be beneficial to the downtown area.

Marquardt closed the public hearing.

Lenz said that the agenda item is to amend the zoning ordinance so these types of signs could be applied for as a conditional use. The application would go through Plan Commission and Common Council. Staff has wrestled with this particular issue since it could set a precedent for other blocks downtown. Early on in the process, staff tried to establish clear guidelines for the signs, which was difficult because the proposed sign would not be doable on other blocks. There are concerns about taking the applications on a case-by-case basis and there may be some discussion as applications come to the commission.

Radtke said that there weren't any measurements on the image that was sent around. Lenz said that the particular image was used to illustrate a change to the text, which is the agenda item for today. When this sign comes back for the conditional use approval, dimensions will be required, along with a site plan, and anything else the commission would like to see.

Oberbeck said that it is a good application as the community is beginning the way-finding initiative. Oberbeck said the signage for the Jefferson Street Inn would make it less confusing and nobody wants people sitting on the intersections trying to figure out where a particular building is.

Oberbeck motioned to amend Title 23 of the *Wausau Municipal Code* by creating Section 23.02.407, "Sign, integrated merchants", and adding Section 23.34.030(j)(5), "Integrated merchants sign", as a conditional use in a B4, Central Business District. Nutting seconded, and the motion carried unanimously 5-0. This recommendation will go before Common Council on March 12, 2013.

(Taken from later in the meeting) Valitchka asked if design standards were covered in the context of integrated merchants signs and suggested the city is currently engaged in developing a way-finding initiative. Valitchka continued by saying when he read the proposed ordinance change, there may be the chance to benefit from a consultant being hired to engage the communities in a program to set standards and guidelines of how way-finding would work. The two initiatives could be blended together. Lenz said that it was talked about that the sign changes would be a conditional use coming to Plan Commission so that any signs can be evaluated against the way-finding initiative as it unfolds.

PUBLIC HEARING: Amend Title 23 of the Wausau Municipal Code by creating Section 23.50.030(h) “Educational Institutions” as a conditional use in an IB, Interchange Business District.

Valitchka arrived at 5: 10 p.m.

Marquardt closed the public hearing.

Lenz said that this particular item was mainly a housekeeping item for the Interchange Business District. It is not written in the ordinance that educational institutions are permitted in IB, but there are existing ones located along the freeway corridor. These include: St. Matthews, Rasmussen College, and the University of Wisconsin, which has a health-related facility. The ordinance change would clarify that these uses are in fact acceptable along the highway, and would allow future educational facilities to potentially locate in the area, with a conditional use. He suggested we may not want to allow all future schools, such as elementary schools, but other higher education, particularly ones related to the nearby medical institutions, may be welcome. The applications would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Nutting motioned to amend Title 23 of the *Wausau Municipal Code* by creating Section 23.50.030(h) “*Educational Institutions*” as a conditional use in an IB, Interchange Business District. Bohlken seconded, and the motion carried unanimously 6-0. This recommendation will go before Common Council on March 12, 2013

Designate Eau Claire River Conservancy Area as a City of Wausau Parkland

Lenz said that this item was introduced during the prior meeting. At the time of last month’s meeting, Duncanson was meeting with the city of Schofield discussing the proposal so the item was postponed until this month. Staff has also been working with the attorney’s office and looking into any potential issues.

Duncanson handed out a map showing the boundaries between the cities of Wausau and Schofield. The piece of property is 63 acres and was acquired by the city in 1973. The reason the property was purchased had to do with Holtz-Krause landfill and to have control of any runoff to the Eau Claire River. There were two deed restrictions which include: maintain it for natural park purposes and to make any alterations to protect the river from anything that happened with the landfill and the remediation. Since it was acquired, the City has participated in the remediation of the landfill, has recognized this as parkland, and has planned for it in the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The Parks and Recreation Committee has decided to move forward with the designation because of the sports complex and curling club. Conceptual uses are shown for the conservancy area to protect the area and its natural assets. Some enhancements would let the public in, yet protect what is there. The Parks and Recreation Committee has directed staff to start the master planning process and in doing so noticed that this was not designated as a City of Wausau Parkland. An unusual aspect of the area is that a portion of the land is in the city of Schofield. Staff has met with the city attorney and city of Schofield to discuss and it has been agreed that the designation can be done. It works because the land use matches the zoning and deed restrictions.

