

MINUTES

FRANKLIN CITY PLAN COMMISSION

March 19, 2024

Members Present

Joe Abban	Member
Suzanne Findley	Member
Norm Gabehart	Member
Debbie Gill	Member
Georganna Haltom	Vice President
Jim Martin	Secretary
Irene Nalley	Member
Mark Richards	Member

Others Present

Lynn Gray	Legal Counsel
Joanna Tennell	Senior Planner II

Members Not Present

John Kempski	President
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Call to Order

Georganna Haltom, Vice President, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call & Determination of Quorum

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes

January 16, 2024 – Jim Martin moved to approve the minutes. Suzanne Findley seconded. Passed unanimously, 8-0.

Swearing In

Lynn Gray swore en masse all intending to speak during the proceedings.

Report of Officers and Committees: January 25, 2024 – Joanna Tennell reported on four agenda items. The first was the Bluffs at Youngs Creek, Section 5B which is on approximately 15.5 acres just south of the Bluffs at Youngs Creek, Section 5A. It is part of the subdivision on the west side of town near Windstar and Franklin Lakes. Section 5 went before Technical Review Committee previously and then the developer decided they needed to split the development into smaller sections. That resulted in Sections 5A and 5B. The next two agenda items were the construction plans for Winterfield, Section 1 and Section 2. This is located on the west side of Hurricane Road just north of Heritage subdivision. Section 1 had gone before Technical Review Committee previously with those two sections combined as one. Due to construction timing and anticipating the desire to begin home construction earlier

than previously planned, they requested the development be split into two sections resulting in Section 1 and Section 2. Both sections will likely begin construction simultaneously. They have begun construction of the storm sewer running from Hurricane Creek across the Legends Golf Course and along the north side of what used to be the Indiana Golf Association. That is where all the subdivision drainage is received. The fourth agenda item was Innovation Park at Franklin College PUD (Planned Unit Development) Concept Plan which will be heard at this meeting.

Old Business

None.

New Business

PC-24-04 (PUD Concept Plan): Innovation Park at Franklin College – Ms. Tennell reported that staff had received a letter on March 15 requesting a continuance of this petition. It was not received by the deadline for granting an automatic continuance. Due to the nature of the project, staff suggested the Plan Commission allow the petitioner to give their presentation and hold a public hearing allowing for concerns and questions to be shared. Following the public hearing, the Plan Commission would have opportunity to ask questions and consider the continuance, granting or denying. It is at the discretion of Plan Commission as to how they would wish to proceed. Attorney Gray outlined the procedural steps for this petition.

Ms. Tennell presented this request for review and approval of a PUD (Planned Unit Development) Concept Plan on approximately 250 acres. The property is located on the north side of Park Avenue and west of Umbarger Lane. It is currently zoned RS-1 (Residential: Suburban One) and RT-1 (Residential: Traditional One). The intent of a PUD (Planned Unit Development) zoning district is to provide greater flexibility in the design of a development. This evening's request and presentation is the first step in the process. It is the PUD (Planned Unit Development) Concept Plan. The next step will be the Detailed Plan which will be filed at a later date. The Detailed Plan will go before Technical Review Committee and then back before Plan Commission. Plan Commission is to provide a recommendation that is forwarded to City Council for introduction and a second meeting for a public hearing at which they could take official action. The plan details were in a document distributed with the agenda to the Plan Commission, the petitioner and available to the public. The project was heard at the Technical Review Committee meeting held on January 25th. Revisions were made and received by staff. Also submitted by e-mail and distributed with the agenda was a letter received from Mr. Steve Yount presenting concerns on behalf of his family.

The president of Franklin College, Kerry Prather, introduced the evolution of this project. In 2006 Franklin College purchased 250 acres of farmland just east of the campus. It was to address outdoor athletic facility needs. Grizzly Park was created. The rest of the property has remained active farmland. Franklin College has received a one percent return annually on this investment. Approximately two years ago significant developer interest began. The College wanted to attract high tech industry to Franklin. The plan model is one of institutions inviting industries to locate on a college campus. This gives the industries the advantage of the talent pipeline being produced on a campus and the college has the advantage of providing students practical experience while they are in school and career opportunities upon graduation. Three high-tech industries are already interested in locating at Innovation Park. They've signed Memoranda of Agreements. Two are in life sciences and one in automated mobility. The planned space would include office areas and research and development type areas where Franklin College students could be alongside the professionals in these industries. 96% of last year's graduating class found employment in the state of Indiana but not many in the City of Franklin. The rest of the property would subsequently be developed in a manner consistent with city needs. Franklin College would like the property to be an advantage to both the college and the city.

