REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2022
Council Chambers, City Hall & Virtual on WebEx
7:00 P.M.

The meeting was held both virtually and in-person. Members of the public had access via https://webex.com, the WebEx application, and via telephone.

Start: 7:00 PM
End: 9:26 PM

1. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was made.

2. Roll Call

Present: Commissioner Thomas Pattavina
Commissioner Catherine Johnson
Commissioner Richard Pelletier
Commissioner Sebastian Giuliano
Commissioner Shanay Fulton
Commissioner Hillary Thompkins
Commissioner Kellin Atherton (Alternate)
Commissioner Kelly Sweeney (Alternate) (Seated for Fazzino)

Absent: Commissioner Marcus Fazzino

Staff: Marek Kozikowski, Director of Land Use; Gary Middleton, Assistant City Planner

Public: Eighteen members of the public attended into the meeting.

3. Items removed from the Agenda

None.

4. Public comment on items on the agenda which are not currently scheduled for a public hearing

None.

5. Confirmation that all hearing signs have been properly posted

Assistant City Planner Middleton noted that all required signs were properly posted.

6. Public Hearings
6.1. Request for a re-subdivision to create 6 lots and a 35 acre open space parcel located at Talia’s Trail, map-lot 10-0219 and Ridgewood Road, map-lot 10-0028 in the R-15 zone. Applicant/Agent: Sunwood Development Corporation. S2022-1

Bob Wiedenmann, Jr. from Sunwood Development Corporation presented the application. Plan would extend Talia’s trail and lead to six conforming lots and a 35 acre open space that is intended to be donated to the City of Middletown upon completion of the subdivision.

Gary Middleton informed committee that site was approved by IWWA.

Commissioner Johnson asked if there would be street trees every 50,’ if the lots on the cul de sacs actually have conforming frontage, and would have complying and if the street extension would be up to code. Applicant answered in the affirmative to all three.

Commissioner Giuliano inquired about the condition of the street and asked to confirm they would meet city standards for the extension. Applicant answered that the street extension would meet standards and that the current street is yet to be adopted by the city, though adoption is being negotiated with original developer, because it is not up to city standards. Development was delayed waiting for the road to get adopted but city attorney informed them they have the right to use the road. Commissioner Giuliano inquired about cul de sac size and Applicant responded current cul de sac intended to be temporary and site plan design conforms to city standards.

Assistant City Planner Middleton read a letter from Thomas Coccomo of Mile Lane, LLC, opposing the application, into the record. It was brought up previously and in the letter that the road is currently private and the Applicant does not currently have access to the proposed site.

Commissioner Giuliano moved to close public hearing, Commissioner Fulton seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Pelletier moved to approve application, Commissioner Giuliano seconded.

Commissioner Johnson asked to condition approval on Applicant completing all required steps. Commissioner Giuliano replied those steps would be required for gaining a building permit and executing the plans so conditions would be unnecessary.

Application approved by unanimous vote.

6.2. Petition for a zoning map amendment to rezone a 1.48 acre parcel having frontage on Main Street Extension from the Mixed Use (MX) zone to the Substance Abuse – Mental Health Floating (SMH) Zone located at 1 MacDonough Place (map-lot 24-0291). Applicant/Agent: David Giuffrida/Middlesex Hospital. Z2022-1

Attorney Richard Carella represented Middlesex Hospital for this application. Attorney Carella asked the board to consolidate this public hearing with the public hearing for 6.3 for a special exception.

Motion to combine the public hearings for Items 6.2 and 6.3 made by Commissioner Sweeney, seconded by Commissioner Giuliano. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

6.3. Request for a special exception for a behavioral health facility in an existing building located at 1 MacDonough Place (map-lot 24-0291) in the proposed SMH zone. Applicant/Agent: David Giuffrida/Middlesex Hospital. SE2022-4

Several representatives from Middlesex Hospital presented on the services to be provided at the location as well as building and parking improvements to be made. Exterior building improvements were shown to this committee though they still need Design Review approval (meeting was scheduled for earlier in the evening but cancelled due to lack of quorum). Presenting for the Applicant were David Giuffrida, VP of Operations for Middlesex Hospital to
explain the design and construction; Kelly Haeckel, Chief Nursing Officer and VP of Patient Care Services; Terri DiPietro, Director of Behavioral Health Services to describe the care to be given at the location; and Kevin McGinty who is Director of Environment of Care; and Steve Doherty, the architect of the project who presented on the planned changes to the building including to parking, traffic control, and aesthetic changes to the outside of the building. Kevin McGinty explained how the hospital would meet the required number of parking spaces.

Commissioner Giuliano inquired further about parking. Specifically, he asked about the number of spaces and whether the spaces at the location and in the nearby lot on Dekoven Drive would be saved for clients and if that would displace employees who currently use the lot. Kevin McGinty affirmed that the closer spaces would be saved for clients and that the hospital has a surplus of 295 parking spaces even if all spaces required by the regulations were set aside and that displaced employees would have several other parking options.