Nutting asked if this same arrangement applies to Radtke Park near the airport. Duncanson said the City of Wausau leases it to the city of Schofield, so it is a different situation.

Valitchka thanked Duncanson for the presentation and said there is a trapezoidal shape in the southeast corner labeled city of Schofield and asked if they anticipate bringing park-like facilities into this. Duncanson answered that they are not offering to be an active partner, but will work with us. Valitchka asked if the triangle parcel marked Babl is outside of the area on private property. Duncanson answered yes and said it is just south of the river – we are mainly interested in the land north of the river. Valitchka said that there is a gray line on the right margins that is marked MOU over and asked what that was. Duncanson said that would be the proposed route of the Mountain Bay Trail coming into Wausau. Valitchka asked if there will be access to the parcel from the city of Wausau. Duncanson said that the county's bike and pedestrian plan identified the desire to use the Canadian National Railroad right-of-way to come into the main line. There is an issue in crossing the main line at Kent Street – the railroad has indicated that a new crossing would likely require the closing of three other railroad crossings in the city. Currently, the best option is to go underneath the railroad bridge that crosses the Eau Claire River.

Nutting asked if there would be access to the WAOW property. Duncanson said that is being negotiated.

Valitchka motioned to designate the Eau Claire River Conservancy area as a City of Wausau Parkland. Nutting seconded, and the motion carried unanimously 6-0. This recommendation will go before Common Council on March 12, 2013.

Accept dedication of right-of-way at 1610 Sheridan Road.

Marquardt said that this went to CISM last week and was approved. This item is to accept two small driveways as right-of-way.

Valitchka asked if the two triangles was the right-of-way area. Marquardt said yes.

Nutting motioned to accept dedication of right-of-way at 1610 Sheridan Road. Bohlken seconded, and the motion carried unanimously 6-0. This recommendation will go before Common Council on March 12, 2013.

Accept dedication of right-of-way on Junction Street from Townline Road to McDonald Street

Marquardt said that this went to CISM last week and was approved. Junction Street was rerouted several years ago and was never recorded as right-of-way.

Radtke motioned to accept dedication of right-of-way on Junction Street from Townline Road to McDonald Street. Oberbeck seconded, and the motion carried unanimously 6-0. This recommendation will go before Common Council on March 12, 2013.

Discuss zoning text changes for fences in Residential Districts and driveway widths in Business and Industrial Districts, and authorize public hearings.

Hebert said that the proposal for fencing materials would give staff and citizens clarity on what types of fencing material is allowed. A public hearing would need to be held. Lenz confirmed that this would be an entirely new section of the ordinance and not a modification.

There is currently a 25-foot restriction for driveway width in business and industrial districts, this change would give staff the ability to approve driveway widths bigger than 25 feet, subject to Engineering Department approval. Staff requests public hearings next month for these changes.

Valitchka motioned to authorized public hearings for zoning text changes for fences in residential districts and driveway widths in business and industrial districts. Oberbeck seconded, and the motion carried unanimously 6-0.

Adjourn.

Valitchka requested that off-street parking be reviewed for business development areas. There may be instances where there isn't any room for off-street parking or is burdensome to the potential business owners. Valitchka said he would like to look at the impact and the possibility of allowing street parking in some situations. Lenz asked if this would pertain to all business districts or just certain areas of the city. Valitchka answered that he was not sure where to begin, but that the downtown areas seem to be challenging for development. Valitchka said that the existing code should be reviewed and how it could be changed to not be burdensome to have off-street parking. Due to this, the city may be losing development due to the standards.

Valitchka moved to adjourn. Radtke seconded. Motion to adjourn carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

The Plan Commission is next scheduled to meet at 5:00 pm on Tuesday, March 19, 2013.