

SUMMARY MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION HELD AUGUST 4, 2015

1. CALL TO ORDER – 6:30 P.M.
2. ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS – Those Present: John Sullivan, Chairman; Steve Hannan, Vice Chairman; John Crouse, Secretary; Brandee Caswell, David Goff, Patricia Connell.

It was moved by Mr. Sullivan to excuse Mr. Rothschild from the meeting.

The following votes were cast on the motion:

Those voting Yes: Caswell, Goff, Hannan, Sullivan, Crouse, Connell.

The motion carried.

ALSO PRESENT: Rita McConnell, Community Development Director; Rob Smetana, Planning Manager; Randall Sampson, Sr. Ass't. City Attorney; Cheryl Drake, Planner; John Firouzi, Traffic, Joan Brown, Recording Secretary.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR JULY 21, 2015 - The minutes of July 21st stand approved as printed.
4. GENERAL BUSINESS – None
5. REPORTS - None
6. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE -
7. PUBLIC HEARINGS -

PDP2015-0002 HILTON GARDEN INN PREL. DEV. PLAN, 5445 & 5475 WADSWORTH BLVD. HE2015-0001 HILTON GARDEN INN HEIGHT EXCEPTION

Mr. Sullivan disclosed the following: I have engaged in conversations, both face-to-face and online, with a variety of people and over a wide range of policy issues, including urban renewal, tax increment financing, development incentives, and the like. Some of those policy or philosophical discussions referenced this particular site and project, but those discussions did not relate to the site-specific land use matters before the Planning Commission tonight – a preliminary development plan and height exception. I have not prejudged this application and am confident that I can be fair and impartial in considering this case tonight.

The public hearing was opened.

Mr. Sullivan entered into the record staff report PDP2015-0002, HE2015-0001, dated 8-4-15, the posting log and affidavit of mailing.

Maureen Phair, Executive Director of the Arvada Urban Renewal Authority, was present and stated twelve years ago it was a goal of the Urban Renewal Authority to secure a hotel in the City of Arvada. She further gave a brief history of the proposed site.

Mr. Scott Somerville, Renascent Hospitality, stated they have been working with AURA for approximately 4 years and referred to a slide presentation showing the location of the site. He felt there was a demand for this hotel in Arvada.

Mr. Todd Parker, Brinkman Partners, stated his expertise was development management. He talked about the limited constraints of the infill site. He said this was an ideal site for the proposed hotel.

Mr. Somerville referred to the neighborhood meetings that were held and stated the proposal is the result of all the input received from the citizens and staff. He stated they are using colors similar to those in the Olde Town area. He further stated there will be 139 hotel suites, meeting and event rooms, a full service restaurant, indoor pool and hot tub, and fitness center. He stated they are estimating approximately 55,000-60,000 guests to stay at the hotel over the course of a year. He referred to a slide showing the views looking southwest towards the front range and west from W. 55th Ave. He said they are sitting in a bowl, so the elevation is similar to that of a 3-story building. He talked about the elevations of the building, and the landscape plan.

Mr. Parker referred to the site plan and the buffer along the west side of the property. He talked about the proposed height exception and stated because of the topography, they are comparable with the 4-story apartment buildings to the west. He talked about request for a minor modification regarding the parking requirements.

Mr. Neil Greenfield stated he would like to see an overlay of the proposed building and the existing building. He wanted to see what the view corridor would look like.

Ms. Cindi Kreutzer stated she was concerned about the height of the proposed building. She was also concerned about the project being a viable plan even with the height exception. She talked about the approval criteria and did not feel it was being met. She also was concerned about setting a precedent for other buildings asking for height exceptions.

Mr. Somerville stated the presentation included some of the renderings of the site plan. He further stated the topography of the site reduces the visual impact of the building.

There being no one else wishing to speak, the public input portion of the hearing was closed.

Ms. Caswell asked if the applicants would be the operators of the hotel.

Mr. Somerville explained that this project will have an owner, developer, and an operator. He further stated they are the operator of this project.

Ms. Caswell asked why the applicant chose the Hilton brand for their hotel.

Mr. Somerville stated the Hilton and Marriott are generally the two best brands that you can get in the hotel business.

Ms. Caswell asked if 4-stories would be a possibility.

Mr. Somerville stated 4-stories would not give us the number of rooms needed to make the project financially viable.

Ms. Caswell asked about the concerns related to buffer for those residences to the north of the project.

