

MINUTES OF THE NEENAH PLAN COMMISSION
Tuesday, February 11, 2020
4:15 p.m.

Present:

Mayor Dean Kaufert, Chairman	PRESENT	Gerry Kaiser, Director of Public Works	PRESENT	Nick Piergrossi, Vice Chairman	PRESENT
Kate Hancock-Cooke	ABSENT	Karen Genett	PRESENT	Betsy Ellenberger	ABSENT
Gerry Andrews	PRESENT	Ald. Jane Lang	PRESENT		

Also present:

Brad Schmidt, Deputy Director of Community Development	Cassandra Kohls, Administrative Assistant Community Development	Jaime Thienel – 990 S. Lake St.
Philip Popour – 308 Division St.		

Minutes: MSC Kaiser/Genett to approve the December 10, 2019 meeting minutes. All Aye. Piergrossi abstained. Motion passed.

Public Appearances: Mayor Kaufert opened for Public Appearances. No one commented. Mayor Kaufert closed Public Appearances.

Public Hearings: Mayor Kaufert opened the Public Hearing for a Special Use Permit to establish an Urban Farm located at 410 Walnut Street.

Philip Popour (308 Division St.) indicated his intent to turn the vacant lot into a small urban farm. The proposed site was previously owned by Wisconsin Electric Power Company and utilized as a power station. Mr. Popour intends to lease the lot from the current owner (Jaime Thienel Properties, LLC). He indicated a small greenhouse and small shed would be constructed on the site. Mr. Popour stated he plans to use organic practices and work with the neighbors to address any concerns.

Mayor Kaufert asked if the surrounding neighbors were notified of the Public Hearing. Deputy Director Schmidt indicated all neighbors within 200 feet of the site received a letter. He has not been contacted by any of the owners who were notified.

Mayor Kaufert closed the Public Hearing.

Action Items:

1. Special Use Permit – 410 Walnut Street – Urban Farm

Deputy Director Schmidt provided an overview. The proposed use is not consistent with the M-2, Multi-Family Residence District as a permitted use. The proposal includes a large off-site, non-connected garden. The process provides an opportunity for neighbors to provide their input. WE Energies has owned the subject property since 1970 and operated a substation on this site. The current owner purchased the property last year. The subject site is fenced on 3 sides. The proposal includes a greenhouse on the north and a 200-square foot shed. The code would limit to one accessory structure. The proposal included a gravel driveway, however, Staff would recommend eliminating the driveway and utilizing on-street parking. A fence along the front property line shall not exceed 3 feet in height or 4 feet if chain-link. No outdoor lighting is permitted. All structures, compost bins, water collection systems, and solar array shall meet the minimum setbacks as identified in the Zoning Code. There shall be no signage on this property.

Member Piergrossi inquired whether the intent was to create a market. Mr. Popour indicated that there would not be transactions on the site. The produce would be sold to consumers off-site at the farmer's market.

Deputy Director Schmidt clarified that the proposed use would not be a community garden.

Member Piergrossi inquired about storage on the site. Mr. Popour indicated storage would be located at the rear of the property. He proposed a 10'x10' or 12'x12' shed. A solar ray would be roof-mounted on the shed to integrate it into one space.

Mayor Kaufert inquired about the size limitations for a shed. Deputy Director Schmidt explained 200-feet is the maximum size for a shed.

Member Genett inquired about the types of plants that will be grown on the site. Mr. Popour indicated spring lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower and other fruits/vegetables typically grown in our region. He intends to grow produce from April through October/November with plants growing constantly. Member Genett asked if hemp would be grown. Mr. Popour indicated he would not grow hemp.

Ald. Lang inquired about the water collection and watering system. Mr. Popour explained the water will collect in totes from rain running off the shed roof. There will be an irrigation pump to water the plants which will be powered off of the solar panel mounted on the roof of the shed. He plans for the site to be self-sustaining. He would like to see this model reproduced at other locations.

Ald. Lang inquired about how this plan would handle a drought. Mr. Popour indicated he has additional water collection totes at his residence and could bring water to the site if necessary.

