

MINUTES
COLUMBIA CITY PLAN COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, JULY 6, 2020
7:00 P.M.

WHITLEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
MEETING ROOM A/B, LOWER LEVEL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Larry Weiss, President
Patrick Zickgraf, Vice president
Walt Crowder
Doug Graft
Chip Hill
Jon Kissinger
Don Langeloh
Dennis Warnick
Dan Weigold

STAFF

Nathan Bilger
Amanda Thompson

ATTORNEY

Dawn Boyd, arrived at 7:06 P.M.

MEMBERS ABSENT

None.

VISITORS

Fourteen out of fifteen visitors signed the Guest List at the July 6, 2020, Columbia City Plan Commission meeting. A copy of the Guest List is included with the minutes of this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Weiss called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Bilger read the roll call with those members present and absent listed above. (For the record, Mr. Graft attended the meeting electronically, as permitted by Executive Order.)

CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE MAY 18, 2020, AND JUNE 1, 2020, COLUMBIA CITY PLAN COMMISSION MINUTES

Ms. Thompson stated that the May and June minutes had not yet been prepared.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE OATH TO WITNESSES

Mr. Bilger administered the Oath to ten potential witnesses. He stated that no members of the public were attending the meeting electronically, but if there had been any, they would have accepted the Oath as part of their registration to the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

1. 20-C-SOA-1 *(continued from the March 2nd meeting)*

Mr. Bilger requested a continuance of 20-C-SOA-1, the public hearing proposing an amendment to the Columbia City Subdivision Control Ordinance to address the number of access points and/or connectivity for subdivisions. Mr. Warnick made a motion to continue 20-C-SOA-1 to the August 3, 2020, Regular Meeting. Mr. Zickgraf gave the second. By roll call vote, the members voted unanimously to carry the motion.

2. 20-C-REZ-3 *(filed for the May 4th meeting; continued from the May 18th meeting)*

Pine Valley Munitions, Inc., requested an amendment to the Columbia City Zoning Map to reclassify property located at 555 N. Line Street from the GB, General Business District, to the I-1, Light Industrial District. Mr. Bilger summarized the Staff Report. He described the location, zoning, and previous use of the property. Mr. Bilger explained that because the petitioner proposes to assemble ammunition, the Zoning Ordinance indicates the property be rezoned to I-1, despite the fact that the use seems far less intense than other uses permitted in the Light Industrial District. He stated that the petitioner submitted zoning commitments with the intention of having them recorded with the deed in order to prohibit I-1 uses that would not be appropriate for this location. Mr. Bilger briefly discussed the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map and described how commercial and industrial uses overlap in the Plan. He also referred to the Review Criteria in the Staff Report.

Mr. Crowder asked if there would be a risk of explosion or what impact this use might have on nearby residential properties. Mr. Bilger stated that manufacturing of explosives would be different from this request and would be considered a Heavy Industrial District use. Mr. Zickgraf asked if light industrial uses could be permitted in the General Business District by way of a Special Exception approval. Mr. Bilger recommended the concept be discussed in the near future, but at the current time, the Ordinance does not allow I-1 uses in GB. With no further questions for Mr. Bilger, Mr. Weiss requested to hear from the petitioner.

Rob Kruger was present on behalf of Pine Valley Munitions. He introduced Quinlan Wall, company president, and explained that the business currently operates on a residential property in Allen County. He addressed Mr. Crowder's concerns about explosibility and stated that the operation is less flammable than a propane tank or paint thinner. Mr. Kruger described how regulated this type of business is by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF),

the Federal Firearms Act, and the local Fire Marshall. He stated that no test firing will occur on this property, and that the goal of the business is to use this site for packaging and eventually for assembly of bullets. Mr. Kruger pointed out that the proposed use would have less traffic than a retail business. Also, he stated the limited access makes the property less desirable to a retail operation.

Mr. Langeloh asked about the nature of the business sales. Mr. Kruger replied that wholesale products are ordered online and shipped to customers (being mostly stores and sheriff departments); this business does not have a retail store front. Mr. Langeloh asked how many employees the business would employ at this site. Mr. Wall stated his name and address for the record and replied that there are currently five employees, and within six months, he anticipates having 10 employees; next year there could be 20-30. He confirmed that the operating hours are 9:00 A.M to 5:00 P.M. and described the safety of the operation and security features.

Neil Bowman of Sturgis Property Group introduced himself to the Commission and discussed his Market Value Analysis Report. He explained how the results showed this business would benefit surrounding properties. There were no questions for Mr. Bowman, and no one else was present who wished to speak. Mr. Weiss closed the public portion of the meeting. Mr. Wall and Mr. Kruger clarified business processes for the Commission members. Mr. Warnick made a motion to forward a favorable recommendation to the City Council for 20-C-REZ-3 as presented. Mr. Kissinger gave the second. By roll call vote, the motion carried with 8 members voting in favor while Mr. Graft voted against. Mr. Bilger anticipated the Council would review the petition at one of their July meetings.

