

Minutes of Plan Commission Meeting February 17, 2015

Call to Order – Phil Wedekind called the meeting of the Commission to order at 5:20 PM.

Roll Call – Present were Phil Wedekind, Dennis Thurow, Jim O’Neill, Tom Kolb, and Roy Franzen. Kate Fitzwilliams, and Pat Liston were absent.

Also in attendance were Engineer Pinion, Melinda Poeppel (A2K), Jon Natvig (Elderspan), and Ben Bromley.

Call to Order

- a. Note compliance with the Open Meeting Law. Wedekind noted compliance with the Open Meeting Law.
- b. Agenda Approval: It was moved O’Neill and seconded by Kolb to approve the agenda as posted. The motion carried unanimously.
- c. Minutes Approval: It was moved by O’Neill, seconded by Kolb to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2014 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Invited to Speak (*Any citizen has the right to speak on any item of business that is on the agenda for Commission action if recognized by the presiding officer.*) There were no speakers.

New Business

- a. Request by ElderSpan Management and their partners to review a Concept Plan, in accordance with Step 2 of the PUD process, to create a 32-unit Independent Living facility on the east side of Jefferson Street, between 14th and 15th Streets, behind the Meadow Ridge Assisted Living facility at 1700 Jefferson Street and the Meadow View Memory Care facility at 1600 Jefferson Street – Melinda Poeppel, with the architectural firm A2K, introduced this proposed project to the Plan Commission and provided a brief history of the Meadow View and Meadow Ridge facilities. She explained that this independent living facility was previously identified as the 3rd and final phase of this Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) complex. The proposed 32-unit Independent Living Facility, which would be connected to the existing Meadow Ridge Assisted Living facility, would consist of a two-story building overlooking Steinhorst Park with a third, lower level that would provide underground parking. Access to this facility would be provided from 15th Street. She explained that the existing “woodlands” on the east side of the site would be removed in favor of this new development and that she had met with City Staff to review site plan for the proposed development. Kolb said that he thought the landscaping plan would be critically important to the development and encouraged the design team to work with a good landscape architect to mitigate the loss of the existing woodland area. Ms. Poeppel explained that the earlier phases of the project included prairie plantings on the south side of the site but that area has proven to be difficult to maintain. Accordingly, they may propose to eliminate the prairie planting as part of this project. O’Neill said that he would like to have a landscape specialist advise them on the prairie feel of the location. He recognizes that prairie grass is difficult to establish and that it requires regular maintenance to keep the weeds from overtaking the native plants and wild flowers. Thurow said that it will have to be burned periodically if it is to be kept as a prairie; however, this could be challenging considering the proximity of the buildings. Wedekind stated that personally he does not like prairie grass in the City. Poeppel explained that when prairie-style landscaping is introduced into an established neighborhood or a more urban area, it becomes a real challenge. She explained that they will work with a landscape architect and the owners and maybe try to come up with a solution that either addresses it or replaces it with more conventional landscaping. Poeppel then reviewed the proposed building materials and elevations. She described how it would look coming up the hill (from the east) with the semi-exposed basement area and the two levels of independent living units, which will have a tremendous view overlooking Steinhorst Park and the Baraboo Bluffs on the southeast side of town. Pinion said that the elevations being shown to the Commission on the screen are more current than the ones included in the packet. Pinion said that it appears the design will include a mixture of building materials that should complement the existing facilities and blend in to the neighborhood very well. O’Neil feels that it will be a valuable addition to the community. O’Neill asked Pinion if this conforms with the City’s long-range plan and Pinion stated that it does fit in with the Comprehensive Plan. He said that the first two phases of this CCRC project pre-dated his time as City Engineer but explained that the Commission “handled” each of the first two phases as Special Zoning Exceptions. He said that he spoke to Attorney Reitz and it was felt rather than issuing a third Zoning Exception that it would be more appropriate to convert the entire development to a Planned Development, similar to what was recently done for the hospital and their new Medical Office Building. The PUD would certainly need to incorporate all of the conditions of the prior SZE approvals. Kolb said that it almost seems like this is an extension of the hospital campus. Pinion said that the first two phases of this project were developed by a “partnership” of St. Clare Hospital and Health Services, ElderSpan Management LLC, and a group of private investors. Jon Natvig, of ElderSpan, stated that ElderSpan Management is a partner in similar projects in seven other communities and that Phase 3 of this project would be developed much like the first two with the same primary partners. Poeppel stated that they will be holding an information meeting to allow the neighbors an opportunity to review and discuss the project. Pinion said that landscaping was talked about at the staff level and he said that the City Forester wasn’t particularly concerned about removal of the existing woodland because it is a mixture of trees and brush. He explained that the City’s landscaping regulations require that a certain percentage of trees will need to be replaced and there may be an opportunity to put some of the new tree plantings in Steinhorst Park rather than attempt to squeeze them all in on-site. Poeppel stated that they have contact information for Utility, Fire, and Police Departments. Pinion asked if there was a schedule for the project and Natvig said that hopefully by fall they will be in the ground. Thurow encouraged them to work with the Parks Department as far as the back side of the property. Poeppel stated that at this time everything is preliminary and they are willing to work with the neighborhood and all the Departments.

Pinion explained that this concept review was informal and nonbinding and that the developers would like an indication from the Commission whether or not they were “on the right track”. The Commissioners were generally supportive of the concept and did not express any objection to the developers proceeding to the next step.

Adjournment - It was moved by Franzen and seconded Kolb to adjourn at 5:45 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Phil Wedekind,
Mayor Designee