

CITY OF OLNEY  
PLAN COMMISSION  
JULY 1, 2013

AGENDA #1 “CALL TO ORDER” The meeting of the Plan Commission was called to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Olney City Hall, 300 S. Whittle Avenue, Olney, Illinois, with Wesley Tolliver presiding.

AGENDA #2 “ROLL CALL” The following Plan Commission members were present: Steve Eichhorst, Scott Jones, Mike Winter, Pat Everette, Rob McClain, Amber Jared and Wesley Tolliver. Also present were City Attorney Larry Taylor, Code Enforcement Officer Mike Mitchell and City Clerk Belinda Henton.

AGENDA #3 “APPROVE MINUTES OF THE PLAN COMMISSION MEETING ON DECEMBER 3, 2012” Mr. Eichhorst moved to approve the minutes of the Plan Commission meeting on December 3, 2012, seconded by Mrs. Jared. Mr. Eichhorst, Mr. Jones, Mr. Winter, Mr. Everette, Mr. McClain, Mrs. Jared and Mr. Tolliver voted yes. There were no opposing votes. The motion carried.

AGENDA #4 “SWEARING IN” Mr. Tolliver asked that anyone wishing to testify on behalf of the item being discussed to stand and be sworn in. City Clerk Henton asked them to raise their right hand and “swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help me God.” Jack Harrell, Wanda Lee Goodwin, Dick Hahn, Larry Esworthy, Amy Read, Jeff Fleming, Darlene Fritschle, Ed Fritschle, Ande Sterchi, Leon Stallard and Richard Fleck were sworn in.

AGENDA #5 “REZONING: 902 E. LOCUST FROM R-1 (SINGLE-FAMILY DISTRICT) TO C-1 (NEIGHBORHOOD SHOPPING DISTRICT)” Darlene Fritschle submitted a petition to change the zoning from R-1 (Single-Family Residence District) to C-1 (Neighborhood Shopping District) on the property at 902 E. Locust Street. If the request for rezoning is granted, the property will be used as a medical office.

Mr. Jones questioned if the off-street parking would be concrete. Mr. Fleck confirmed the parking lot would be concrete. Mr. Jones asked their intentions for storm water detention. Mr. Mitchell commented water detention would be determined by an engineer. Mr. Jones asked where the storm water detention will be located. Mr. Fleck explained an engineer will not be hired to complete the storm water detention plan until after the rezoning is approved. Mr. Fleck has talked to the Street Department Supervisor concerning drainage.

Mr. Tolliver noted a petition in favor of the rezoning has been submitted with 13 names and a petition opposing the rezoning with 12 names was also submitted. A letter of opposition was also received.

Jack Harrell, owner of 916 E Locust, did not believe moving a business into this area was feasible. He understands the Fritschle’s position on this house because if the house is rezoned they will be able to sell it. The house has been for sale at least since 2007. Mr. Harrell pointed

out there is a school down the street and this location is close to the hospital, but the surrounding area is residential. Mr. Harrell noted students park on both sides of Locust Street in this area. This area is also heavily traveled by school buses. Mr. Harrell stated this matter is happening too fast. Adding a business to this location will increase the traffic. Mr. Harrell has not seen the parking plan. The Plan Commission allowed Mr. Harrell to view the proposed parking plan. He foresaw a problem with parking and traffic. According to Mr. Harrell, the only reason the Plan Commission would rezone this property would be to help the Fritschles sell their house. He did not believe this was the way to get rid of the house. Consideration needs to be given to vehicle traffic, pedestrian traffic and school bus traffic. He did not believe this is the place for this type of business or any type of business.

Mr. Eichhorst asked Mr. Taylor if a traffic study is available for the Laurel, Locust and East Street area. Mr. Taylor commented the traffic studies available are not very recent.

Jonathan Brown, 603 N. East, agreed traffic on East Street is crazy, but it was hard for him to imagine that a medical office would cause much more traffic. Mr. Fleck commented there would probably be 2 to 3 cars all the time. He would expect 20-25 cars per day on a doctor day. When the clinic first opens, they plan on 3 doctor days per week. Additional doctor days would be added as business increases. Mr. Fleck explained there is enough room for parking in front of the house. Drivers will be able to turn around in their parking lot before pulling out into the street.

Mr. Tolliver asked if the existing curb will remain. Mr. Fleck explained the curb will remain for 20-30' from the corner and then the curb will be cut and the parking lot will be concreted up to the right of way. There will be 50-60' open across the front of the property to allow for parking.

Mr. Harrell noted there is a sidewalk from Jefferson Street to Washington Street on the north side of Locust, but there is no sidewalk in the 900 block of Locust. He would have no problem with the City extending that sidewalk to get some of the pedestrian traffic off of the street. A driveway across the front of the property would eliminate the possibility of a sidewalk. Mr. Harrell asked that this matter be tabled for 30 days to allow time for evaluation.

