

PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING

JANUARY 26, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. via Zoom Meeting, a virtual meeting platform, pursuant to the Town's Electronic Participation Policy, due to COVID-19. Commissioners Falk, Liske, Nelson, Mayor Clark and Chairperson Canright were in attendance. Councilor Meyer and Commissioner Emilson entered the meeting at 5:40 p.m. due to internet connection issues.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Application for Final Plat; Location: East of Blocks 31 and 32, north of Hartwell Park and Charles Street, east of Lena Street, south of Otto Street, and west of the Library District property, and Town of Ridgway property at North Railroad; Address: TBD North Lena Street; Zone: General Commercial (GC) and Historic Business (HB); Applicant: Hines Designs; Owner: Lena Commons, LLC

Staff Report dated January 26, 2021 presenting background, analysis and staff recommendation prepared by the Town Planner.

Planner Shay Coburn presented an application for final plat consisting of 19 residential lots and 4 commercial condominium units for the Lena Street Commons Planned Unit Development. Coburn explained the general subdivision process for the benefit of the public and noted the southern portion of the property, currently designated HB, will not be developed at this time. She explained most of the development will occur in the portion of the property zoned General Commercial. However, the build-out will occur on a small portion of the lot designated HB. This will require a rezoning approved by the Town Council to correlate a new property line with the Zoning designation, the Planner concluded.

The Town Planner compared the non-compliant items with the Final Plat requirements. She noted the applicant needs to submit the documentation as required in Ridgway Municipal Code 7-4-5(C) (2); the as-built documents need to be edited, and once those documentation are received staff will need to review the utility easements against the utility locations to ensure they correlate. The easement language in plat notes 9, 10, and 11 need revising so they match the Town's standard language for easements as explained in detail per the Staff Report dated January 26, 2021. Coburn said a Subdivision Improvements Agreement (SIA) will be needed for the requirements detailed in the Staff Report that have not been completed prior to final plat, and concerns regarding the water pits and service lines installation might need to be addressed in the SIA as well.

Ms. Coburn recommended approval of the application to the Town Council with the 10 conditions summarized in the Staff Report dated January 26, 2021.

Tom Kennedy, Attorney for the Applicant agreed an SIA is needed. He expressed concerns regarding installation of the utility service lines to all lots prior to the grading and excavation because the lines could be compromised. He said they are working with Staff to develop an SIA

for items that need completion as part of the individual build-out for each phase. Mr. Kennedy noted the improvements would be shown in the Building Permit Application. He expressed further concern regarding the Town and other utility service providers having access within their easements to provide service to other projects outside of this development. He noted the Town should review plats before excavation to be familiar with the stipulations of the utility easements. Mr. Kennedy said the development team is looking forward to working through the outstanding items with Staff and encouraged the Commissioners to approve the application.

The Chairperson opened the hearing for public comment and there was none.

The Planning Commission discussed the outstanding items with Staff and the Applicant. The Commissioners recognized there will be many property owners in this development. Because of this the plat note language should be standardized with the Town's language for continuity in managing the easements in town. Furthermore, it is not practical for staff to review plat notes for every easement in town when an excavation is required. Since the easement is smaller than what the Town normally requires there might be a way to reconcile both parties' concerns. The Planning Commission agreed the Town Attorney should review the plat notes to make the determination about the language in the plat notes.

ACTION:

Mayor Clark moved to recommend approval to the Town Council for the Application for Final Plat for the Lena Street Commons Planned Unit Development, with the 10 conditions listed in the Staff Report dated January 26, 2021. Commissioner Emilson seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

2. Landscaping Regulation Update, Third Discussion

Staff Report dated January 26, 2021 presenting background, analysis, comments received after the December Regular Meeting and staff recommendation prepared by the Town Planner.

Planner Coburn presented the Staff Report dated January 26, 2021 for the Landscaping Regulations Update. The Planner lead the discussion with the Commissioners and public. Ned Bosworth, Ruth Stewart, Krista Stewart and Terese Seal were the community members that participated in the discussion.

Plant Species: Ms. Coburn suggested the discussion should cover whether the Town should provide a list of drought tolerant plant species; a limited list of undesired plants; educational materials for water wise plant maintenance; a list of exemptions to water wise watering such as gardens, and considerations for high water users and how to effectively communicate water wise landscaping. The consensus was to encourage water wise practices through recommendation rather than regulation, and that progressive water rates should assist in regulating heavy water users. They noted a short list of desirable, noxious, and undesirable plant and tree species should be provided. They also discussed how to disseminate information regarding the importance of submitting and understanding the landscaping plan with a building permit at the beginning of a project.

Trees and shrubs: The Planner explained the current requirement for the minimum number of trees per residential property is based on the lot size, and the minimum number of shrubs required is based on street frontage. She suggested the minimum requirement for all properties should be 1 tree and 4-5-gallon shrubs with the additional requirement of 1 tree or 4-5-gallon shrubs for each 2,000 sq. ft. thereafter. Already established trees on residential lots would apply toward the requirement. The Commissioners and participants agreed the required plantings should be spread out on parcels and not apply only to the front yard.

The Commissioners discussed the information needed in an educational brochure for tree and shrub plantings. They noted the information should include determining proper planting location, parcel topography, a map showing town topography zones, preparing or preserving lots under construction to encourage new plantings, determining tree value, tree and shrub maintenance, and expectations for plantings in easements.

Ground Cover: The Town Planner noted that currently 50% live vegetation is needed in the front yard. She explained previous discussions included clarifying the requirement by setting limitations on hard surfaces; ensuring ground cover is adequate to prevent dust blowing onto other properties and minimizing weed germination; ensuring the soil is stabilized to prevent erosion, limiting the use of turf that is not water wise, encouraging water wise ground covers, and allowing more area for organic mulches. Coburn suggested a more generalized ground cover requirement, stipulating a certain percentage of landscape for the non-built area of parcels.

The Commissioners and Public agreed the landscape definition should be general as to include points from the previous discussion while limiting the amount of inorganic materials used. Planner Coburn will prepare scenarios for percentages of ground cover to non-built lot area, to be reviewed at the next discussion to determine how ground cover requirements could be regulated.

Water Conservation: Planner Coburn noted the previous discussions for water education were about providing information and education to residents for the use of grey water, efficient irrigation systems, soil amendments, rain gardens, and rainwater harvesting and collection. They discussed providing a reference list of landscape professionals and eventually requiring the use of a landscape professional for commercial developments, and large multi-residential projects.

Other: The Planning Commission agreed staff should have the flexibility to approve landscape plans that deviate slightly from the regulations. Other topics for future discussions could be about an annual plant buying program, incentives to encourage groomed yards, a free residential mulching program, and a compost pick-up program. However, the priority for this year will be to update the Town's Landscaping Regulations and to provide a comprehensive brochure for educating town residents regarding the topics discussed.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

3. Minutes from the meeting of October 27, 2020.

ACTION:

Commissioner Nelson moved to approve the Minutes from October 27, 2020. Commissioner Liske seconded the motion, with Commissioner Emilson abstaining, and the motion carried unanimously.

ACTION:

Commissioner Nelson moved to approve the Minutes from December 22, 2020. Councilor Meyer seconded the motion, it carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Christian
Deputy Clerk