Attorney Tim Ochs of Ice Miller represented the petitioner and presented the Concept Plan. Their desire is for a mixed-use project. The intensities of the land uses are intentionally graduated beginning with the less intense uses on the north and west sides, moving south and east to the more intense uses. Single-family detached residences would be across from other single-family homes. The more intense office innovation district and industrial uses are planned to the south and east. Adequate access is provided by a main east-west road connecting Umbarger Lane.

South Milford Drive also is planned to be extended through the development. And there are additional staff-directed stub streets. One will go from the roundabout and one from the east-west road to the south in case that property should be developed. Site features include a topographic fall from the northeast to the southwest, so detention is planned for the south end of the property. That area would be kept open and the wooded area maintained. This will also serve as a buffer between some of the uses and adjoining properties. The development is designed to be divided into six primary areas, and Attorney Ochs reviewed the proposed particulars of each section per their submitted document dated March 4, 2024.

Ms. Haltom opened a public hearing. Remonstrator Steve Yount, resident of 1543 Williamsburg Lane in the neighborhood just north of and bounded by the area for detached, single-family homes area, addressed his concerns regarding the development as submitted in a written letter to the Plan Commission offered in to the record as directed by City Attorney Gray as Exhibit A. The letter included five considerations Mr. Yount believed needed to be considered by Plan Commission in their decision about this project.

David Yount, resident, remonstrated, believing this to not be a good PUD (Planned Unit Development) or Concept Plan based on his experience as the attorney for the Bargersville Plan Commission. Usually a unique circumstance dictates the need for a PUD (Planned Unit Development). Mr. Yount did not believe there is any justification for this project. He proposed starting with parceling off and rezoning the Innovative Park area abutting Umbarger Lane. He additionally suggested speaking with custom builders for the residential build sections and maintained there is not enough housing in Franklin for young professionals with high paying jobs. He appealed to the Plan Commission to reject the petition due to not meeting any of the five criteria under Indiana Code.

Rene Olibo lives in Jefferson Estates, just north of the open field. He expressed his agreement with the Younts. He spoke of frequent flooding in his area. Drains flood at a pond just east of him and rise two-thirds of the way up his driveway which is on a significant incline. He requested the plan be studied more.

Isaac Henry is a resident on Decourcy Court. His property butts up against the detached residential section. He asked if the inference was that the order of actual development will be the same as Attorney Ochs' presentation order.

Attorney Ochs answered that there is no set order to the development although most likely the innovative office space would be first. He stated that their Concept Plan presents a classic transition from one type of use to another based on traditional planning principles. Attorney Ochs also explained that the five required criteria as presented by the Younts are not actually criteria required to be demonstrated but just an ask of the Plan Commission and Council to give due regard. The petitioner maintained that very few college graduates would be able to afford to live in custom-built homes. Current planning suggests that the best and most viable communities are those with a variety of residential uses to address different needs and desires of residents. Attorney Ochs maintained this project to be what PUDs (Planned Unit Development) are made for, and they are very amenable to working with the city on any desired modifications.

The public hearing was closed. Mr. Martin asked if they are willing to scale back the plan to just the innovation park. Mr. Ochs responded no. The flexible components would be density, setbacks and minimum lot sizes.

Attorney Gray asked what the total acreage of Franklin College's existing campus currently is in its entirety. Franklin College Facilities Manager Tom Patz responded that the campus currently occupies 140 acres.

Ms. Findley asked the projected price range for the housing. Attorney Ochs said they didn't know at this time. Determination will be made not only on the basis of lot size and setbacks but also character and design elements.