Larry Esworthy, 511 N. Jefferson, uses Locust Street frequently. He explained school kids travel this route several times a day. He hated to see this residual area compromised. There are other areas where they could locate that would be much better suited for this venture. Mr. Esworthy also pointed out that the visibility at the Locust/East intersection is not very good. That concerns him greatly.

Mr. McClain asked Mr. Mitchell if he had any problems with the plan and what is being requested. Mr. Mitchell commented the off-street parking plan meets the requirements for the number of parking spaces.

Mr. McClain questioned if the rezoning request should be tabled until the storm water detention plan is presented. Mr. Mitchell did not know if they would want to spend money for a detention plan before the rezoning is approved.

Mr. Esworthy questioned where a storm water detention area could be placed. Mr. Mitchell explained the engineer would have to determine the size and placement of the detention area.

Amy Read questioned the purpose of the detention area. Mr. Tolliver explained the purpose.

Sandy Koch, 911 E. Pine, complained about storm water from the high school parking lot flying down Pine Street. Mr. Tolliver commented that the parking lot was built before storm water detention was required.

Mr. Harrell asked if the value of the homes in the area will be affected. Mr. Eichhorst said there is no way to know.

Jonathan Brown understands the neighbors' concerns about traffic on East Street, but the type of business should be taken into account. He believed it makes sense for this business to be placed near the hospital for convenience.

Mr. Tolliver pointed out that once this lot is rezoned, it will stay commercial even if the medical office moves. The property could then be sold to someone else for a different type of commercial use which is also allowed in a C-1 district. For this reason he takes rezoning very seriously.

Mr. Esworthy stated he was not opposed to this new business coming to Olney, he just believed there are better places to locate.

Mr. Winter presumed the biggest objection to this rezoning was the traffic issue. Mr. Harrell added his concern for property value. He noted that Olney is not growing and the population of Richland County has actually decreased. The only people to benefit are the people selling the house.

Leon Stallard, owner of a house on Pine Street and Locust Street, believed the traffic needs to be lessened, not compromised by adding more. There are many other places in town to locate a business. This area needs to stay residential.

Mr. Winter asked if the Marion Eye Center is moving from another location or if this was a new practice. Mr. Fleck indicated this was a new practice. Marion Eye Center current has 33 practices. He has worked for the Center for 26 years and they have only closed 2 locations. The closest practice to Olney is Flora. They try to locate clinics 20-25 miles away from each other. Mr. Fleck pointed out that patients bring revenue into the community by spending money on gas, groceries and food.

Mr. Fleck explained there would be a doctor in the office 3 days a week plus there will be 3 to 4 staff members at the clinic each day. Employees will park behind the house.

Mr. Winter asked if this property has been vacant prior to Marion Eye Center's interest. Mr. Harrell answered that the property has been for sale for approximately 5 years. Mr. Fritschle indicated the property was rented with the option to purchase, but that fell through. The sale to Marion Eye Center is pending rezoning.

Mr. Winter asked how much work has been done already. Mr. Fleck commented that Marion Eye Center has not yet invested anything in the house.

Mr. Winter asked if the physicians that will work there are from Olney. Mr. Fleck indicated the physicians do not live in Olney, but the staff will be from Olney.

Mr. McClain asked if there is an alternative plan if the rezoning fails. Mr. Fleck said no. Mr. McClain asked if they would consider another location in Olney. Mr. Fleck answered it would depend upon what the doctor wants to do.

Ande Sterchi has always tried to do things that were good for the city. She sees this as a good thing for the city. She lived across the street from 902 E. Locust for 3 years. If parking is being taken away from the high school students, it would only be 3 parking spaces. The high school has quite a bit of parking available at the school. She did not believe getting in and out of the parking lot would be a problem. She believed a new eye clinic would be a good thing for this community. Any time you can bring a business into Olney, it is good. They will bring in sales tax revenue. She did not think it would make the property values go down. The more doctors in the area the better for all.

Mr. Eichhorst questioned their criteria for a location. Mr. Fleck explained the doctors wanted to be close to the hospital and East Street.

Mrs. Sterchi asked if there was a medical zoning district. Mr. Tolliver explained there is no such zoning at this time. Mr. Eichhorst explained the request for a C-1 was the appropriate zoning for a medical clinic.

Mr. Winter asked if there are any provisions if they leave, the zoning would revert back to residential. Mr. Tolliver answered no. Mr. Taylor commented the only way would be to amend the zoning ordinance to allow for a special use permit. At this time there is not a special use that fits this situation.

Amy Read pointed out if and when West Richland School District is annexed to East Richland there will be even more traffic. She was opposed to additional traffic generated by the clinic.

