

Pekin Planning Commission Meeting
Council Chambers
111 South Capitol Street, 2nd level
July 10, 2019
5:30pm

Present:

Bill Craig, Chairman
Don Hild, Vice Chairman
Chris Deverman
James Ruth

Steve Thompson
Amy Wilson
Ron Knautz

The regular meeting of the Pekin Planning Commission was called to order and a quorum was declared.

Staff present: John Lebegue, Building Inspections/Development Director, and Kate Swise, City Attorney

MOTION by Chris Deverman to approve the July 10, 2019 Agenda, seconded by Ron Knautz. On roll call vote, all present voted AYE. Motion approved.

Council Action Reports:

Bill Craig, Chairman, stated that at the June 24, 2019 regular meeting of the Pekin City Council, the members of the City Council concurred with the recommendation of the Plan Commission and by a unanimous vote, approved the Site Plan for the installation of U-Haul exterior storage units at 2909 Court Street.

Application #1: Consideration of a petition by Scott Shipp for the vacation of a 14 foot by 200 foot City alley located between the properties of 1125 Derby Street and 1129 Derby Street and the vacation of a 14 foot by 162 foot City alley located between 1219 S. 12th Street and 1119 Derby Street and 1125 Derby Street.

Open Public Hearing: 5:32 p.m.

Bill Craig, Chairman, opened the discussion and asked if there was anyone here to speak in regard to the issue.

Scott Shipp, 1516 S 14th Street, appeared before the members of the Plan Commission and explained that he had owned the properties at 1129 Derby and 1219 S. 12th Street for several years and has cleaned and maintained the alley to the south of his property at 1219 S. 12th Street. Mr. Shipp further stated that the east/west alley had never been used and has become overgrown with trees and weeds and had homeless individuals living in the area at times. Mr. Shipp continued by stating that he had recently cut down the trees and weeds and wants to install a

retaining wall where the alley currently exists to stabilize the hill at the south side of his property at 1219 S. 12th Street if the alley is vacated and he was able to receive half of the 14 foot alley. Mr. Shipp continued by stating that the property to the west of his property at 1129 Derby Street had recently been sold.

Nathan Noyes, 1125 Derby Street, appeared before the members of the Plan Commission and stated that he is the new owner of the property at 1125 Derby Street and was only recently made aware of the alley vacation request submitted by Scott Shipp. Mr. Noyes stated that he needs to review the vacation request in more detail, but stated that he needs access to the rear of his property from the north/south alley. Mr. Noyes continued by stating that he did not want a wall constructed down the north/south alley as that would restrict access to the gate at the rear of the property.

Close Public Hearing: 5:41 p.m.

Bill Craig, Chairman, entertained a motion for discussion.

Motion made by Vice Chairman, Don Hild, seconded by Steve Thompson, to open discussion.

Vice Chairman, Don Hild asked who would own the alleys if they were to be vacated.

John Lebegue, Building Inspections/Development Director stated that if the alleys were to be vacated, Scott Shipp and Nathan Noyes would assume ownership of the alleys, with each of them receiving half of the width of the alleys.

Scott Shipp stated that he had no intention of constructing a retaining wall down the north/south alley, just down the east west alley.

Vice Chairman, Don Hild asked Mr. Shipp if he had any plans to develop the alley property.

Scott Shipp stated that he would like to build the retaining wall to stabilize the hill at the south of the property at 1219 12th Street and construct a new building on the 12th Street property.

Commissioner Steve Thompson stated that given that Mr. Noyes had not had the opportunity to review the alley vacation, he suggested that the matter be tabled to allow Mr. Noyes and Mr. Shipp the opportunity to meet to discuss the matter.

Bill Craig, Chairman, stated that he agreed that the case be tabled so that the owners can talk and come to an agreement before further action is taken on the vacation petition and put the matter on the next meeting agenda.

Vice Chairman, Don Hild stated that the owner of 1125 Derby Street should consider installing a gate at the front of the property to access the fenced area.

Chairman Bill Craig stated that the earlier motion would have to be rescinded in order to make a motion to table the case and asked Commissioner James Ruth if he agreed to rescind his earlier motion.

Commissioner James Ruth rescinded his earlier motion.

Motion made by Steve Thompson, seconded by Vice Chairman Don Hild, to table consideration of the vacation petition to the August 14, 2019 meeting. On roll call vote, all present voted Aye. Motion approved.

Application #2: Consideration of a petition submitted by Pekin Community High School District 303 for the Re-Zoning of property currently zoned R-1 (One-Family Residential District) to AG(Agricultural District), for the purpose of educational use at certain property located east of North Parkway Drive, with a Legal Description of Sec 1 T24N R5W Part of Lot 3 of S ½ (Exc 6' x 50' Tract)NE ¼ 46.18 AC in Tazewell County, Illinois, with the following P.I.N.# 04-10-01-201-002.

Open Public Hearing: 5:51 p.m.

Tim Bonnette, representing Pekin Community High School, appeared before the members of the Plan Commission and explained that most people don't realize that the High School owned the land to the east of N. Parkway Drive, which the high school had previously used for playing fields. Mr. Bonnette continued by stating that the walking trail maintained by the Park District goes thru the property and that, until this year, the Park District had mowed and maintained the high school property. Mr. Bonnette explained that since the playing fields are no longer needed and that the Park District is no longer mowing and maintaining the property, the high school would like to convert the land to a natural prairie with the assistance of the organization Trees Forever and that is why they were requesting a map amendment to rezone the land to A, Agricultural. Mr. Bonnette stated that the current grass that has been overgrown is not a prairie and the high school would plant natural plantings to replace the turf grass. Mr. Bonnette further stated that the Park District would continue to maintain the walking trail and that a mowed, 15 foot buffer was planned for the area adjacent to the residential homes.

