

FARMINGTON PLANNING COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS
City Council Chambers
23600 Liberty Street
Farmington, Michigan
July 8, 2024

Vice Chairperson Kmetzo called the meeting to order in City Council Chambers, 23600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan, at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, July 8, 2024.

ROLL CALL

Present: Crutcher, Gray, Kmetzo, Majoros, Mantey, Westendorf

Absent: Perrot

A quorum of the Commission was present.

OTHER OFFICIALS PRESENT: Assistant City Manager Christopher Weber; Recording Secretary Bonnie Murphy; Brian Golden, Media Specialist, Brian Belesky, Media Specialist. Beth Saarela, City Attorney

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Gray, seconded by Crutcher, to approve the agenda.

Motion carried, all ayes.

APPROVAL OF ITEMS ON CONSENT AGENDA

A. June 10, 2024 Minutes

MOTION by Majoros , seconded by Mantey , to approve the items on Consent Agenda

Motion carried, all ayes.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT PRE-APPLICATION CONFERENCE FOR “THE LIBRARY LOFTS” PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT 23333 FARMINGTON ROAD

Vice Chairperson Kmetzo introduced this item and turned it over to staff.

Assistant City Manager Weber stated this is a Planned Unit Development Pre-application conference for the Library Lofts which is commonly known now as Cassel Dental, located at 23333 Farmington Road. We have today some people to present, we have the owners, Jairius Mikols, Brian Hernandez and Dan Goodman and their architect, Roland Day, who will give a presentation or discussion about their project and then after their presentation the Planning Commission is just asked to provide feedback on their project and if you have any request for additional materials that they can certainly put those together for a future meeting. He invited the petitioners to the podium to present their request.

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Roland Day, architect for the project, came to the podium. He stated that he would go through the proposal page by page for the Commission as presented. On Page 1, what they began with earlier in the process what we had started looking at the footprint of the building presented in red on the Cassel Dental site, to the north of CVS and the green arrows represent egress and access to the site. We were looking during that time in conversation with CVS in an attempt to as we get into the plans proper, you'll see the site itself's vehicular access is limited and we were trying to provide more retail space and therefore using access of their site to this particular site would help us with additional access and provide retail. The second page is the survey of existing conditions. Page three is a parallel plan and that begins to talk about the code issues and some of the particulars that the PUD application itself addresses in terms of us looking forward to additional leniency with building height, setbacks and so forth. Page four is the architectural site plan which I think as you can see really does fill the entire site, the floor plan is just under 13,000 square feet and the concern noted on this particular plan, really one area of conversation there is a hatched bubble that indicates parking to the north which is really the south end of the CVS lot and otherwise we don't have any parking on there, on the site itself. Per the eligibility requirements listed on the right were the items that we felt were going to be appropriate for this project on this site, mixed use development with residential uses, pedestrian transient oriented design, high quality architectural design beyond the plan requirements, and then the provision of open space, public plazas or features, effective transition between higher and lower density uses and between nonresidential and residential uses, shared vehicular access between properties or uses and last, the significant use of suitable building and design features. Page five goes into more details, ground floor and typical second and third floor plan. On the first floor, north is at the top of the page, Farmington Road is on the right side, these components that we've got here are the covered area in green which is the building entrance both for residents and potential retail suites which they're both showing the purple. Those areas are 2,500 plus and just over 4,000 square feet between the first retail space and the second space. The building common lobby is in the red for the center with the elevator and stair core. The yellow area represents the building common tenant storage and then we have some spaces left over for mechanical and utilities within the building. Below is the second and third floor plan which represents a mixed of residential units with interior balconies, typically very few one and two-bedroom units, otherwise it's one single studio units or otherwise there are generally two-bedroom units, trying to take advantage of views to the north, south and to the east. One area of note as we get to the next plan, this is toward the back of the building, we're very cognizant that we have residential there and we realize this is a tall building, which we'll get to in the elevations, and I just want to repeat that we're very aware of that proximity but we'll address that in detail in just a little bit. But we've tried to provide enough natural light for these tenants, we think that the developers are doing a good thing with regard to their drive to create a nice high end residential units as well as different retail and commercial opportunity. The Third and fourth floor, page six, these are the larger, more luxurious units if you will, and overall we

