

Minutes
Huntington Planning Commission
July 5, 2022

A meeting of the City of Huntington Planning Commission was held on July 5, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. *Mr. Gallagher* called the meeting to order.

Members Present: Gerry Holley, Sharon Pell, Sean Hornbuckle, Stephanie Vlahos Bryant, Sarah Walling, Ursulette Ward, Carl Eastham, Holly Smith Mount

Members Absent: Brian Gallagher

Staff Present: Breanna Shell, Planning Director
Ericka Hernandez, Assistant City Attorney
Patricia Usher, Zoning Officer

Ms. Mount made a motion to approve the June Minutes as presented; *Mr. Eastham* seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the Minutes were approved.

PC 22-RZ-05

A petition to rezone property to R-5 Multi-Family Residential District from R-2 Single-Family Residential District. This property is located along the north side of 4th Avenue and west of 28th Street and includes 2736, 2738, 2742, and 2746 4th Avenue.

Petitioner: JTH Rentals, LLC. 1 Official Plaza, Madison, WV

Tom Elkins, 105 N. Ridge Dr., St. Albans, representative of JTH Rentals, presented the petition. He informed the Commissioners that John Thomas Handley, property owner, is a Marshall graduate and very familiar with the Huntington area. He bought the Emmons property several years ago and would like to rezone the property to construct affordable, multi-family housing that is intended to be owner occupied. He explained that the maintenance of the property would be taken care of for the owners. They are considering three to four structures with four to six units each with driveway access from the alley and the parking in the rear. The original retaining wall on 4th Ave. would remain. A large amount of the property would be reserved for green space and stormwater management, and for the residents to have a common area to use.

Mr. Eastham – How many stories would each building have?

Mr. Elkins claimed two is the intent right now, but no more than three.

Ms. Mount – The development would have off-street parking?

Mr. Elkins confirmed there would be off-street parking in the rear. He passed around a conceptual drawing to the Commissioners and the public, a copy of which has been included in the record.

Ms. Walling – Does Mr. Handley have any other properties in the area?

Mr. Elkins explained that Mr. Handley does not have other properties in the area other than his own residence and for children in college.

Ms. Mount – You stated these would be owner occupied, but the company has “rentals” in the name?

Mr. Elkins explained it is just the name Mr. Handley went with when the company was started many years ago. Mr. Handley has other owner occupied properties elsewhere.

Ms. Shell presented the Staff Report.

M. Walling – This hearing is just for a rezoning to allow for other uses for future development must come back before this Commission for approval?

Ms. Shell confirmed, yes, the petition is for a rezoning only which would allow for more uses. The development of a property which is over an acre, such as this, must come before this commission for approval; and added that any proposed plans presented this evening would not be binding.

Pat Jones, 2564 3rd Ave., had many of his questions from the first meeting answered, but is concerned about funding of the project and the lots to the west, which have been included into the rezoning request. He wonders why this rezoning does not include housing to the south, and believes it should be. He additionally has concerns about the properties becoming rentals, access from the alley, vacant housing in neighborhood, and that it would be hard to sell property in this area.

Sarah Dolin, 2739 4th Ave, across the street from the petitioner's property, mentioned the downward trend in neighborhood; concerns about construction traffic, parking, and speeding on 4th Ave.; the poor infrastructure in the area; the narrow alley being proposed as an access point for the property; maintenance of the property and sufficient green space; and management of foot and vehicle traffic. She also expressed concern that if the project were to fail, who would buy the property and the possibility of excess multi-family housing.

Sarah Deeming, 2736 4th Ave., whose property is part of the proposed rezoning, express similar concerns about infrastructure, stormwater management, the poor quality of the alley, and maintenance. She added that the area has major issues with the sewage lines and believes 12-16 more units would be hard to support. She reminded the Commissioners this an area of mostly families with kids and those types of people should be in those homes.

Anthony Scriven, 2760 Highlawn Ave., shares concerns of his neighbors, but stated that "without change how can we expect things to get better?" Mr. Scriven is in favor of the project.

Mr. Elkins confirmed that JTH Rentals has plenty of capital and the ability to acquire financing for the project, and there would be no issue finishing the project. He admitted that the issues brought be the neighborhood have yet to be addressed, but would be taken care of during the design process; the alley, capacity of the sewer and other infrastructure, and maintenance of the property. It is important for them to know what can be built prior to investing in studies and plans that will address all of the issues discussed. Mr. Elkins is familiar with the major subdivision process and assured that the proposal presented to them will steam out these issues. In regards to the maintenance, all units will be part of an HOA with monthly fees for maintenance of the property; homeownership will be condition of the deed and a stipulation of the purchase.

Ms. Walling reiterated Mr. Elkins claim that this issues brought forward by the public are issues that would be addressed in the design process and cannot be addressed at this time without knowing what type of development will be allowed.

Public comment was closed.

Mr. Eastham gave a history of the sewer and water systems and the alley in this area of the city in his experience as a fire fighter.

Ms. Walling assured the public that ARPA funds have been dedicated to updating of the utility systems in that area of the city.

There was discussion among the Commissioners to send the proposal to Council with a neutral recommendation which was discouraged by Ms. Hernandez as the Planning Commission is an advisory board and a neutral recommendation would not be a recommendation.

Mr. Eastham made a motion to forward the petition with a favorable recommendation to City Council; *Mr. Hornbuckle* seconded the motion. Motion passed to forwarded a favorable recommendation by a vote of 8 Yes to 0 No.

Good and Welfare

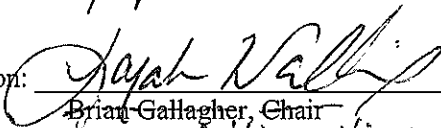
Sarah Deeming spoke on issues of theft, breaking and entering, drug addicts, delinquent teenage vandals, and vacant homes in the Highlawn neighborhood.

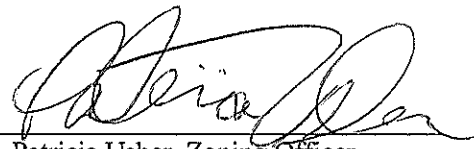
Linda Blough spoke of Highlawn's need for help in the neighborhood with vagrants and delinquent landlords.

Pat Jones spoke of the issue of employment in the police department.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Date approved: 9/16/2022

Chairperson: 
~~Brian Gallagher, Chair~~
Sarah Walling, Vice Chair

Prepared by: 
Patricia Usher, Zoning Officer