Mr. Somerville stated it was important to maintain the views from Grandview which have been maintained in this project. He said at the height of the project compared to the residences to the north, they are within a 4 or 5 foot difference to the top of those projects to the north. He further stated the views to the north are being preserved.

Mr. Crouse referred to the Economic Viability Study, and asked how much of an impact did the opening of the Gold Line have in that study, and is that a critical factor to the success of the hotel.

Mr. Somerville stated it is seen as an amenity to the project, but it would not have made or broken the viability of the hotel. He further said it is a great benefit to the guests.

Mr. Hannan asked for clarification of the proposed height.

Mr. Parker referred to a plan and explained the various heights of adjacent buildings. He further explained they will be one-story taller than the parapets of the apartment buildings.

Mr. Hannan questioned the proposed traffic onto W. 55th Ave. and onto Olde Wadsworth with the estimated 50-60,000 guests.

John Firouzi stated the peak hour traffic amounts to 72 morning peak hour trips, and 82 afternoon peak hour trips, and that the current street system can adequately handle these trips..

Mr. Hannan asked if there were other 5-story buildings in the City.

Cheryl Drake stated the Loft Building in the Water Tower is 5-story, Marcella Manor along Wadsworth is 5-story, and the Arvada House adjacent to K-Mart is 5-story.

Mr. Goff asked if the roof-top mechanical equipment would be higher than the 57 foot height.

Mr. Parker explained the heating and cooling will be handled within the rooms and will be hidden within the architecture on the exterior façade. He further stated the rooftop units will be mounted over the restaurant and convention area on the first floor. Those units will be screened.

Ms. Connell asked if staff was comfortable with the requested parking adjustment.

Cheryl Drake stated yes.

Mr. Sullivan asked about the proposed trips.

John Firouzi stated the numbers are based on the number of rooms.

Mr. Sullivan asked what the benefits regarding the height would be to the City.

Maureen Phair stated this would benefit the surrounding businesses and generating more sales tax.

Ms. Caswell asked what the anticipated life of the project.

Mr. Somerville stated it is a 20-year agreement.

Ms. Caswell asked if the proposed 57 foot request would be a new high water mark for the Arvada City Center area.

Cheryl Drake stated the request would be about 2 feet higher than the 55 foot height exception granted for the Loft Building. She further stated there was a height exception granted for the stair towers on the parking garage for 55 feet.

Ms. Caswell asked what other 5-story buildings are located within the Arvada City Center.

Cheryl Drake stated Park Place and the Loft Building are located in the Arvada City Center. The other 5-story buildings mentioned previously are outside of the Center. She further stated there is an element of our Comprehensive Plan, Transit Framework Plan, and the goal of establishing that plan was for density to be developed around the transit station, and specifically noted 6-stories would be appropriate if it was compatible with the adjacent character of the buildings. She further stated any consideration of a height exception should be considered as a goal for this particular area.

Ms. Caswell referred to Approval Criteria B regarding the applicant adhering to parking, screening, setbacks, bulk, and landscaping. She questioned the finding that it complies, when they are requesting exceptions.

Cheryl Drake explained that it does comply as the Land Development Code allows for modifications in PUD developments. She further explained the PUD process of establishing development criteria and the flexibility necessary to allow for creative and superior design.

Mr. Sullivan asked about the views from the Water Tower buildings into the proposed project.

Cheryl Drake stated there is a significant distance between the residential structure and the hotel. She said the structures that are close to the hotel are the garages, so there is not a substantial impact to those adjacent residences.

Ms. Connell questioned the neighborhood meetings and said it was stated there was general consensus by the people in attendance they were in agreement.

Mr. Somerville stated the citizens asked for more input, therefore a second meeting was held. He said the proposal was in line with what the citizens wanted to see.

Ms. Connell felt the Gold Line was a selling point for the hotel.

Mr. Somerville stated it is viewed as an amenity for the hotel.

MOTION:

It was moved by Mr. Crouse that PDP2015-0002, Hilton Garden Inn Preliminary Development Plan, located at 5445 & 5475 Wadsworth Boulevard, be recommended to City Council for approval.

This motion is based on the findings of fact and approval criteria on Pages 8 & 9 of the staff report.

DISCUSSION OF MOTION:

Ms. Caswell said she felt it was a good project and a use that we need. She had concerns with height and overall aesthetics; for something that is going to set a high water mark in a very important part of Arvada, it needs to be exceptional to qualify for that kind of an exception. She said this is a kind of product that is going to be around for 30+ years, and it needs to be exceptionally good to get these kinds of exceptions in the place where you identified it to be.