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have twenty-five total units of residential. Materials, we turn to the elevations next, we've tried to take the historical context of Farmington downtown and look at both scale and the use of glass, the opportunity to provide walkability, visibility, zero lot line, custodian maintaining that street front as well as picking up some of the historic nature of the City and its core. We are going to go towards more contemporary once we get into the units themselves but we think from the historic and from some the scale and materials that we plan to use, that it will be a great fit for the City and will provide a nice quality of life for the residents. Going back to the fact that we're abutting up to residential on the back side of the property, we have minimal windows on the back, we also have bedrooms in the back, so we're trying to keep that side quiet. We realize also that there is some significant trees back there offering somewhat of a buffer visually and then we wanted to try to make sure the balconies will be on the north and south sides as well, so, we're very cognizant of our neighbors.

So, to go back, briefly looking at the site itself, one of the reasons for selecting the use of the entire site other than maximizing the retail, is that there is an apron cutbacks at the southernmost end of the CVS site and then we have a Chase entrance. If we would have put one in or two separate cuts we'd have four aprons within about 140 feet, which from a geometry and driving point, it's a lot. So, again, our first option was to look at access with CVS to the north, but I think that we kind of looking forward to what tends to be a little more contemporary urban thought with regard to parking and zero lot line aspect, I think those are some of the items we need to address this evening. But that's kind of where that direction is going,

Vice Chairperson Kmetzo asked if any of the other petitioners wished to make comments.

Brian Hernandez came to the podium. He stated he didn't actually think he would ever be a developer, you have three owners who are local people who, I grew up in Redford, used to ride my bike to the Grand Café, spent a lot of time in downtown Farmington. Mr. Goodman, also grew up right down the street and Jarius and I both live in the Farmington/Farmington Hills area. So, we're three business owners, separate businesses, really saw this building and said hey, this is kind of a neat little building and then MEDC put out a proposal regarding the building and what you can do with the building. It had three or four options within the proposal, it was like an 80-page proposal that the MEDC put out regarding this lot. So, we're pretty much following the MEDC guidelines for the most part what's in that proposal and that's really what started us, being local, seeing the building, saying hey, this could be something cool, we could do something good to improve our community we all live in and grew up here and that's how we got to this point.

Kmetzo opened the floor for questions from the Commissioners.

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Majoros stated I'm sure we have a lot of questions. This is step one of what would be a seemingly light, warm process and I'll try to ask a couple questions and then make a couple comments and these may be questions that others have. So, CVS parking, you don't own that property, what's the protocol with parking that's not your parking, you know, is there an arrangement that needs to be worked out or is worked out or shared parking and access through the CVS.

Hernandez replied obviously we don't have a parking lot however they have vast easements on our land and we're trying to reciprocate back to them, we're trying to work in good faith as well as one of the options is to purchase for rent land rights to those parking spots and likewise we'll have the same conversation with Chase. I think CVS is more willing to do it than Chase because apparently that ATM is the most popular ATM in Michigan. So, we are actively in negotiations to work through that process right now.

Majoros said if that was to be worked out, would it be petitioned off somehow, would it be denoted this is parking for this because if it's, okay, let's just use our surge parking, on a Tuesday in February, not a problem, Farmer's Market, everything else. So, if someone lives there and it's a Saturday morning and they go somewhere and their spaces are taken, so they have to go to the neighbors, if there is an arrangement are you trying to work it out that it's 100% exclusive parking for the residents of this lot for the retail that is there and Hernandez replied primarily for the residents.