Ald. Lang raised concern regarding fruit trees located along the sidewalk. Her concern was in regards to debris from the trees and attraction of bees to the area. Mr. Popour indicated the fruit trees would not be located in the terrace. The trees would be dwarf or semi-dwarf varieties. His goal would be to harvest the fruit and create the least amount of debris/wasted fruit.

Member Andrews indicated the fruit trees would add visual appeal to the site.

Ald. Kaiser raised questions about the type of equipment used in the garden. Mr. Popour explained he intends to use a soil cultivator initially, and the remainder of the work would be done by hand. He indicated he would also use a weed-eater and lawn mower.

Member Andrews asked if manure would be used. Mr. Popour stated that composted manure would be used, not raw manure. Member Andrews cited a similar concept used at ThedaCare. He spoke in favor of the use.

Ald. Kaiser asked for clarification regarding the shed. Deputy Director Schmidt indicated the code allows for one accessory structure. Plan Commission could approve two accessory structures (shed and greenhouse). Staff would ask for an updated site plan to include the shed.

Mr. Popour explained the greenhouse would be situated on landscape fabric and would be anchored to the grass. The shed would sit on a 4'x4' timber platform.

Ald. Kaiser asked whether the use was tied to the owner or the land. Deputy Director Schmidt indicated the use goes with the property. If the use is abandoned for a 12-month period, the special use permit would become null and void.

Ald. Lang spoke in favor of the idea and inquired about the history of the property. Deputy Director Schmidt indicated prior to WE Energies purchasing the property around 1970, a home built around 1870 was located there.

Mayor Kaufert asked about security on the site. Mr. Popour expressed that he has concern about security. However, he indicated if necessary he could monitor the site from his residence. Due to the site's close proximity to City Hall and Fire Department he feels the site will be watched over.

Member Piergrossi stated that the site is a hangout for children.

Jaime Thienel (990 S. Lake Street), introduced himself to Plan Commission as the owner of the subject property. He explained his intent to construct a residence of the property in the future. He inquired whether a waiting period of 12 months would be required before building a home. Deputy Director Schmidt explained that a waiting period would not be required. The normal process would apply and the special use would no longer exist.

Plan Commission discussed whether agricultural use would apply to the site.

MSC Andrews/Genett, Plan Commission finds that the proposed use meets the findings of fact for a Special Use Permit (Sec. 26-48) and recommends Common Council approve a Special Use Permit for an urban farm located at 410 Walnut Street subject to the conditions of the Approval Letter. All Aye. Motion passed.

2. Final Plat – Castle Oak VI Subdivision

Deputy Director Schmidt provided an overview explaining this is the final phase of the Castle Oak development. The proposed plat is 9.53 acres in size and includes 33 single-family residential lots. The average lot size is 9,750-square feet; smaller than lots in Castle Oak V. The plan includes connecting Cavalry Lane on the north and south end of the development. There are no proposed sidewalks within the plat except for a mid-block sidewalk which allows access to Lakeview School via Olde School Road.

Member Genett stated she thought there was opposition to mid-block sidewalks.

Ald. Kaiser explained the mid-block sidewalk serves as a cut-through to Wallace Avenue. Otherwise pedestrians would be using Marathon Avenue and crossing to get to Olde School Road. The City maintains the mid-block sidewalk as it is designated as an outlot.

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Deputy Director Schmidt indicated that lots in Castle Oak V have sold faster than the developer anticipated; approximately three-quarters of the lots have been sold.

MSC Kaiser/Andrews, Plan Commission recommends Common Council approve the Final Plat of the Castle Oak VI Subdivision. All Aye. Motion passed.

Announcements and future agenda items:

Deputy Director Schmidt indicated the following future agenda items:

- 1) Public Hearing for Special Use – 349 S. Green Bay Road - Commercial Kennel
- 2) Rezoning – 125 Byrd Avenue

Adjournment: The Commission adjourned its meeting at 4:50 P.M. MSC Kaiser/Piergrossi. All Aye.

Respectfully Submitted,



Cassandra Kohls
Administrative Assistant, Community Development

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