Mr. Hannan stated he shared those concerns. Grandview is more than corridors of sight. From the 1800's you could see Fairview Cemetery, and you could see forever towards the south and towards the west. He said his concern is that once it is approved and built, we may lose Grandview forever. You can still see Mt. Evans, but we may not be able to see the flat tops, or we may not be able to see Green Mountain anymore, or Olinger Cemetery. His biggest concern is what it is going to do to Arvada over the next 20 to 30 years.

Mr. Goff stated he had some of the same concerns applying exceptions to height and some of the landscape requirements. He also said it is a difficult space to build in, and we have a great sports complex and people have to leave the City for accommodations. He stated based on the criteria, he will be voting in favor.

Mr. Sullivan stated he would be voting in favor as well. He wanted to point out that this particular motion is about the PDP and not about the height exception. He stated the issues are around the parking and landscaping, and he felt they were reasonable adjustments as explained by staff.

Mr. Crouse stated being on the north side of Arvada there are a number of hotels very close to where he lives, and none of them are in Arvada. He stated there are two Walmarts near him neither of which are in Arvada. He felt there clearly was a demand for this product, and the proposal before us bestows that benefit upon Arvada; it could very easily go to our neighbor.

The following votes were cast on the motion:

Those voting Yes: Goff, Hannan, Sullivan, Crouse, Connell.

Those voting No: Caswell.

Those absent: Rothschild.

The motion carried.

It was moved by Mr. Crouse that HE2015-0001, Hilton Garden Inn Height Exception to allow up to 57 feet, located at 5445 & 5475 Wadsworth Boulevard, be recommended to City Council for approval.

This motion is based on the findings of fact and approval criteria on Pages 9 & 10 of the staff report.

DISCUSSION OF MOTION:

Ms. Caswell suggested that there be a discussion about what the relevance is of the 35 foot height requirement given what we are doing here. She said she does like the project in many ways, but it just seems that the height is driven by the pro forma. There are other economic issues that have been touched upon by others in the audience and a 4-story structure appears to be possible, at least from the testimony, so I think it would serve us well to work a little harder to make this product fit a little bit better aesthetically with our view corridor.

Mr. Hannan said criteria C has minimal effect upon adjacent properties for height; criteria F is character of the proposed building or structure that will exceed 35 feet in height are or will be compatible with existing development on surrounding or adjacent parcels. He said 57 feet seems to be a little too much for him, and based on those criteria, he will be voting against the motion.

Mr. Sullivan said a lot of good points have been raised tonight. Ms. Kreutzer asked the question and Ms. Caswell kind of alluded to it – why have the 35 foot limits, and why do we keep having

exceptions. He said we have a Land Development Code amendment coming up, maybe we need to look at that if we are having so many exceptions and maybe more impact statements could be written around that requirement. He said for him some of the key things in the testimony came around the fact that it sits in a hole, there is a grade separation between it and the adjacent properties. He said the view corridor diagram was extremely helpful because he could visualize what it was going to look like.

Mr. Crouse countered by saying some of that work has already been done as staff has noted that the Transit Oriented Development Plan that has been through this public process does contemplate up to 6-stories within that transit oriented development area. So, that variation from the 35 feet has been contemplated through that Transit Oriented Development Plan, and this is lower than what is allowed in that plan.

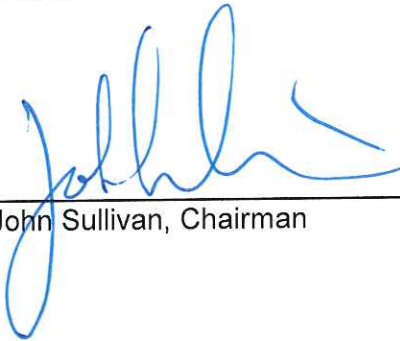
Mrs. Connell commented that perhaps this is the start of necessary things or approaches to some adjustments because of the Arvada City Center and the development there.

The following votes were cast on the motion:
Those voting Yes: Goff, Sullivan, Crouse, Connell.
Those voting No: Caswell, Hannan.
Those absent: Rothschild.
The motion carried.


8. OTHER ITEMS –

The next meeting is scheduled for August 18, 2015.

9. MEETING ADJOURNED – 7:50 P.M.



John Sullivan, Chairman



John Crouse, Secretary



Joan Brown, Recording Secretary