Majoros asked then the retail, if it's 25-units and correct me if I'm wrong but I think we try to do one to one and a half spaces per something like that, so if it's 25-units, eighteen spaces, 25-units, one and a half is 40 or 38 or whatever my math is, and then we've got five retail entities that have employees and I don't know what sort of businesses you're looking to have there, let's say a place is a law firm, somebody not having fast turn traffic, so parking, traffic flow, CVS is going to be on of a number of issues. So as you get closer I would just highly encourage the communication to the residents, to us, that just gets resolved because what comes along with that also then it's not just access to that CVS, but you're right the streetscape and whatever, we ran into this with Maxfield both where it was like the way to get there people were concerned on Oakland that people would be zipping through and cutting through. So, that back alley behind CVS would be a primary place that people would know to get there because they'd be coming through Grand River and like I don't want to go down Farmington Road, I'm going to shoot down between the library and whatever, I'm going to take a hard right and cu through the back alley. So, traffic flow, parking, is going to be a massive thing for us to understand and work with you on and that's going to be a concern that not only adjacent residents who have a dwelling next to them now but the people in a broader, that part of town, they're going to say this is just a traffic flow mess.

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Hernandez stated the residents would be partitioned off as well as the employees or any sort of long term parking would be partitioned off and that retail could actually be on the east side where there's actually a 3-hour limit because most of retail you're not spending more than three hours in a retail location but the employee would be a permanent parking space. As well as trash, we have to address where to put the trash. We are working through the footprint.

Majoros said I'm sure you know these are all things you know are coming your way. The other thing is there is a feeling that retail parking will be across the street, the crosswalk is north of that. And so you have a business here, and there's parking here, and the crosswalk is here, people are going to be like water, they're going to take the laziest route there, they're going to be crossing the street where there's not a designated crosswalk with flashing lights and what have you, so you're going to have a safety topic that people are going to want to talk about. I think the other thing obviously is going to be building height and I think Chris, we're going to need some help just on what's allowed and what it's zoned for, and just some sense because this was another Maxfield issue, right. You're looking for appropriate density, development costs, return on investment and we're supportive of all that at the same time I'm sure you have a minimal threshold, the first question from residents will be can it be three stories, well, you lop off eight units then your proposal goes tilt. So, at some point we're going to need to understand it's four stories or it's nothing, right, because the economics are going to have to work for you but they're going to have to work for everybody else. So, building height, what's the code, what it's zoned for, and then because we wound up with Maxfield, right, we were snipping units off the corner so it wasn't so close to the one resident and we arrived at a good place but let's just get at it early. If four stories is the minimum, then let's just call it and let's work with that. But we spend a lot of unnecessary time debating back and forth and back and forth. If you tell us the only way it's going to work is if it's this size, then let's know that ahead. A part of that is do we know how high that Chase sign is by any chance, I'm just trying to get a sense for what 48-feet is, don't you think we should understand that with discussion with the residents. Right now it's different when it's not a thin, brick Chase sign, it's a building or whatever, it's closer to the lot line, etc., but it's just for perspective when you're walking by, oh, it's as high as that.

Hernandez stated he is not horribly familiar with the height of the project but with this the MEDC studied height and density, so we are working off that RFQ from the MEDC, and I believe it's option four.

Majoros stated MEDC is good in that regard but they don't have the emotion of the people that live there. And the last thing I would say is what we found very constructive in Maxfield was David Judge was a gentleman that lived back behind there and we were ping ponging back and forth endlessly on Maxfield and the solicitation of input of residents, having a residential kind of advocate, so this gentleman David Judge took it

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upon himself to meet with neighbors, he met with the developer, consolidated the feedback and I thought it was very instrumental and helpful just to understand the feeling the issues of the residents, they're all going to bring I think those things up, I don't think you'll hear anything different from those folks but I do applaud what Robertson did, they were very active in meeting with the residents and hearing their concerns and they have constructive solutions to those, etc. And I thought it made what could have been an even longer process, we got to a better place quicker when that sort of communication stream was opened up.

Westendorf stated he is very excited to see progress and see something going in here, it's very exciting. I do encourage you to take a look at your openings and such, you've got the zero lot line really close and I don't know if you can have all those windows you're showing us, you might want to do a Code check on it and make sure what you're showing us is something that you can actually do.

Kmetzo thanked the applicants for taking time to do a pre-application conference, I think it will help you and I don't recall that we had any other developers that came in ahead and asked for feedback that you want to investigate. There are a couple engineering issues that you need to work on with an engineering firm or the City of Farmington engineering, and regarding sanitation, trash, the water, sewage and all that stuff. It was mentioned about the traffic flow, the ins and outs, garbage pick-up and access for fire or police and trucks that come and deliver for the retail, whatever the retail units will be, and again as Steve has mentioned, the building height. I think getting the feedback from the surrounding neighbors would do a ton of good and will really help in you finalizing your preparation for this project.

