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MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION

**CITY HALL EAST ANNEX BUILDING
2434 VERMONT STREET
BLUE ISLAND, IL 60406**

Commissioner Chairman Mark Patoska called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m. on Thursday, August 1, 2019.

I. Roll Call

Present

Mark Patoska
Dave Brown
Eric Polcaster
Toni Ebeling
Ron Bloom
Jason Berry

Staff

Howard M. Coppari, Community Development Manager
Marisol Barrera, Mayor's Executive Assistant

Absent

Arthur J. Wier
Erich Wennberg

II. Approval of Minutes

Vote on the motion as follows: 02-07-19 Plan Minutes (Zoning Ordinance Update – Zoning Uses)

AYES	<u>6</u>	Ebeling, Berry, Polcaster, Bloom, Patoska, Brown,
NAYS	<u>0</u>	
ABSTAIN	<u>0</u>	
ABSENT	<u>2</u>	Weir, Wennberg

III. Public Comment

None

IV. Old Business

Zoning Definitions & Zoning Uses

V. New Business

2201 Vermont Street - Special Use for "Tavern or Bar" use and a Parking Variance; Alleyway Review

VI. Commissioners Comments (2201 Vermont Street – Special Use)

The Chair called for the first item, 2201 Vermont, for a special use for a “tavern or bar” use and a parking variance in a UTOD Zone. Chair Patoska asked for Shatonna Miller and George Mseeh, her business partner, to the podium to discuss their overview and their plans for their property.

Mr. Mseeh and Ms. Miller introduced themselves. Mr. Mseeh stated he wants to talk about the new business on 2201 Vermont Street. Mr. Mseeh and Ms. Miller want to open up a new bar and grille restaurant, and Mr. Mseeh was going to bring the property back up from its glorious past.

Shatonna Miller stated that the building had a lot of history and described how she wants to bring back the nostalgia by enhancing the restaurant with pictures from the 1900’s; especially by adding a video gaming parlor with liquor, and turn it into a tavern restaurant. Ms. Millers wants to change the scenery around and bring people into the proposed establishment to reminisce and have a good time.

Chair Patoska stated there are parking challenges in this specific area of the city. He asked the applicants how they plan to address the concerns on parking scarcity in the area. Ms. Miller said they have looked into several locations near the building and only had one, within 150 feet to work with her property, but the leasing deal went south. She also noted that she reached out to a plethora of nearby businesses such as: a concrete place, a nearby hotel, Dave’s Auto, and MWRD’s property to negotiate a parking lease agreement with them, but due to insurance liability issues, their efforts to lease additional parking spaces did not go according to plan. Basically, Ms. Miller explained that she had to apply for a parking variance, and seek relief with on-street parking.

Chair Patoska noticed in the architectural drawings that the occupancy for the proposed business was quite high. He pointed out that the seating plan was showing 24 seating spaces with a maximum load occupancy of 101, 56, and 24.

The chair asked for further clarification. He asked staff to explain how the seating and parking spaces are counted using occupancy load. Staff explained the different scenarios that can either trigger higher or lower occupant loads; for instance, in this case, this is a food and drinking establishment where, for planning and zoning purposes, every 4 seats equate to 1 parking space, this should be required by the applicant, onsite. The parking variance is for seats and not occupant load.

The occupancy load that the Building and Fire Departments are looking for is very different from zoning load. Basically, the Building and Fire Departments are looking for how many people can physically fit within the tavern space. Usually, this is counted by having people stand close to each, while standing up.

Ms. Miller said that the architect gave so much details so the Building Department could start to review the drawing for plumbing, electrical, HVAC work, while the Fire Department could review the plan for occupant load. In this situation, Ms. Miller is providing for 24 seats, which equates to 6 parking spaces per zoning. Her plan shows for 6 video gaming stations and 1 ATM, as well.

Ms. Miller and Mr. Mseeh are only showing 24 seats; so they can ask for a parking variance. In this calculation, only the seats for eating are counted for the parking variance and not the 6 video gaming stations. However, for life safety, the building can accommodate for 60 people for a maximum occupancy load.

Minutes for the Planning Commission (Continue)

Commissioner Brown confirmed that Ms. Miller is looking to preserve the interior space, while saving the old bar area for being destroyed. The bar area is very old and has a very retro look for today's standards.

Staff asked to elaborate on what food will be served. Ms. Miller responded by saying upscale bar food like chicken with alfredo sauce, pizza, nachos, and burgers. Staff mentioned that they will be expanding the kitchen area, which Shatonna Miller concurred.

