

Webster Groves Plan Commission
Meeting Minutes
April 5, 2021

Members Present	Jeff Smith	PLANNER
	Scott Mueller	Danny Jendusa
	Maddy Heikkila	DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
	Toni Hunt	Mara Perry
	Michael Buechter	CITY ATTORNEY
	Annie Tierney	Neil Bruntrager
		COUNCIL LIAISON
		Pam Bliss

Members not present: Charles Sindel
Steve Hunkins
Christopher Michael

REGULAR SESSION

1. Smith opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Smith asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the March 1, 2021 meeting. Buechter made a motion to approve. Tierney seconded the motion. Smith abstained as he was not present for the March meeting. The motion passed 5-0.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There were none.

4. **PUBLIC HEARING:**

- a) **21-PC-01 Lona's Lil Eats LLC (7985 Big Bend Blvd.):** An application by Lona's Lil Eats LLC for a Conditional Use Permit to allow a "Restaurant, drive-thru" use located on a 0.41 acre lot at 7985 Big Bend Blvd. in the "C" Commercial District. APPLICATION HAS BEEN REQUESTED TO BE POSTPONED BY THE APPLICANT TO THE MAY 3, 2021 MEETING

Smith asked for a motion to postpone 21-PC-01. Hunt made a motion. Buechter seconded the motion. All in favor the motion passed 6-0.

- b) **21-PC-02 Zoning Code Text Amendments – Multiple Family Dwelling Regulations:** Proposed amendments include changes to the use and dimensional regulations regarding multiple family dwellings in the "C", "C1" and "D" Commercial Districts in Sections 53.110 through 53.147, and Section 53.159.

Jendusa said staff is proposing amendments that would allow limited multiple family housing within the city's existing commercial districts and simplify the dimensional regulations in the "C" and "D" Commercial Districts. Jendusa emphasized that the proposed amendments would not

allow multi-family housing in what are primarily single family residential neighborhoods. The amendments would be limited to existing commercial districts. The purpose of the proposed amendments would be to provide clarity for existing property owners and neighbors adjacent to commercial areas, and allow for additional housing options in the community.

He identified what the code defines as multiple family dwellings and apartments:

“Apartment” shall mean a room or suite of rooms in a two-family or multiple dwelling, or where more than one living unit is established above non-residential uses, and that is used, intended to be used or designed for use as a residence by a single-family including bath and culinary accommodations. “Apartment” does not include “Student Housing, Apartment.”

“Dwelling, Multiple” shall mean a building or portion thereof used or designed as a residence for three (3) or more families living independently of each other, and doing their own cooking in said building, including apartments and apartment hotels.

Jendusa gave examples of multi-family unit types such as triplexes, fourplexes or town homes, residences above storefronts and mixed use buildings and where on the map the amendment would allow these in the city’s existing “C” and “D” commercial districts. The city’s most recent comprehensive planning efforts with significant community engagement in the 1978 Comprehensive Plan and 2006 Development Foundation Plan recommended mixed use development including residential and multiple family housing options within and near the city’s commercial districts. Residents stated during these planning efforts that they desired multiple family housing in commercial areas to provide additional housing type options for residents seeking to downsize and remain active in the community and to improve the walkability of the city’s commercial districts. However, the city code still designates multiple family housing as a conditional use requiring a CUP in the “D” Commercial District and does not allow it in the “C” Commercial District. Jendusa went through some of the benefits of multi-family housing such as providing options for empty nesters looking to downsize, more customers for local businesses and business attraction, improved walkability and vibrancy and increased tax revenue. Jendusa identified common concerns and challenges that are often brought up during discussions of multiple family housing- ie. building height, parking, aesthetics, landscaping, lighting, noise, over-occupancy, design and traffic- and pointed out the existing procedures and systems in place within city government which already serve to regulate these items and address issues should they arise.

Jendusa identified the city’s “C”, “D” and “PC” zoned areas and the locations of existing multifamily residential zones in the city. He identified topics that staff and the Plan Commission will want to consider and discuss related to this topic: use, height, setbacks, area requirements, parking, side and front entry garages, open space requirements, performance standards, trees and landscaping, stormwater, etc. Largely, the updates staff would like to make would be to clean up the dimensional requirements in the “C” and “D” districts so they are more clear for residents and property owners to understand and make updates to allow development that would improve walkability in commercial areas while not imposing upon nearby residents. At this time, the types of updates staff is considering for proposal would include maintaining the existing 3 story building height limit in the “D” and “C1” overlay district and 2.5 stories in the rest of the “C” district, simplify front setback regulations to allow buildings to be readily built closer to the street

where appropriate and set back further in more auto-oriented stretches, maintain side and rear setbacks on lots abutting single family residential to allow for some level of buffer areas between commercial and residential, reduce or remove restrictive minimum area requirements, maintain the parking standards the Plan Commission and City Council recently set, updating attached garage regulations in commercial districts to head off potential designs which could detract from walkability and aesthetics, and maintain existing open space requirements and performance standards. Multiple-family housing that would meet all the same standards we require of everything else could be approved as a permitted use. Any development proposals that would seek to go beyond most existing limits would still require re-zoning or CUPs in public hearings.

Hunt asked the motivation for these amendments rather than allowing each proposal to be looked at on a case-by-case basis where the city can have additional control to get better development in the end. Perry responded that the updates staff would be looking to make would set the standards and controls we'd be looking to enact with development proposals anyway, and would reduce the levels of uncertainty and time that can discourage developers from even pursuing the types of development that would be good for our city. Requiring developers to go through several months of hearings and uncertainty to end up with the recommendations we'd want to set anyways is an unnecessary burden. The intent would be to provide clarity for property owners and developers and allow for a greater mix of housing options in the city.

Hunt identified that parking and design options that may be appropriate in Old Webster might not work on Watson. It seems like the development pattern you are seeking may be to make commercial areas more like an urban or town development pattern and suggested looking into alley access.

Clark Hotaling, 118 W. Cedar, said the more housing options the better. It benefits our community.

Smith asked for a motion to continue 21-PC-02 to the May, 2021 meeting. Buechter made a motion. Heikkila seconded the motion. All in favor the motion passed 6-0.

5. ADJOURNMENT OF REGULAR SESSION

Smith asked for a motion to close the regular session. Tierney made a motion. Buechter seconded the motion. All in favor the motion passed 6-0.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

6. **OTHER BUSINESS:** Perry said we will be seeing a CUP for Rolling Ridge coming. Also, SG Collaborative has a proposal coming in June, which can be viewed on the city website.

7. **NEXT REGULAR MEETING:** May 3, 2021

8. ADJOURNMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE

Smith asked for a motion to adjourn. Tierney made a motion. Buechter seconded the motion. All in favor motion passed 6-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.