

**MINUTES**

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE OAK PARK PLAN COMMISSION  
VILLAGE HALL- ROOM 201  
January 9, 2020  
7:00 p.m.

A recording of this meeting is available on the Village of Oak Park Website: <https://www.oak-park.us/your-government/citizen-commissions/commission-tv>

**PRESENT:** Chair David Mann, Commissioners; Iris Sims, Nick Bridge, Jeff Clark, Jeff Foster, Lawrence Brozek, Joseph Flowers and Paul May.

**EXCUSED:** None

**ALSO PRESENT:** Craig Failor - Village Planner, Bill McKenna – Village Engineer, Floyd Anderson, Village Architectural Design Consultant and Gregory Smith - Plan Commission Attorney

**Roll Call** - Chair Mann called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll was called. A quorum was present.

**Non-Agenda Public Participation** - None

**Approval of Minutes** - Commissioner Foster motioned to approve the December 5, 2019 draft minutes, seconded by Commissioner Sims. Commissioner Bridge motioned to approve the December 19, 2019 draft minutes, seconded by Commissioner Sims. Both were approved unanimously as written.

Commissioners Sims and Bridge stated that they were in communication with the Oak Park Development Corporation regarding this application, which is considered to be an ex-parte communication. Both commissioners indicated they could be fair and impartial when considering this application.

**Public Hearings**

**PC 2019-09: Planned Development-435 Madison Street:** The Applicant seeks approval of a Planned Development to allow for the construction of a 48 unit apartment building with 48 first floor parking spaces within the MS-Madison Street zoning district at 5-stories tall. The Applicant is requesting zoning relief for the following; 1.) Increase in density from 24 allowed dwelling units to a not-to-exceed unit count of 48 dwelling units, 2.) Increase in height from an allowed 50 feet to a not-to-exceed height of 63 feet, 3.) A reduction in the rear yard setback from the required 25 feet to a not-to-exceed distance of 8 feet, 4.) A reduction in side yard landscape area width from 7 feet to a width of 3 feet, and 5.) A reduction in the required number of on-site loading areas to zero (0).

Mr. Tom Meador, principal with Michigan Avenue Real Estate Group, applicant, introduced the application and development team.

Mr. John Schiess, project manager, provided information relative to data facts, zoning facts, comprehensive plan standards, the walk score and demographics.

Mr. Jay Keller, project architect, went through the site, landscape and architectural plans. He discussed the Wight & Co. architectural review memorandum and spoke to the programming of the building.

Ms. Meredith Vlahakis, project architect, detailed the landscape plan regarding plantings, fencing and parkway improvements. Later Ms. Vlahakis reviewed the shadow study and photometric plan for the project.

Mr. Bill Grieve, applicant's transportation planner, reviewed the traffic impact study indicating a well-developed traffic plan with extended time frames during peak hours; 6-9A and 4-7P. Mr. Grieve indicated that the traffic produced by the development would have little impact to existing conditions.

Monica, applicant's civil engineer, reviewed the water and sewer services to the proposed building.

Mr. Schiess reviewed the neighborhood meeting held prior to the application submittal.

Village Planner Failor reviewed the staff's report indicated general support but pointing out staff concerns with the architectural design and impacts to the single family residential properties to the south of the project site.

Village Architectural Design Consultant, Mr. Floyd Anderson provided an overview of his memorandum to the Village and Plan Commission. Mr. Anderson indicated that they cannot endorse the project's architectural design for the reasons mentioned in the memorandum.

The Plan Commission asked questions of engineering staff.

Village Engineer McKenna provided a brief overview regarding loading operations, traffic conditions, the Village's review of the traffic impact study, landscaping and the proposed driveway on Gunderson Avenue. Mr. McKenna indicated to issues with the traffic impact study and supported the installation of the parking driveway on Gunderson Avenue. Mr. McKenna indicated a bond should be provided to ensure payment for any potential infrastructure modification necessary in the future.

The Plan Commission asked additional questions to Mr. McKenna regarding the driveway on Gunderson, the alley usage and the traffic impact study.

The Plan Commission then made statements to and asked questions of the applicant. The commission was questioning the natural light and vent in the proposed apartments, rental viability, number of families proposed, compensating benefits, and public art. The commissioners continued with questions about the storefront activation and window displays for public art and the lightening up of the façade. Discussion ensued regarding the architecture, setbacks of the upper floors, construction types, and the market analysis.

### **Cross Examination.**

Mr. Stephen Legatzke asked the applicant about, the Gunderson garage entrance, clear site triangles, the traffic impact study, the rear yard setback, the possible alley closure for construction, long term tenancy, and construction type.

Ms. Tina Birnbaum asked about traffic and occupants of the apartments.

Mr. Stanley Birnbaum asked about the architecture, setbacks, loading area, garbage pick-up, water and sewer and traffic counts.

Mr. Adam Korchek asked about the loading area, south wall, construction material, the proposed bump out on Gunderson, garbage pick-up, vehicular indicators such as strobes or beeping, and the variances.

**Public Testimony - In Favor.**

Mr. Paul Beckwith stated his support for the project. He indicated development of this price point was needed.

Mr. Tim Kelley agreed with Mr. Beckwith and in addition stated that the existing building has is not in great shape and would need to be replaced soon.