Ms. Miller stated that she will employ 3 people, which can take up 3 parking spaces. Staff noted that Ms. Miller tried, many times, to speak to the other property owners and try to reduce the amount of cars being parked on the street.

Staff encouraged Shatonna to speak about the lease arrangement with the owner. Ms. Miller explained about the lease for the restaurant, and the rights to go in and build out, per the lease outline, also making sure that the washrooms are handicap accessible. Ms. Miller also stated that the family that owns the property, also rents the back of the property, but that the tenant will be leaving soon. Shatonna Miller mentioned that she intends to upgrade the front door, make the bathroom handicap accessible, in addition, to beautifying of the front "storefront" area.

Commissioner Berry asked about parking for the tenant that resides in the rear of the property. It was confirmed by Shatonna that there are 2 parking spots in the rear, but 1 of the parking spots is reserved for the tenant.

Commissioner Brown asked who owns the property. Shatonna Miller responded, by saying, it is owned by Elizabeth Diaz.

Commissioner Berry asked who lives in the back. Shatonna Miller responded that the owner's daughter, but the lease would end soon and the daughter will move out eventually. Commissioner Berry was fine with the current and proposed living arrangement when it came to parking.

Staff highlighted that part of the garage is accessible to customers, and it is also in compliance with residential parking.

Commissioner Berry asked about Mr. Mseeh what other businesses he owns. Mr. Mseeh stated he owns *Dolton Food & Liquor*, since 1992, and *City West Side ABH* on Western and North Avenue.

Commissioner Brown asked about the type of signage that will be used. Staff replied, a blade sign, will be used.

Commissioner Berry asked about the hours of operation. Mr. Mseeh replied, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. Staff asked, Monday through Sunday? Mr. Mseeh said yes.

Commissioner Berry asked about the parking once again. Chair Patoska chimed in about the parking with Commissioner Berry's question. Staff replied that an existing tavern and bar restaurant once existed, and it had no off-street parking as well. The difference today is that Ms. Miller and Mr. Mseeh are asking for a parking variance to acknowledge the problem and to rectify it with a parking variance. They would not generate so many new cars onto the streets.

Minutes for the Planning Commission (Continue)

Ms. Miller commented that she would tell her patrons to park across the street, and use the *METRA* parking station afterhours, when it is free. She would be very vigilant on the parking scenario. Again, she mentioned that she tried in good faith to secure a private parking lease with multiple businesses, but every deal fell apart.

Commissioner Bloom thanked both Mr. Mseeh, and Ms. Miller for their interest in Blue Island, explained the location was an icon, and he is confident that they will be wildly successful. He also thanked staff for putting this all together, he noted the parking issue, and he asked Ms. Miller how she decided to pick Blue Island over other places to open up a new business? Ms. Miller replied, "I found the Vermont property due to low taxes and price, and found the architectural elements, especially the interior space, very appealing."

Chair Patoska pointed out that the building was uninhabited for 9 years, the establishment was called *Pete and Paul's*.

Commissioner Ebeling asked about the kitchen expansion and what space would be eliminated for the kitchen area. Shatonna highlighted only a small space, but she would preserve the beauty of the interior space. Commissioner Brown concurred with Shatonna's comment.

Chair Patoska expressed grave concerns about the responses from the staff report; especially, the residential welfare will be affected, injurious to residential mixed with commercial, due to the "flooding of parking affecting residences ability to park, and that times have changed." Basically, the chair is opposed to the parking hardship that will be impacted on the surrounding properties, especially residential homes, near the proposed tavern or bar.

Commissioner Berry explains the zoning. Special use recommendation only. Chair Patoska stated that the property is not historical.

Commissioner Bloom asked if there was any public comment. Commissioner Brown asked what their establishment will be called. Ms. Miller stated maybe *EAT, Drink, Repeat*.

Jeff Vails commented. Commissioner Berry talked about balance, and he supports the use, and explained several parking options.

Chair Patoska asked for someone to make a motion to approve the special use in question. Commissioner Berry made a motion to approve the special use. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown. Chair Patoska voted "no."

The board voted to recommend approval of the special use with a parking variance request to the City Council.

AYES	<u>6</u>	Ebeling, Berry, Polcaster, Bloom, , Brown,
NAYS	<u>1</u>	Patoska
ABSTAIN	<u>0</u>	
ABSENT	<u>2</u>	Weir, Wennberg

Minutes for the Planning Commission (Continue)

VII. Commissioners Comments (2201 Vermont Street – Special Use)

Chair Patoska called the next item on the agenda at 7:28 p.m. This item is regards to an alley between Longwood Drive (abutting Vincennes Avenue) and Irving Avenue. It is 2152 123rd Street Alley, the idea is to convert a one-way alley to a two-way alley.