Hernandez stated like I said, we're three local guys, we're not looking to make a giant eyesore, so we're trying to bring a breath of fresh air. The last thing we want to do is building something where we anger everyone around us, that's usually not a good strategy, both living in the community and going in the community, so we definitely want to listen to the feedback from our neighbors. We talked to the commercial neighbors briefly, our next step will be probably to approach the residential. But we're looking for a little bit of feedback before we do that because I think you only get one shot with multiple residents, so we want to just get ahead of the planning before we go ahead and have that conversation because if we show them what it is today but we haven't worked out parking, so that could change and we don't want to do that, we want to show them here's what we are doing, this is the finalization, what are your thoughts.

Majoros said there's likely to be conversation does it have to be four stories, can it be three, do you have to have the retail, can it all be purely residential, but I think people want to understand suitable alternatives, right, because I guarantee what you're going to hear from residents, less density, smaller. At some point people will say look, just get rid

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of the first floor, make them three story like the Orchards or the ones over there and call it a day. It doesn't always work that way, right, so you're going to hear those things as well, so being receptive to alternatives and being able to explain why it needs to be this way or what have you I think is helpful.

Hernandez stated they've talked about that internally as well, the top floor instead of having eight units up there, having two, not only reducing size but changing the layout within the floors because I can almost guarantee you two units with the parking is going to be a lot less than eight units with the parking. So, we are looking into that and we will also take that back and look at it.

Crutcher asked for the 25 units what is the square footage you're looking at for the units.

Day responded The smallest is around 700 for the studio, the largest goes up to almost 1,700 and there is a mix in between, the average, I think there are fourteen units that are roughly 1,200 square feet and then they flex a little bit up and down.

Crutcher asked if these are rentals and Hernandez replied they are not leaning towards rentals but as townhouses and Crutcher asked and you're doing that with no covered parking or dedicated parking and Hernandez replied the idea is to have dedicated parking and we are very actively pursuing that being the plan.

Crutcher stated I know this is preliminary but are you intending on fencing the parking in and Day replied we were looking at permits or the least invasive as possible in lot but clear and further discussion was held regarding a dedicated entry for trash, the impact of the Chase ATM to residents on the second floor

Crutcher –

Hernandez - - alley dedicated entry for trash – south entrance

Crutcher – any consideration for chase atm –

Hernandez – retail –

Crutcher second floor.

Crutcher indicated it would be helpful to look at the height of the building relative to the neighborhood, that there's a one-story residential behind and on the west side.

Hernandez stated that they will do an aerial at that elevation to see what you can see.

Crutcher stated the unit count seems low and there should be a formula for unit size and cost and Hernandez stated we have to keep in mind the average cost of home.

Kmetzo asked what their expectations are in terms of timeline and Hernandez replied as soon as they have a successful agreement with CVS, they would look for immediate PUD submission and then from the PUD submission and approval process, we would be ready to bid the project out to developers or builders and subsequently start. We are ready to go. We have been planning on over a year now for this so we're kind of chomping on the bit to move forward.

Kmetzo asked Weber if the ZBA would be involved and Weber replied no.

Further discussion was held regarding landscaping and green space and Hernandez stated they would like to hear ideas for the property, that they are basing their plans on the MEDC packet and Kmetzo suggested they meet with Webber and go over Master Plan to see how well that works.

Westendorf stated to Applicants that the MEDC packet is a starting pint and not a finished product.

Kmetzo thanked the Applicants for their presentation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The following people commented on the proposed project:

Amy Ellen 34069 Alta Loma Drive
Jordan Michaels 34177 Schulte Drive

PLANNING COMMISSION COMMENT

Crutcher announced that he has been elected Chair of the Parking Commission.

Kmetzo congratulated him on the appointment.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Crutcher, supported by Majoros, to adjourn the meeting.
Motion carried, all ayes.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted,

Secretary