NEW BUSINESS

3. 20-C-SOA-2 (*filed for the April 6th meeting*)

Mr. Bilger requested a continuance of 20-C-SOA-2, the public hearing proposing an amendment to the Columbia City Subdivision Control Ordinance to correct and update miscellaneous information throughout the code. Mr. Warnick made a motion to continue 20-C-SOA-2 to the August 3, 2020, Regular Meeting. Mr. Zickgraf gave the second. By roll call vote, the members voted unanimously to carry the motion.

4. 20-C-REZ-4

S & K Stuff, LLC, requested an amendment to the Columbia City Zoning Ordinance to reclassify a 0.23 acre property on the north side of Swihart Street, 770 feet east of River Street, from the R-3, Multi-Family Residential District, to the GB, General Business District. Mr. Bilger summarized the Staff Report, describing the past uses of the property and its current, undeveloped status. He explained that this parcel historically had been in common ownership with the western parcel, and the new owner wishes to unify the zoning of the two properties and plans to use the area to store vehicles and dumpsters. Mr. Bilger

added that a Special Exception petition for the outdoor storage is on the Board of Zoning Appeals' next agenda.

Dwayne Knott was present and introduced himself to the Commission. He explained that prior to purchasing the property, he and his business partner had verified that the zoning was appropriate for the desired use, but they had not realized the property was divided into two parcels and that the smaller piece was zoned differently. Mr. Warnick asked if the property was to be used as a storage area. Mr. Knott confirmed this was the case. Mr. Weigold asked about the hours of operation and referenced noise complaints received from previous commercial uses. Mr. Knott replied that four employees would arrive at 5:00 A.M. and dumpsters would be swapped out through the day, beginning around 7:30-8:00 A.M. and generally concluding between 2:00-4:30 P.M. Mr. Weiss asked if Mr. Knott's business in the industrial park would be relocating to this location. Mr. Knott stated that the business would not be moving, and this property would only be used to store the vehicles, roll-off boxes, and semi-trailers containing recycle bins. Mr. Warnick asked if old oil tanks had been removed. Mr. Knott confirmed that they had, and he stated that the property had been cleared by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Zickgraf asked for details on the proposed fence. Mr. Knott replied that he intended to install a 6' chain link fence, screened with mesh, with landscaping along the River Street entrance. He stated that there may be other gates as well, allowing the drivers to enter the property from Whitley and Coesse Streets. Mr. Knott told the Commission that the property would be well maintained and create a more appealing visual appearance. He added that his use of the property will create a buffer between the railroad and the residential area along Swihart Street.

Mr. Weiss asked if this proposal would be seeking a site development approval. Mr. Bilger replied that because no structures were proposed (other than the fence), the pending Special Exception petition was the only other approval needed. Mr. Weigold asked Mr. Knott if there would be any security lighting. Mr. Knott said no lighting is planned, but he anticipated that would be discussed during the Special Exception petition. He added that if any were to be installed, it would be pole lights along Swihart Street, with the light directed north onto the property.

There being no further questions for Mr. Knott, Mr. Weiss asked if there was anyone else present who wished to speak with regard to the petition. Deb McClurg stepped forward and stated she had not seen the removal of the underground tanks. Mr. Knott responded that he was only aware of above ground tanks. Ms. McClurg said the tanks she was referring to were used by the railroad for underground grain storage, and she was concerned about the ground collapsing where the tanks are buried. She stated she had no concerns with Mr. Knott's proposal. There was no one else who wished to speak, so Mr. Weiss closed the public portion of the meeting. Mr. Crowder made a motion to accept

the petition as presented and forward a favorable recommendation to the Council. Mr. Kissinger gave the second. The motion was carried by a unanimous, roll call, vote.

5. 20-C-SUBD-3

DRATS, Inc., requested primary plat approval of a 2-lot subdivision proposed to be named Armstrong Corporate Park, Section 15. Mr. Bilger described the property and location and pointed out that the plat also includes a Block that was created to reconcile the location of a fence belonging to the neighboring property. He stated that the 60' of access on Opportunity Drive is wide enough for a local street, should one be proposed in the future. He listed two suggested conditions stated in the Staff Report.

Mr. Warnick asked if there was any condition needed regarding the wetland area. Mr. Bilger replied that the Commission could decide whether or not any condition was needed; they may feel that development plan discussion(s) would suffice. With no further questions for Mr. Bilger, Mr. Weiss invited the petitioner to speak. Kevin Michel of Walker & Associates was present and distributed full-sized copies of the plat to the members. He discussed the location of a tile, the wetland area, and drainage for this and the surrounding properties. Mr. Michel stated that no easement was drawn for the tile so that it can be relocated (as is anticipated with development) without causing the need for a replat.

