

MINUTES OF THE NEENAH PLAN COMMISSION
Tuesday, December 10, 2024
4:00 p.m.

Present:

Mayor Jane Lang, Chairperson	PRESENT	Sarah Moore-Nokes, Vice Chairperson	ABSENT	Gerry Kaiser, Director of Public Works	PRESENT
Kate Hancock-Cooke	ABSENT	Karen Genett	PRESENT	Betsy Ellenberger	ABSENT
Gerry Andrews	PRESENT	Alderman Dan Steiner	PRESENT		

Also Present:

Brad Schmidt, Deputy Director of Community Development	Kayla Kubat, Administrative Assistant of Community Development	Chris Haese- Director of Community Development
Alderman Cari Lendrum	Alderman William Pollnow	Frank Cuthbert- 1533 Fallow Dr Neenah
Duke Behnke- 1176 Apple Blossom Dr, Neenah	Trevor Lind – 2624 W Sunnyview Cir, Neenah	Mike Breining- 1030 Oak St, Neenah
Jennifer Breining- 1030 Oak St, Neenah	Bill Douglas – 530 E Castlebury, Appleton	Jason Ebert – N1568 Lake Ridge Dr, Adell
Eric Welhouse – W2646 Buchanan Rd, Appleton	Florence Bruno- 1002 E. Forest Ave, Neenah	

Minutes: MSC Andrews/Genett, the Plan Commission, to approve the November 12, 2024 meeting minutes. All voting aye. Motion passed.

Public Appearances: Chairperson Mayor Lang opened public appearances to topics not related to the agenda.

No one in attendance spoke. Chairperson Mayor Lang closed public appearances.

Public Hearings:

a. Special Use Permit – 1021 Oak Street – Religious Institution

Jennifer Breining- 1030 Oak Street- she wanted to know if the 200 seats are per two services or over all of Sunday. Also questioning what the requested rental space is since the Neenah Joint School District scheduler has it listed as the gymnasium and the cafeteria. She was also wondering if this rental included religious holidays that happened outside of Sunday and how the traffic and parking would be monitored. Also, she wanted to know if the Neenah Joint School Board would vote on the leasing. Her understanding is leasing is defined as anything over a six-month period where rental is six months or less or a month-to-month rental and would need to be approved at an annual or special meeting by the school board. Finally, she asked why she didn't receive a public hearing notice letter. Her husband did, but her name was not on the letter.

Michael Breining- 1030 Oak Street- he is concerned about the disruption in the neighborhood. Since the school has 68 parking spaces and the gymnasium and cafeteria can hold 894 chairs, people will need to utilize street parking during the now quiet times on Sunday. He also doesn't want this to set a precedent for other schools and these large room rentals.

No one else in attendance spoke. Chairperson Mayor Lang closed public hearing.

b. Special Use Permit – 1340 Gillingham Road – Class “A” Liquor License

No one in attendance spoke. Chairperson Mayor Lang closed public hearing.

Action Items:

a. Special Use Permit – 1021 Oak Street – Religious Institution

REPORT

Deputy Director Schmidt went over the request from Alliance Church and Neenah Joint School District, who is the owner of this property, to utilize part of the school as a religious institution. The church is planning to use the gymnasium, cafeteria and two classrooms. The minimum lot size for this type of use is 25,000 square feet, which this property exceeds. The request is to utilize the school on Sundays from 6am until noon. Currently, there is a condition in the special use that the church use is only allowed on Sundays, however, after a conversation with the applicant, as part of their lease agreement with the school district, they are also planning to use this space for a Christmas Eve service. Deputy Director Schmidt went over on the original application, the applicant identified 294 seats in main auditorium. The City of Neenah zoning code requires a minimum of one parking space for every four seats in the main auditorium, which would then require 74 parking stalls. This site has 68 parking stalls. The applicant can reduce the number of seats to 272 in the main auditorium or add six additional stalls. The applicant indicated they will reduce the number of seats down to 272.

Deputy Director Schmidt went over the other parking options. There are no restrictions on on-street parking on Sundays. There are some restrictions during the school days and school hours. The priority for parishioners would be to park in the parking lot and if there is a need for on-street parking, to park on Haylett, Oak, Campbell, or Higgins, which is adjacent to the school property. All hallways and entrances/exits must remain open within the building.