Mr. Esworthy could not see how a detention area could be created on the subject property. Mr. Mitchell commented it would be possible. There are several different ways a detention area can be built to comply with the requirement.

Mr. Everette questioned the longevity of their clinics. Mr. Fleck indicated the Carbondale clinic has been established since 1981 or 1982 and they have only closed 2 clinics.

Mr. Brown asked why they are interested in this area. Mr. Fleck commented the doctor wanted to be located near the hospital and East Street. Land in other areas is more expensive.

Mrs. Jared asked if the physicians in this clinic will be doing business with Richland Memorial Hospital. Mr. Fleck did not know. She asked if he does cataract surgery. Mr. Fleck answered yes. The doctor does not presently work with Richland Memorial Hospital. Marion Eye Center owns their own surgery center in Mt. Vernon.

Jeff Fleming, representing Darlene Fritschle, did not see any significant increase in traffic. There should only be 3 or 4 cars at a time. East Street is a major artery through town. There are commercial districts on East Street at Main Street and also Mack Avenue. Already located on East Street are dentist offices, oil office and the hospital. The hospital has expanded toward East Street and northerly over the last several years. Mr. Fleming also understands they have acquired additional property to the north and south of their existing property. The hospital has changed and will continue to change. They are trying to make themselves a larger operation. As evidenced in other communities, doctor offices want to locate around hospitals. East Street offers that opportunity since it is a major thoroughfare. There is already other commercial activity along East Street, and Mr. Fleming sees it will continue that way. He believes this is an opportunity for employment for the community as well as additional sales.

Mr. Tolliver felt the addition of West Richland students will be a bigger problem than the eye clinic.

Mr. Brown thought the community should be reasonable and accommodating to businesses that want to locate in Olney.

In regards to property values, Mr. Winter asked if the Marion Eye Center has any plans to landscape and improve the looks of the house. Mr. Fleck commented it will be repainted, a new roof will be put on, the interior would be completely remodeled. Their clinics are always kept well lighted and maintained.

Sandy Esworthy hoped this new clinic does not run off the optometrists that are already in the community. She commented she is very proud of her neighborhood by the high school, but once things start creeping in that are not residential, the whole area will be changed. She is all for growth in the community, but surely there are other places to locate this clinic.

Wanda Lee Goodwin, 916 E. Locust, complained about kids parking in front of her house. She does not want to go through this anymore. She is tired of it.

Mr. Eichhorst believed Mr. Fleming was right when he mentioned that the hospital will continue to expand in this area. Everyone will be attracted to the hospital for their offices.

Mr. McClain pointed out that the growth of the hospital has taken place on the other side of East Street. When asked about their affiliation with the hospital, they indicated there was no intention to work with the hospital, they just wanted to be in the proximity of the hospital.

Mr. Winter asked Mr. Harrell what he hopes to accomplish if this matter is tabled for 30 days. Mr. Harrell commented he would like to do more research.

Mr. McClain asked Mr. Taylor if he had any concerns. Mr. Taylor commented he had no particular concerns. It is the decision of the Plan Commission in light of the issues.

Mr. Eichhorst asked Mr. Mitchell if he had any concerns. Mr. Mitchell commented his job is to make sure all the requirements are met. They can meet the parking requirements.

Mr. McClain asked if there are any requirements or limitations in regards to zoning near a school. Mr. Taylor answered there is nothing that restricts commercial zoning in the proximity of a school. There are restrictions concerning liquor licenses near a school. The whole issue is evaluating the factors and determining whether this property is appropriate to be zoned as requested.

Mrs. Sterchi asked how many treatment rooms will be operated at one time. Mr. Fleck explained there will only be one doctor present at a time.

Mr. Winter moved to recommend approval of the requested rezoning. The motion died due to a lack of a second.

Mr. Jones moved to recommend denial of the requested rezoning, seconded by Mrs. Jared. Mr. Eichhorst, Mr. Winter, Mr. Everett and Mr. McClain voted no. Mr. Jones and Mrs. Jared voted yes. Mr. Tolliver abstained because his brother lives within two blocks of the rezoning. The motion failed.

Mr. Winter moved to recommend approval of the requested rezoning, seconded by Mr. Eichhorst. Mr. Eichhorst, Mr. Winter, Mr. Everette and Mrs. Jared voted yes. Mr. Jones, Mr. McClain voted no. Mr. Tolliver abstained. The motion carried.

Mrs. Jared was confused and changed her vote to no which tied the vote. Mr. Tolliver reconsidered his abstention and voted yes. The motion then carried.

Mr. Tolliver advised the audience this matter will be considered by the Council at their meeting on July 8 at 7:00 p.m.

AGENDA #6 "ADJOURN" Mr. Eichhorst moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Everette. A majority voice vote was received.

The Plan Commission meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.