There were no questions for Mr. Michel, and no one was present who wished to speak, so Mr. Weiss closed the public portion of the meeting. Mr. Warnick made a motion to approve the plat as presented and with the two conditions stated in the Staff Report. Mr. Zickgraf gave the second. By roll call vote, the members voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

6. 20-C-DEV-2

Real Estate Equities, Inc., requested Development Plan Review for the construction of mini storage buildings on property located on the south side of Denzil Drive, approximately 1/3 mile east of Countryside Drive. Mr. Bilger described the location and proposal for eight buildings (decreased from the original proposal of nine buildings, due to grading issues). He stated that the property had recently been rezoned in order to permit the mini storage use; the rezoning approval was contingent on two conditions – a detailed review of aesthetics and of a lighting plan. He told the Commission that neither a lighting plan nor landscape plan had been submitted. Mr. Bilger referenced the past precedent of allowing gravel surfaces for storage unit developments, but he recommended that the entrance to the property be paved, as has been required in the past. He discussed the development plan review criteria and listed five suggested conditions of approval, amending #3 to state: “The proposed stormwater/drainage plan must be approved in accordance with the additional comments from Jon Gotz.”

Kevin Michel of Walker & Associates was present to speak on behalf of the petitioner. He distributed full-sized copies of the revised plans and explained the grading problems that had caused the need to rework the design for the site. Mr. Michel described the drainage plan, addressing the concerns stated in the Soil & Water Conservation District's comment letter.

Mr. Warnick asked what was planned for lighting. Rex "RD" Schrader introduced himself to the Commission and stated that these facilities were planned to match Real Estate Equities' other storage developments which have on-building lighting only. Mr. Crowder asked if Columbia Shores residents, south of US 30, would be impacted by any lighting. Mr. Schrader confirmed that they should not. Mr. Crowder also mentioned concerns he had received about what changes might occur with the trail and its aesthetics. Mr. Schrader expressed that having trees would be difficult with the fence and rip rap, and heavy landscaping would take away from the business' desired visibility from US 30. He requested that the Commission consider that well-maintained, homogeneous storage units might be a more appealing view than the mixture of aging shapes and colors of the neighboring manufactured home park. Mr. Schrader also noted that the City's Municipal building has very visible frontage with no trees and displays piles of items, whereas his proposal includes no outdoor storage. He felt it would be unreasonable of the Commission to require screening of Real Estate Equities' property when it has not been required elsewhere. Mr. Crowder stated that the citizens he spoke with did not indicate a preference on what was planned for the trail area but were only curious about the proposal.

Mr. Weigold asked if the facility would be gated. Mr. Schrader replied that it would have a gate with a passcode, similar to their other units. Doug Walker introduced himself to the Commission and provided additional details about the gate. Mr. Bilger and Mr. Walker discussed paving the entrance from Denzil Drive and determined that paving up to the first buildings would be sufficient. At the request of the Commission members, the petitioners provided other details about their proposal including an 8' fence, the lack of a dumpster, and that signage plans were unknown.

There was no one else present who wished to speak with regard to the petition. Mr. Weiss closed the public portion of the meeting. Mr. Weiss made a motion to approve the petition as presented, with the following conditions:

1. A lighting plan shall be submitted to Staff for approval.
2. The driveway shall be paved up to the first buildings.
3. The proposed stormwater/drainage plan must be approved in accordance with the additional comments provided by the Soil & Water Conservation District.
4. Any lighting must be directed and/or shielded to prevent glare onto public rights-of-way and residential properties.

5. If outdoor storage is to be allowed, a separate Special Exception must be approved.
6. Any signage must be approved by Staff.

Mr. Langeloh gave the second. By roll call vote, the members voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

OTHER BUSINESS

7. **Continued discussion of rules for electronic participation during meetings**
 Mr. Bilger explained that with the Executive Order in place, meetings are permitted to be held electronically. He recommended that the Commission consider establishing a procedure to set expectations for after the Order is lifted. Mr. Warnick asked if Mr. Bilger would provide suggestions. He stated that he would and that he preferred to wait until after the Order expires, for relevance, and so that he can take into account the most up to date regulations.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Langeloh made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Crowder gave the second. The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 P.M.

GUEST LIST

1. Deb McClurg ----- 808 S. Whitley Street, Columbia City
2. Kevin Michel ----- 4242 S. 700 East, Columbia City
3. Don Armstrong ----- 671 N. Armstrong Drive, Columbia City
4. Rex “RD” Schrader ----- 1370 S. Raber Road, Columbia City
5. Doug Walker ----- 3686 E. 300 South, Columbia City
6. Dwayne Knott ----- 1722 E. Inverness Circle, Columbia City
7. Rob Kruger ----- 200 E. Main Street, Ste. 1000, Fort Wayne
8. Roger Schwartz ----- 6925 Derek Drive, Fort Wayne
9. Neal Bowman ----- 202 W. Berry Street, Fort Wayne
10. *(Illegible)* Schwartz ----- 6925 S. Derek Drive, Fort Wayne
11. Robert Doyle ----- 1503 Silver Linden Court, Fort Wayne
12. David Vincent ----- 8309 Popp Road, Fort Wayne
13. Quinlan Wall, *(address as stated during the meeting)*
 ----- 11909 Willowind Court, Fort Wayne
14. Earl Tison ----- 832 Hawthorne Lane, Columbia City
15. *(Did not sign in)* John Whiteleather – 119 S. Main Street, Columbia City