

# CITY OF WEST CHICAGO

WHERE HISTORY & PROGRESS MEET

Approved April 10, 2023

## MINUTES

### DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

February 13, 2023 6:00 P.M.

#### 1. Call to Order, Roll Call, and Establishment of a Quorum.

Alderman Rebecca Stout called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll call found Aldermen Melissa Birch Ferguson, James Beifuss, Christine Dettmann, Matthew Garling, John Jakabcsin, Jayme Sheahan and Rebecca Stout present. Alderman Stout announced a quorum.

Also in attendance was Community Development Director, Tom Dabareiner and City Planner/Assistant Director of Community Development John Sterrett.

#### 2. Approval of Minutes.

##### A. January 9, 2023.

Alderman Jakabcsin moved and Alderman Dettman seconded a motion to approve the minutes. Voting Aye: Aldermen Birch Ferguson, Beifuss, Dettmann, Garling, Jakabcsin, Sheahan and Stout.

#### 3. Public Participation.

Bob Blas spoke about wanting to preserve the railroad substation located at 900 Prince Crossing Rd.

Jeff Handel expressed several concerns regarding the proposed Wheaton Academy PUD amendment, such as an existing gravel area, landscaping replacement plan, train depot demolition, access, parking requirements and intersection visibility. He also made mention of a letter submitted by Louise Handel, which was previously distributed to the Committee members prior to the meeting.

Brian Ostberg spoke in favor of preserving the railroad substation located at 900 Prince Crossing Rd and described its historic value and the reasons and options for preservation.

#### **4. Items for Consent.**

- A. Approval of the 2023 Zoning Map** – State law requires annual approval of the official zoning map of the City.

**Alderman Birch Ferguson moved and Alderman Garling seconded a motion to approve the Item. Voting Aye: Aldermen Birch Ferguson, Beifuss, Dettmann, Garling, Jakabcsin, Sheahan and Stout.**

#### **5. Items for Discussion.**

- A. Wheaton Academy, 900 Prince Crossing Road** – Petitioner requests approval of a fifth amendment to their current Final Planned Unit Development, with the demolition of the existing Academy Hall and construction of a 2-story, 20,500 square foot addition to the Academic Building, along with other phased improvements.

Tom Dabareiner summarized this Item. He indicated the Plan Commissioners voted unanimously to recommend approval of both Items A. and B.

Alderman Dettman asked about the proposed signage at Hawthorne and Prince Crossing Rd., as it is a difficult intersection. John Sterrett indicated the signage meets the City's visibility triangle requirement, and staff believes it should not be an issue.

Alderman Garling asked about the anticipated date for the completion of the first phase. John Sterrett replied that it would be sometime in 2024. Alderman Garling indicated that would allow for enough time to move the train substation, and Mr. Sterrett agreed it would, but it would have to be worked out between a private entity and Wheaton Academy.

Alderman Beifuss asked about the gravel drive and why it will not be paved. Mr. Sterrett replied that it must be expanded or improved for an upgrade to be required. The mere removal of a building would not meet the standards for upgrade.

The Committee recognized Mr. Jeff Handel to again address the Members. Mr. Handel questioned how staff overlooked the requirement to upgrade the gravel to pavement. Mr. Dabareiner stated that staff followed the non-conforming provisions of the ordinance. Discussion ensued among Alderman Garling and Mr. Dabareiner and Mr. Sterrett regarding non-conforming surfaces. Alderman Beifuss pointed out that a PUD provides leeway to put forth certain requirements. Alderman Dettman commented that Wheaton Academy has tried to be a good neighbor and she wondered if they might be willing to upgrade the gravel surface if asked.

Steve Carlson of Wheaton Academy was recognized to speak. He stated they looked into doing it, but it would be quite expensive. They would love to figure out how to do so at some point in the future. They do not want it to be an eyesore. They are willing to carry out the Plan Commission's recommendation to install a 6-foot fence. Alderman Dettman stated that the concern about the gravel is the mess and danger that it makes. She wondered if the fencing would help. Mr. Carlson replied the gravel driveway is not actively used, and therefore gravel is not being dragged out onto the street. It serves as access to the back of the property. Alderman Garling asked who would have the responsibility to maintain the curb cuts at Prince Crossing by the Prairie Path. Mr. Dabareiner stated staff does not have an interest in closing an access point that is used for occasional drop offs. John Sterrett wondered if the Fire District would even allow for the access to be closed off. Alderman Garling asked about the location of the privacy fence. John Sterrett clarified that it would not run across this access unless they were to put up a gate.