Rachel Wyman, 218 Cottage Grove, appeared before the members of the Plan Commission and stated that she lives next door to the high school property and has never had a problem with tall grass until the last few months. Ms. Wyman continued by stating that the high school just wants to have the property rezoned to A, Agriculture so that they won't have to mow and maintain the property. Ms. Wyman ended her comments by stating that the high school is not properly maintaining the property now and won't maintain the property if it is converted to a prairie and felt that the prairie use is not appropriate for the city.

Rebecca Doubet, 220 Cottage Grove, appeared before the members of the Plan Commission and stated that the high school property was well taken care of by the Park District, but now that the Park District is no longer mowing and maintaining the property, the high school is allowing the property to become overgrown. Ms. Doubet also stated that due to the tall grass she is

experiencing problems with ground hogs and the mosquitos are horrible and she feels that the property should stay as it is currently zoned and be mowed.

Mrs. Rhoades, 305 Reservoir Rd., appeared before the members of the Plan Commission and asked if the proposed prairie included the property behind the UAW high rise.

Tim Bonnette answered that the property behind the high rise is part of the high school property.

Mrs. Rhoades stated that she agreed with the comments of the other neighbors about the condition of the high school property and felt that the high school should keep the property mowed as it was in the past. Mrs. Rhoades continued by stating that when she called the high school to complain about the tall grass she was informed that the high school had no intention of mowing the property. Mrs. Rhoades stated that she also had contacted the Park District and was informed that the Park District was no longer maintaining and mowing the property. Mrs. Rhoades further stated that the tall grass was a haven for mosquitos and wildlife and was an eyesore for the neighborhood and negatively impacted property values. Mrs. Rhoades ended her comments by stating that the high school should maintain and keep the property mowed and felt that an AG use in the middle of the city was not appropriate.

Close Public Hearing: 6:11 p.m.

Bill Craig, Chairman, entertained a motion for discussion.

Motion by James Ruth, seconded by Ron Knautz, to open discussion.

Commissioner Amy Wilson stated that given her background in landscape architecture, she was a big proponent of natural prairies, but cautioned that the process in establishing a natural prairie is very tedious, with a high degree of maintenance. Commissioner Wilson agreed that the educational purpose of the natural prairie was great, but she had concerns that the high school would not be able to manage the process and maintenance. Commissioner Wilson ended by stating that the establishment and maintenance of a natural prairie would also require staffing.

Tim Bonnette stated that for the first 2 years the planting and property would be mowed to keep down the weeds and to allow the plantings to become established.

Commissioner Amy Wilson asked if the high school would be opposed to providing an access trail from Cottage Grove to make it easier for those residents to access the walking path.

Tim Bonnette stated that he would have to confer with the high school to determine if an access trail would be allowed.

Don Hild, Vice Chairman stated that the high school is not mowing the property now and creating a nuisance for neighboring residential properties and does not know how they will deal with allowing grass and native plants to grow tall in the future.

Bill Craig, Chairman that the high school did plan on mowing a proposed 15 foot buffer area.

Tim Bonnette stated that the high school has been making arrangements to have the property mowed, but has struggled to find a contractor that could mow tall grass.

Commissioner Chris Deverman asked the applicant what specific areas of the property would be prairie.

Tim Bonnette then pointed out on a map the specific location of the proposed natural prairie.

Commissioner Amy Wilson stated that she had concerns that if the prairie did not work out that then the property could revert to an un-mowed state which is allowed in the AG, Agricultural District.

Commissioner Ron Knautz stated that perhaps a stipulation could be added that requires that the area be mowed and maintained.

Charity Gullett, 1602 Matilda Street, appeared before the members of the Plan Commission and stated that since the Plan Commission is making a recommendation, that consideration of this item could be tabled to allow all parties to get together to discuss the issues that have been raised tonight.

Commissioner Amy Wilson asked if there was any way to allow or consider the prairie use without rezoning the property to AG, Agricultural District.

Bill Craig, Chairman stated that the City would lose control of the property if it were rezoned to AG, Agricultural District, as all agricultural uses would be allowed and no stipulations or conditions could be place on a permitted use. Chairman Craig continued by stating that a Special Use could be created, where conditions and stipulations could be added to better control the use.

Commissioner James Ruth stated that he did not agree that the property should be rezoned to AG, Agricultural District, as he had concerns that the high school did not have the ability to maintain a natural prairie.

Bill Craig, Chairman stated that the high school would have to have a professional group to provide oversight. Chairman Craig continued by stating that the establishment of a natural prairie is a worthwhile project, but would not work by rezoning the property to agricultural.

Commissioner Ron Knautz stated that it important that the high school property be mowed and maintained, so as to not create a nuisance for neighboring residential properties.

Bill Craig, Chairman called the question on the petition submitted by Pekin Community High School District 303 for the rezoning of property currently zoned R-1 (One-Family Residential

District) to AG (Agricultural District), for the purpose of establishing a natural prairie for educational uses at certain property located east of North Parkway Drive. On a roll call vote, all present voted Nay. Request for rezoning denied.

No public input.

Motion made by Ron Knautz, seconded by Chris Deverman to adjourn. On roll call vote, all present voted Aye. Motion approved. Meeting adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

John R. Lebegue, Building Inspections / Development Director