This request id for a recommending vote for city administration.

Staff explained why this item was on the agenda. Staff said that Michael Marzal, the Director of Finance and Administration, wanted to receive a recommendation from the Planning Commission because the Plan Commission looks at long term planning initiatives.

A resident in the neighborhood wants to convert a one-way alley into a two-way ally; especially, to go in-and-out between the cross streets.

Mr. Marzal contacted Erik Alvarez, the Contract Civil Engineer from *Robinson Engineering*, and Mr. Alvarez generated a report that spoke about the possibility to convert an existing ally from a one-way to a two-way can work; even though, vehicles passing each other, side by side, can work, but it will be a tight fit.

Mr. Alvarez also commented about the state of the existing pot holes that needed to be repaired, and the alleyway would need repair for long term use.

When it came to traffic mitigation, the report didn't have any anything negative to say about a two-way versus a one-way.

Staff explained that he brought this same "recommendation request" to Community Development Committee last year, during December of 2018, but they voted against it because the Aldermen at that time said that the alleyway should be repaired "first" before talking about a one-way or a two-way conversion.

Staff read Erik Alvarez's report. Commissioner Bloom, Ebeling, and Berry made a comment on their own personal experiences regarding alleys. Chair Patoska made a recommendation to send this item to Municipal Services Committee; a motion was made by Chair Patoska, second by Commissioner Berry. 5 Ayes, and 1 Abstained.

AYES	<u>6</u>	Ebeling, Berry, Bloom, Brown, Patoska
NAYS	<u>0</u>	
ABSTAIN	<u>1</u>	Polcaster
ABSENT	<u>2</u>	Weir, Wennberg

VIII. Staff's Update (Zoning Code Revision Update – Zoning Definitions & Zoning Uses)

Chair Patoska called the last item on the agenda at 7: 40 p.m. Zoning Code Revision Update – Zoning Definitions & Zoning Uses. Community Development Manager Howard M. Coppari mentioned that the zoning rewrite will be a one to two-year project. The expected start date will be January 2020.

Commissioner Bloom asked about staff's hire date with the City, and thanked Mr. Coppari for his efforts. Staff responded back by saying that he started on September 14, 2018.

Minutes for the Planning Commission (Continue)

Commissioner Ebeling asked about Elias Rodrigues' application, and if Eli was contacted. Staff explained that he never heard back from Mr. Rodrigues, and he has not called him.

Commissioner Patoska requested that staff create a quarterly report as the code revisions progresses. He also asked about the rescheduling of the Zoning board meetings. Mr. Coppari said that the ZBA board members were fixated with Monday at 7:00 p.m.

Commissioner Bloom asked about *Ophelia's Banquets*. Staff explained the situation regarding Ophelia Smith. Staff said that the property is located at the former *Klein's Building* on Western Avenue and Vermont Street, and what used to be a retail store many years ago, and now is sitting abandoned.

Mr. Coppari explained that Ophelia Smith and Alex Loyfman applied for a building permit at the Building Department, but the application was denied. They also submitted for a building permit for a business license application as well. It was denied on two fronts, first, we don't allow for banquet halls as a permitted use, and second, the proposed use needed a parking variance. Mr. Coppari would allow for some grandfathered parking if it goes from retail to retail even if the building doesn't have any parking.

After the parking calculations were done, all the seats in the banquet facility totaled 87 parking spaces that would be required for this use. Staff also noticed that the second floor would generate another 10 parking spaces where people can try on their wedding gowns and suits. In total, 97 parking spaces would be required for *Ophelia's Banquets*.

IX. Adjournment

On a motion by Commissioner Chair Patoska, the commission agreed to adjourn the meeting. Vote on the motion followed:

AYES	<u>6</u>	Ebeling, Berry, Bloom, Brown, Patoska
NAYS	<u>0</u>	
ABSTAIN	<u>1</u>	Polcaster
ABSENT	<u>2</u>	Weir, Wennberg

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

These minutes are not a verbatim record of the meeting, but a summary of the proceedings. *The original minutes were prepared, but then they were lost to the city being hacked by a ransomware virus. This reproduction of the minutes was done with limited information.*

12/5/19

Date



Mark Patoska, Chairman