Alderman Beifuss asked about why the substation is being demolished. Steve Carlson responded that the building was already dilapidated when they acquired this property around 2014. It costs a lot of money to maintain a building that old. They have explored options, but they are all cost prohibitive. They would use it actively if they could. Alderman Stout asked about relocating the building. Mr. Carlson stated that he has only been approached by one person in the five years he has been with the school. They would not be opposed if someone were to move it.

Alderman Garling asked about the fence location. He expressed wanting to see the fence extended across the driveway to block the view of the gravel yard and maintenance shed as this is a main thoroughfare and along the Prairie Path. Steve Carlson stated he agrees that a privacy fence with a gate in this location would be a good idea.

Alderman Beifuss indicated that the fencing and landscaping requirements should made part of the PUD. Mr. Sterrett agreed that staff would make these revisions. Alderman Beifuss asked about the lighting near the tennis courts. Mr. Sterrett said they had previously received approval in 2015 for lighting in this location, and that it would be property shielded.

Alderman Beifuss stated that the substation has historical significance, and he would like to see it preserved. Tom Dabareiner said that this is a private matter. Alderman Beifuss asked if it is landmarked, and Mr. Dabareiner said it is not. Alderman Beifuss asked what the timeframe is for its demolition, and Mr. Carlson replied by summer of 2024.

**Alderman Garling moved and Alderman Birch Ferguson seconded a motion to approve Item with a fencing requirement added. Voting Aye: Aldermen Birch Ferguson, Beifuss, Dettmann, Garling, Jakabcsin, Sheahan and Stout.**

- B. The Crusher, 629-651 W. Washington Street** – Petitioner requests approval of an amendment to their Special Use Permit (SUP). The amendment will allow them to proceed with a previously approved, but expired, phasing plan under their SUP.

Tom Dabareiner updated the members on this Item, stating the petitioner was not able to complete the site improvements in time, but they are willing to do so.

Alderman Beifuss asked about their completion date. John Sterrett replied that Phase I is to be completed by December 31, 2024 and Phase II is to be completed by December 31, 2026. Alderman Beifuss asked about a dumpster located on the property and wondered if it is to code. John Sterrett stated the applicant has made great strides to clean up the front of the property in the past few months and nothing is being stored in front of the property any longer.

**Alderman Birch Ferguson moved and Alderman Sheahan seconded a motion to approve Item B. Voting Aye: Aldermen Birch Ferguson, Beifuss, Dettmann, Garling, Jakabcsin, Sheahan and Stout.**

## **6. Unfinished Business.**

- A. Discussion of Architectural Design Guidelines** – A copy of the related code is included with the packet. City Staff will be present to discuss interpretation and take direction on possible updates from Committee Members.

Alderman Beifuss spoke about some of the reasons for the purpose of the City's Appearance Code such as to promote orderly and harmonious growth, attractiveness and cohesiveness, and to encourage high quality design. He pointed to some recent examples of high quality, new and remodel construction projects completed around the City. These types of developments protect property values. Alderman Beifuss stated the building next door to City Hall does not meet the City's Appearance Code on a couple of points: 1) The slate materials used are shingle-like in terms of how they look and how they are fastened to the building and therefore, they are not in keeping with the intent of the Code. 2) The overall look of this building is not harmonious with the surrounding properties. Many people have told him it is unattractive. Mr. Dabareiner disagreed, stating he believes the building is attractive and more modern, and that having a variety of architectural styles is important.

Alderman Stout asked if there is any language changes to propose to the Appearance Code. Alderman Beifuss replied that the acceptable materials of brick or stone should include cladding as unacceptable. The other important aspect is education.

Alderman Sheahan asked if the people objecting to the building design are materials experts or if anyone inquired about how the slate was affixed. She does not see the point in changing the City ordinances for everything to look the same.



Alderman Garling stated good points have been made. He asked if the Code's intent could be enhanced by adding examples to it.

Alderman Birch Ferguson stated that she agrees with Alderman Sheahan. She likes the way the building looks. It is different and therefore stands out. She sees no reason to change the Code. Alderman Dettman expressed that the building appearance is growing on her, and added that people who dislike something are more likely to express their opinions.

Alderman Beifuss proposed having a companion document that would be educational in terms of providing example documents as an addendum to account for changes in staff over time.

Mr. Dabareiner cautioned that the additional costs for the high quality materials of potential downtown apartment developments may come out of the TIF, as the costs would not be covered by the developers' rents.

Alderman Birch Ferguson asked staff to prepare a companion document and bring it back to the Committee for discussion.

**7. New Business.** None.

**8. Reports from Staff.**

Mr. Dabareiner invited the members to attend the Plan Commissioner training on March 21, 2023.

**9. Adjournment.**

**Alderman Birch Ferguson moved, and Alderman Dettman seconded the motion to adjourn the Development Committee meeting at 7:27 p.m. The motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Burke