Commissioner Johnson asked about the entrances that would be used. Applicant answered adults would enter through the interior courtyard and that youths would enter in another entrance. Commissioner Johnson followed up with an inquiry into the safety of the staircase and walking area between the Dekoven parking lot and 1 Macdonough Place. Applicant stated that several safety improvements have been made or will be made including adding sophisticated security cameras and an emergency call box in the lot as well as clearing vegetation to improve sight lines.

Dan Walsh from the public asked about hours of operation. Applicant answered Mon- Thurs 8-8; Friday 8-5; and only staff will be there on weekends.

Commissioner Giuliano moved to end public hearing, Commissioner Johnson seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Staff added before vote that Wetlands, Water and Sewer, and Public Works all approved the plans.

Commissioner Pelletier moved to approve application 6.2, Commissioner Giuliano seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Fulton moved to approve application 6.3, Commissioner Giuliano seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

6.4. Request for a special exception for an educational use of the existing building located at 101 High Street in the R-15 zone. Applicant/Agent: Jim Cavallaro/University Network for Human Rights. SE2022-5

Stephen Devoto and Jim Cavallaro presented the application on behalf of University Network for Human Rights. Applicant explained the Institution works to develop curricula and relationships with students and university faculty to teach a program that trains students to advocate for human rights around the world. They expressed there would possibly be ten staff and faculty although there is currently only six. There would be some lectures, meetings with students, and occasional use of a suite for visiting lecturers.

Commissioner Thompkins expressed that she does not believe use would be good for town.

Commissioner Giuliano expressed that he believes the use of the property is primarily office space and does not support a special exception for this applicants intended use though he supports the intended use coming about as a zone change to ID with deed restrictions to prevent the property from being used for student housing or other disruptive purposes in the future. Commissioner Giuliano believes this would stretch the definition of an educational institution use too far and have future consequences.

Letters from the public were read into the record and are on file. Abutters Catherine and Robert Boone expressed support for the proposed use but great concerns about future uses as they pertain to the vague classification of educational institutions and how the space could be used for
a purpose that would be deleterious to the residential character of that neighborhood. Abutter Karen Anderson agreed with the Boone’s concerns and asked for clarification about how applicant intended to actually provide the adequate ten parking spaces. Abutter, a Ms. Hedrick, expressed support and agreement for the Boone’s position.

Applicant responds they plan to stay a long time but cannot say what the future uses would be. Applicant also explained the parking layout and how they intend to address it to allow ten spaces.

Commissioner Giuliano moves to close public hearing, Commissioner Pelletier seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Johnson supports the proposed use and believes it is an educational institution.

During discussion, Commissioner Thompkins asked fellow commissioners to consider the future effects of this special exception. Commissioner Pelletier expressed supporting this application was a good way to preserve the property. Commissioner Giuliano reiterated his position as earlier stated though he wants to see the property preserved and believes an institution like the applicant could do that.

Commissioners Pattavina and Sweeney support the application and proposed use.

Commissioner Pelletier moves to approve application, Commissioner Johnson seconded.

Motion passed by rollcall vote of 5 to 2 with Commissioners Giuliano and Thompkins voting against the application and Commissioner Fulton, Pelletier, Pattavina, Sweeney, and Johnson voting in the affirmative.

7. Old Business

7.1. Adoption of the 2022 Middletown Affordable Housing Plan.

Director of Land Use, Marek Kozikowski made a brief presentation of the draft 2022 Middletown Affordable Housing Plan.

Commissioner Johnson suggested edits of graphics, does not believe the micro-units are actual micro-units as they are displayed, and would like to change the term “middle housing” to medium-density housing.

Commissioner Giuliano expressed concern that accessory dwelling units would be a backdoor to getting rid of single family residence zones. Further, Middletown already has more than 20% of its housing as affordable and should (See Video for exact wording).

Commissioner Pelletier moved to adopt the 2022 Middletown Affordable Housing Plan, Commissioner Johnson seconded. Motion passed by vote of 5 to 2 with Commissioners Giuliano and Thompkins voting against the adoption and Commissioners Fulton, Pelletier, Pattavina, Sweeney, and Johnson voting in the affirmative.

8. New Business

None.

9. Public comment on topics which are not or have not been subject of a public hearing

10. Minutes, Staff Reports, and Commission Affairs

10.1. Minutes of the April 27, 2022 regular meeting
Commissioner Johnson moved to approve minutes; Commissioner Giuliano seconded. Motion passed 6 to 0 with Commissioner Fulton abstaining.

10.2. RiverCOG Report

Nothing to report.

10.3. Staff Report

Commissioner invited to visit Roots Center methadone clinic in New Britain, details to follow. Commissioner Giuliano asked for guidance from legal on way for commissioners to comport themselves and things not to say as city is currently in litigation with Roots Center. Commissioner Thompkins inquired about traffic report and Director Kozikowski will inquire about progress in that request.

10.4. Commission Affairs

None.

11. Adjournment

Commissioner Giuliano moved to adjourn, Commissioner Johnson seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Submitted,

Marek Kozikowski, AICP
Director of Land Use