

# CITY OF PALOS HEIGHTS



## PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION June 17, 2019

The Planning and Zoning Commission of the City of Palos Heights met at the Palos Heights City Hall on Monday, June 17, 2019 to review the Comprehensive Plan. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Chairman Stevens. Board members present were Jeff Barry, Tom Gabel, Pat Scully and Michael Lombard. Also in attendance were Ken Busse, Teska spokesman, concerned parties and recording secretary Charlotte Moore.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Stevens entertained a motion to approve the minutes from April 8, 2019. So moved by Commissioner Lombard, seconded by Commissioner Gabel. All in favor, and motion carried.

### **New Business**

**City Comprehensive Plan & Recreation Master Plan** – Pete from Teska Associates approached the podium and explained that he has been working with the city for the past year, updating the Comprehensive Plan for the city as well as the city's parks and recreation. Teska has been working with Dan Nisavic, other staff members and the steering committee.

Pete reviewed through the plan with a PowerPoint presentation with a brief outline of each chapter. Each member of the committee had already received a hard copy of the Plan before the meeting for their review. Teska is here to get feedback and comments on the plan, before the next step which is a public hearing. Essentially, Teska was engaged to update the existing plan. Ideally you should look at your comprehensive plan every 5 years. There are no major changes being proposed. The city is essentially built out.

Commissioner Lombard noticed that this plan has a significant change from the 2008 plan, for allowing parking on residential streets. Pete mentioned this subject did come up in the steering committee meetings, and yes this is a change in recommendation. Pete mentioned that if and when an opportunity arises to purchase additional property the city should look at property for additional parking. There is nothing in the works right now.

Teska provided some suggestions and guidance to the city for future development at Route 83 and Harlem Avenue. Commissioner Scully wondered what kind of push back Teska has seen in the past when a property owner hears about suggestions we have for their property. Pete typically doesn't hear any. He did mention that the property owners were contacted prior to the report being completed. Mr. Busse mentioned that the owner of Tiffany Square has expressed interest in selling his property. The bank has also spoke about removing the drive-thru building.

Commissioner Gabel asked if this plan requires any changes to the current land use map? Pete commented that this plan would not require changes to the zoning map.

Commissioner Scully asked if the property is currently under a TIF. Mr. Busse mentioned that Tiffany Square which includes Starbucks and the bank is under a TIF. It may be possible to expand

the TIF district west of Tiffany Square and down Harlem Avenue.

Mr. Busse commented that Lake Katherine is often in need of additional parking, and Lake Katherine plans to expand its parking east, north of Tiffany Square. Other municipalities construct parking garages open to the public, which serve commercial and recreational uses.

There was some discussion on the Dominick's property. Pete mentioned that there is no magic bullet on what to do. Chairman Stevens doesn't understand why we don't put the hammer down on the owner after being vacant for so many years. We can't do anything if they are not cooperating. Mr. Busse added that Jewel controls the lease on that property until March 2022, with 4 additional 5 year options to renew the lease. Relinquishing their lease over Dominick's is subject to their review of any proposed future use of the space. Grocery stores have expressed an interest in the space. However, a grocery store use is least among uses for which Jewel would gladly relinquish its lease.

Chairman Stevens questioned about tax reductions on the vacant Dominick's, and how long tax reductions can continue. Mr. Busse stated that the assessed valuation has been reduced because of the Dominick's vacancy and its impact on the shopping center. And, for as long as it is vacant, the Cook County Assessor may reduce the taxes, in spite of the fact rent is being paid on the property. Discussion ensued.

For the **Parks & Recreation** section, Teska reviewed items that the city wants to monitor every few years to see if goals and objectives are being accomplished. Teska also explored some grant opportunities and funding sources for parks and recreation improvements.

Commissioner Lombard commented that over 50% of people in Palos Heights are over 50. The median age is 51 years. This aging population eventually will move out or pass on. Are there any models that look at the change in demographics in the future for Palos Heights? Pete mentioned that slowly over time this will happen. Mr. Iosue described that the aging population is trying to stay in their homes. In Steering Committee meetings, the Committee discussed "aging in place". Teska looked at senior housing opportunities in town to provide places for seniors to move and remain in town, thereby opening up single family houses for young families. Such a transition by allowing them to move while remaining in town. Discussion ensued.

Pete mentioned that they had a separate survey just on the Parks and received 234 responses. Nicole from Teska spoke about the parks plan and mentioned that they looked at the parks and any other recreational opportunities. There is a property in Misty Meadows where the city is already in the process of acquiring a lot for a pocket park. Each park was reviewed and made some specific recommendations were outlined. Nicole mentioned that Palmer Park probably needs the most work. There was a master plan done and OSLAD funding has been secured for Palmer Park. Secondly Teska looked at Passarelli Park. Teska believes it would be a good opportunity to partner with the school district being right next to Navajo Heights school and it is the only park in the system that has the ramp system for the play equipment which is considered inclusive.

Chairman Stevens asked if there were grants available. Nicole mentioned that OSLAD funding is pretty common. The last couple of years almost all of the projects have won funding. They usually match half of what the community is contributing.

## **Questions/Comments from the audience**

Bob Grossart the chairman of the BEAC committee approached the podium and described the three areas of focus the BEAC committee believes need to be addressed. First, the northern Gateway into Palos Heights along Harlem Avenue is very important to set the tone for the character and future development of the city. There have been various proposals for the northeast corner next to the senior housing, with the current proposed use a possible gas station. The BEAC doesn't believe a gas station is the highest and best use for this critical location and gateway entrance and focal point in the community. Looking toward the future, gas stations may become obsolete with more and more vehicles becoming electric and charging at homes and places of business. The city needs to pause and look at what we really want at this gateway entrance. The second item is assuring a leadership structure for implementing the updated Comprehensive Plan so that goals and objectives are accomplished. It all takes time and energy. The last area of the committee's focus is parking. There has been a lot of discussion on parking and we believe there is significant problem, especially within the Olde Palos Shopping District along Harlem Avenue. The BEAC committee urges the City to become more pro-active on additional parking options within the Olde Palos Shopping District.

Mike Coogan of the BEAC committee mentioned that the gateway into the City is crucial. Currently, there is an opportunity for the northeast corner of Harlem and College Drive to create a sense of arrival into Palos Heights. We need to consider how we want that piece of land to be viewed and used.

Mr. Busse commented that the person proposing a gas station at the corner of Harlem and Route 83 must follow the PUD process to present their plan and proposal to the P&Z Commission. The PUD doesn't currently allow for a gas station, and would have to be amended with a special use permit for a gas station.

Mike Coogan urges the City to give thought to purchasing the 2 1/2-acre parcel, then the City determines the fate of the property. Discussion ensued. Mr. Busse acknowledged that the site is not listed on the MLS, nor published on CoStar or LoopNet. Currently, the only marketing device is a billboard on the corner, which greatly limits its marketing exposure to the world. Additionally, it is currently being used as a staging ground for Spectrum construction. Discussion ensued.

### **Adjourn**

There being no further business, Commissioner Lombard moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Scully. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 7:54pm

Respectfully submitted,

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Charlotte Moore  
Recording Secretary