**Public Testimony – In Opposition.**

Ms. Tina Birnbaum stated the proposal is too large for the property. She was concerned with parking, school children walking by, parking exiting and entering too close to the sidewalk, and questioned why the applicant couldn't meet the zoning code.

Mr. Stanley Birnbaum stated that this location was a good location for apartments. However, the garage should access Madison not Gunderson. There should be greater setbacks on the south property line. The applicant needs to better explain the need for variances and the market analysis is not accurate.

Mr. Adam Korchek stated that this development is not appropriate for this location. The architecture is boring and mundane. The neighbors will be battling excessive light, noise, dog waste, air pollution, noise pollution, impact to historic homes, construction problems, and the applicant needs to be better prepared.

Ms. Amy Korchek stated that their taxes won't go down if this is built.

Mr. James Pulaski stated the building was ugly, out of character and the applicant was too greedy.

Mr. Bill Ipema stated he was concerned with traffic increases due to impacts of the road diet and nearby construction projects. He was concerned the alley closure during construction would be disruptive to the neighborhood and the development was too large for the site.

Ms. Maribeth Stein stated she supports development on Madison Street but the neighbors are angry about this development proposal. She stated her concerns were regarding the yard designation, number of persons renting the units, garbage pick-up, safety of pedestrians, and car traffic.

Mr. Prentiss Harris stated his concerns with the closure of the alley, balconies facing his property and the fact that the renters will not be paying taxes.

Katherine Figatner was supportive of development along the Madison corridor, but she was concerned there was no retail on the first floor, state there would be a lack of privacy for her family, and felt the driveway on Gunderson would make an unsafe situation.

Mr. Chris Donovan stated the development should follow the zoning regulations.

Ms. Anne Dickerson stated that she agrees with previous sentiment, the site is too small for the development, there is a safety issue for pedestrians and school children, and the development is too dense.

Ms. Kristen Mallik stated that this is not the Plan Commission's only choice. She was concerned about pedestrian safety.

Mr. Justin Brown noted other developments along Madison meeting code. He indicated the rendering was out of scope, the marketing plan was flawed and there needs to be a greater step-back on the upper floors along the south property line.

Mr. Stephen Legatzke stated his opposition to the development indicating it was too tall and too dense, did not meet the new 2017 Zoning Ordinance, no compelling information was presented for the variances, no adequate use of the property was provided for the residents and dogs. The development should be made safer and include affordable housing.

Mr. John Conour stated his concern for the alley closure during construction and after the building was built making it difficult for a large SUV to maneuver.

Ms. Stacy Fifer stated that the development doesn't comport with the comprehensive plan or Madison Street Plan or the Zoning Ordinance. Other developments do. She was concerned about safety, site lines and in adequate bicycle parking.

Mr. Tom Thomas stated he was concerned with the development.

Mr. Joerg Albrect stated he was concerned the architecture didn't take into consideration the abutting historic district to the south. He stated the height was too great and doesn't follow historic guidelines. He was not supportive of the proposed public art component along Madison Street.

Ms. Anna Johnson stated she agreed with many speakers. She noted there were several errors in the application. She was concerned with the architecture as the development borders an historic district. The building was not in scale with the neighborhood, the public benefits were lacking and the developer should donate to the park district.

Ms. Elizabeth Loentz stated her family would have a lack of privacy and the proposed park benches were not a good public benefit.

Mr. Timothy Maly stated the proposal was sloppy and a midland development.

Mr. John Saxine stated that the developer should use more common sense.

**Public Testimony was closed.**

The Plan Commission made statements for the applicant to consider. The commissioners stated that the applicant should revisit the architecture as it wasn't well thought out and is inappropriate next to an historic district. They should reconsider the location of the parking floor entrance/exit – consider Madison access and present what obstacles there may be for using Madison Street – maybe consider a right-in, right-out option. Step back the 5<sup>th</sup> floor on the south side. Some commissioner preferred the access on Gunderson vs. Madison Street, but the applicant needs to deal with it differently. The project should setback further than 7 feet from the south lot line – there is too much lot coverage. The applicant needs to bring samples of the materials to the next meeting. Some were concerned with the height and that there needs to be more compensating benefits. The applicant should consider upgrading their energy efficiency offering and provide annual reports on water and energy usage. The applicant should consider a donation to the Oak Park Park District. The applicant should do a better job in presenting their application and discuss architectural design with the Village's architectural consultant. The applicant should provide information on property taxes and school impacts.

**APPROVED January 23, 2020**

The Commission continued the hearing. Commissioner Foster motioned to continue to March 5, 2020, seconded by Commissioner May.

Roll Call Vote:

Motion by Commissioner Foster – yes  
Seconded by Commissioner May - yes  
Commissioner Bridge- yes  
Commissioner Clark – yes  
Commissioner Sims–yes  
Commissioner Flowers – yes  
Commissioner Brozek – yes  
Chair Mann - yes

Village Planner Failor provided an overview of the upcoming meetings. The commission requested examples of zoning regulations from other communities regarding recreational cannabis regulations for next week's meeting.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 p.m. – Motioned by Commissioner Brozek, Seconded by Commissioner May.

Prepared by: Craig Failor, Village Planner / Staff Liaison