



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

Evidentiary Hearing

SUMMARY

Public Hearing

Zoning Map Amendment

12th & Exeter Parcel MC to R3

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

Following the Conditional Use Hearing for 2040 Centre Ave.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

J. Cepeda-Freytiz, C. Daubert in person and W. Butler and M. Ventura virtually

OTHERS PRESENT:

M. Gombar, Esq. L. Kelleher, S Calluori and Jerome Skrincosky

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz called the hearing to order at approximately 7:00 pm.

M. Gombar stated the purpose of this hearing is obtain public comment on the proposed recommendation from the Planning Commission for the Zoning Map change of 1716 N. 12th Street parcel from MC to R3. He stated that the agenda packet contains all the exhibits showing the advertisement, the notice posted, the application with the site plan, the City and County Planning recommendations and the Planning Commission minutes.

A copy of the Agenda Packet was provided to Mr. Mooney, Esq. representing the applicant, MPG Acquisitions, LLC.

I. Testimony from Applicant

Mr. Mooney explained that the residential hall project has been before the Zoning and Planning Boards for over a year and objections to the project should have occurred during that time period. He stated during the review process the Planning Commission discovered that the parcel for the project is within the Institutional Overlay zone is mainly zoned as R-3 with a small section zoned as MC and they recommended a Zoning Map amendment to cure this issue. He noted that a dorm is an allowable use within the Institutional Overlay district and that the rejection of the proposed amendment will not stop this project from being completed. He noted that this amendment is being sought only to comply with the recommendation of the City Planning Commission.

II. Public Comment (No More than 3 minutes per speaker)

Rebecca Reppert, of Hampden Blvd., was not present.

Joe Reedy, of Locust St., stated that he is opposed to this project. He expressed the belief that until this hearing there was no opportunity for public input and no public notice about opportunities for public comment. He questioned why the newspaper article about the groundbreaking for the residential hall last week contained information about tonight's public hearing. He expressed the belief that limiting public notice to only properties within a few hundred feet of the project is too limited.

Mr. Reedy questioned if a new dorm is needed and he noted the trash strewn around the existing dorms. He expressed the belief that this project will damage the environment and noted the need to retain this vacant lot. He again expressed opposition to the residential hall project as the parking needs of the students residing in the hall will spill into the public parking spaces relied on by the residential properties across the street. He asked City Council to reject the proposed change to the Zoning Map.

Robert Hertzog, of Locust St., was not present.

Richard Siggins, of Exeter St., was not present.

III. Rebuttal from Applicant

Mr. Mooney stated that the residence hall will house approximately 300 Albright students and it includes approximately 130 parking spaces. He stated that the parcel is central to the overall Albright campus and that students generally do not use cars to get to and from Albright classes. He noted that Albright's existing dorms require updating and they cannot be taken offline without another area for students to reside.

Mr. Mooney stated that the City's process requires the applicant to hold a public hearing prior to the submission of the application and that hearing was held in Roessner Hall in February with notices sent to the list of properties provided by the Zoning Office. He stated that the hearing was held at 5:30 pm, a stenographer was present and no members of the public arrived between 5:30 and 6:15 when the hearing was concluded as only the applicant and Albright staff were in attendance. A copy of the transcript is included with the application. He added that it is unreasonable to purchase a home across from an undeveloped seven (7) acre lot and expect that the lot will never undergo development. He stated that the denial of the Zoning Map change will not stop the project as the parcel is located within the Institutional Overlay zone.

Mr. Reedy requested the ability to comment. The request was granted.

Mr. Reedy again expressed the belief that the lack of public notice to the surrounding properties did not afford the public with an opportunity to provide input about this project.

There was no further testimony.

Mr. Daubert moved, seconded by Ms. Ventura, to adjourn the hearing at approximately 7:15 pm.

*Respectfully Submitted by
Linda A. Kelleher, CMC, City Clerk*