Member Andrews asked if this is a limited term lease. Deputy Director Schmidt stated it is his understanding that they signed a one-year lease.

Member Genett asked the applicant what their longer-term plan would be. Applicant Bill Douglas stated they would like to establish a presence in Neenah due to the amount of people who currently drive up to Appleton from the Neenah area to their services. He does not think this is a long-term solution and that they will outgrow this space rather quickly. They have been looking for larger spaces for a while and will continue to do so but this is a way to get established in Neenah.

Member Genett asked applicant why they chose Horace Mann and if they had thought of another place, like Armstrong. Applicant Bill Douglas said they looked at quite a few elementary schools but ultimately chose Horace Mann due to its bigger gymnasium since it used to be a Middle School.

Member Genett asked if they considered Armstrong due to having more parking. Jason Ebert, who is the Neenah Joint School District director of facilities, stated since Armstrong is a middle

school, there are events that take place on weekends. With these events taking place on weekends, it would not be a guaranteed to be open on Sundays for a service.

Chairperson Mayor Lang brought up the question from a resident regarding if the Neenah Joint School District votes on this topic. She explained the Neenah Joint School District is a separate entity from the City. The city responds to what the school district gives us and the application that is presented before the plan commission.

Member Genett asked if is this something that is prevalent in the state, like churches utilizing schools for services. Deputy Director Schmidt stated it is not something he has seen before but looking at the zoning code and at existing churches in the city, they are primarily located in the R1 single-family districts.

Director Kaiser asked about the capacity at 272 and how is that monitored. Deputy Director Schmidt stated if there are complaints about excess parking in the neighborhood, the property will need to be inspected on a Sunday to make sure they are maintaining the 272 seat capacity.

Director Kaiser asked what type of a modification would require amending the special use permit. Deputy Director Schmidt stated if the church decided to utilize a different classroom or different common open space within the school, that would not require a modification to the special use permit, but must be reviewed by staff. If a modification requires a building permit or change of use permit for a building code issue, the city will need to know but wouldn't require a modification.

Member Andrews stated he is in favor of utilizing empty buildings, but he is concerned about parking. Deputy Director Schmidt stated if parking becomes an issue, specifically the on-street parking, Director Kaiser, Public Works staff, and Common Council can ultimately decide to limit parking to certain streets if there is congestion due to traffic and parking.

MSC Andrews/Kaiser, the Plan Commission, finds 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 a religious use located at 1021 Oak Street subject to the conditions on the Special Use Permit review letter including adding Christmas Eve to the allowable days the use may occur. All voting aye. Motion passed.

b. Special Use Permit – 1340 Gillingham Road – Class “A” Liquor License

Deputy Director Schmidt went over the application for 1340 Gillingham Road. The malt beverages within the building take up 19 square feet of the building total 1,000 square feet sales floor. This area meets the requirements for the permit. All other conditions must also be met as outlined in the ordinance.

MSC Genett/Andrews, the Plan Commission, finds the proposed floor plan meets the requirements listed under Section 4.95(f) of the Municipal Code for a Class “A” license and recommends Common Council approve a Special Use Permit for the issuance of a Class “A” license for property located at 1340 Gillingham Road subject to the conditions of the Special Use Approval Letter. All voting aye. Motion passed.

REPORT

ORDINANCE
#2024-26

c. **Annexation #237 – 1241 W. Winneconne Avenue**

Deputy Director Schmidt went over the requested annexation. It is currently located in the Town of Neenah but within the city’s growth area. This single-family property is looking to connect to city water and sewer. It is a little over one acre and has an R-1 single-family zoning district, which is consistent with the comprehensive plan and surrounding uses.

MSC Genett/Kaiser, the Plan Commission, recommends Common Council approve Annexation #237 (Ordinance #2024-26) and the property also receive an R-1, Single-Family Residence District zoning classification. All voting aye. Motion passed.

Neenah Housing Study and Needs Assessment

Deputy Director Schmidt went over the housing study and that the consultant is about 90% completed with their analysis. They will provide a presentation at our next meeting with their current findings.

Announcements and Future Agenda Items: Next meeting is scheduled for January 7, 2025.

Adjournment: The Commission adjourned its meeting at 4:29 p.m. MSC Kaiser/Genett. All voting Aye. Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kayla Kubat
Administrative Assistant, Department of Community Development