Ms. Tennell explained a number of different options that could be taken in response to the Concept Plan before the Commission at this meeting. It could be approved as is and the petitioner would proceed with the Detailed Plan. It could be approved with modifications. The Commission could provide direction on specifics. This would give the

petitioner and staff an idea of which direction the Plan Commission would like to see the project go. The Commission could deny the project as is. The petitioner would then have to refile a new Concept Plan and begin the process over. Any official action could also be continued, providing information on any suggested modifications. The Plan Commission must decide whether they choose to give direction now with modifications or proceed with the petitioner working out more details and coming back before Plan Commission. If the modifications are substantially different from the current presentation, continuance is the most advisable.

Ms. Haltom asked if there are currently interested parties for the tech park. Attorney Ochs confirmed that there are. Ms. Haltom additionally inquired whether other types of businesses are being considered such as restaurants and shops. Attorney Ochs assured that a multitude of uses are under consideration.

Joe Abban believed the proposed housing is supported by younger people today, looking to Fishers and Carmel as examples. Much of their building currently features high-rise and dense apartment builds with small square footage. Mr. Abban sees this project fitting in well to the Franklin community.

Ms. Haltom asked if any feasibility study has been conducted to determine market desires and demands for housing. President Prather stated that Franklin College conducted a feasibility study surveying members of the community. Affordable housing along with childcare was one of the foremost desires that came out of the study. President Prather added that what they envision in addition to the first building, with the three tenants already signed on to the project, is a co-working, incubation space for entrepreneurs and solo practitioners who can work with the college students. Franklin College also has an additional, confidential Memoranda of Agreement with another higher education institution to combine forces in a second classroom lab building specifically for health sciences education and a collaborative nursing program. Genovis also did work on asset mapping currently in existence in Franklin along with economic impact.

Ms. Haltom asked what “massing” means. Attorney Ochs explained that massing is a planning tool where the form is put in to a primary role. An example is that the placement and design of a particular building in a streetscape should look acceptable and blended with its surroundings. It should have appropriate scale and vibrancy.

Norm Gabehart asked how much of the property Franklin College will maintain or sell. President Prather anticipated all developable areas beyond Innovation Park will ultimately be sold. Ms. Tennell identified that who owns, retains or sells does not impact the land use. She added that the level of detailed information provided in the Concept Plan is well beyond normal and appreciated in anticipation of the types of questions the Plan Commission would ask. Staff would appreciate additional direction from the Commission on the Concept Plan in its generality. A number of elements in this Concept Plan are normally part of the Detailed Plan.

Ms. Findley asked if the petitioner would be open to making the detached residential on larger lots. Attorney Ochs assured they would be willing to consider such.

Mr. Abban spoke in support of approving the Concept Plan with modifications to the residential portion of the plan. Attorney Gray reminded that approval of the Concept Plan means the next step is the Detailed Plan. Discussion was held on elements of the residential development details in an effort to determine what direction the Plan Commission would choose to take on the development at this meeting. Staff also provided a plan mark up with the agenda and which was also made available to the public. Ms. Tennell maintained staff’s need for direction from the Commission as to next steps. Her understanding was the Commission’s desire to consider larger lots for the detached residential and to determine how many units in one structure for the attached residential along with one or two-story structures. Ms. Haltom asked for petitioner’s proposed squared footage per unit in the attached residential. Attorney Ochs said a PUD allows them to define that as they choose.

Mr. Gabehart reiterated the Commission’s concerns on the single-family residential and suggested that staff has more knowledge about need, consistency and blend for Franklin on floor plans. He desired staff to work with the developer to determine a plan most desirable for the city to resubmit before Plan Commission.

Mark Richards made a motion to continue the petition with the the purpose of allowing staff and petitioner time to discuss the residential development portion of the PUD in further detail. Seconded by Mr. Gabehart. Passed unanimously, 8-0.

Ms. Tennell announced this case to be continued to the April 16th Plan Commission meeting held in Council Chambers at 6pm. Any new agenda items for that meeting will be after this case as it will be docketed under Old Business. Attorney Gray reiterated the order of a Concept Plan, Detailed Plan, Technical Review Committee and review by City Council. Additional notification of the April 16th meeting will not be given.

Other Business

Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion for adjournment was made and seconded, passing unanimously 8-0.

Respectfully submitted this 16th day of April, 2024.

John Kempski, President

Jim Martin, Secretary