

City of West Branch Special Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting
April 22, 2024
West Branch City Council Chambers, 110 North Poplar Street

Chairperson John Fuller called the Special Planning & Zoning Commission meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Roll call:

Commission members present: John Fuller, Ryan Bowers, Madison Conley, Brad Bower, Matt Van Scoyoc, Max Kober. Absent: Ryan Foley and Brad Bower

City Staff present: City Admin Adam Kofoed, and Zoning Administrator Terry Goerd.

Developers present: Chris Kofoed and Brad Larson.

Public present: Councilperson Sexton, Bruce Barnhart, Brian Boelk

APPROVE AGENDA/CONSENT AGENDA/MOVE TO ACTION.

Approve the agenda for the April 22, 2024 Planning & Zoning Commission meeting. /Move to action.

Motion by Kober, second by Bower to approve the agenda. Motion carried 5-0.

PUBLIC HEARING/NON-CONSENT AGENDA

Public Hearing regarding Amending the West Branch Zoning Code regarding rezoning a parcel from R-1 to R-2 in The Meadows, Part 6.

Chairperson John Fuller opened the public meeting at 7:02pm.

Fuller asked those in favor to speak. Brian Boelk the engineer for the developers, spoke in favor and explained the rezoning. The intent is to allow both single family and zero lots. Developers chose R-2 to prevent spot zoning and it allows more choices for residents since single family and zero lots are both allowed.

Fuller asked those opposed to speak. Councilperson Jerry Sexton voiced his opposition and concerns with the rezoning. Sexton feels there needs to be designated R-1 lots as there are already denser developments happening on Parkside and Heritage Hill.

A resident in the audience asked if W. Orange would extend to Cedar Johnson Road as she lives on the corner of Dawson and W. Orange and has concerns about a through street being next to her property.

Public Hearing Closed at 7:05pm.

Consider the request to Rezone that particular parcel from R-1 to R-2 in The Meadows Part 6 and forward the request to the City Council for consideration. /Move to action.

Commissioner Van Scoyoc asked about a previous board meeting on this subject and wanted to know how many lots would be single family and how many would be zero lots. Engineer Boelk explained that rezoning takes first before a preliminary plat but yes eleven out of nineteen properties will be single family.

Commissioner Conley expressed support for housing diversity. Commissioner Bowers asked about the rezoning to both R-1 and R-2. Engineer Boelk explained that mixing zoning codes in a smaller subdivision could lead to legal spot zoning issues.

There were questions about whether buyers would want R-1 to be next to R-2 homes. Developer Larson explained that in Phase V, three lots have been sold for single family units in R-2 zones and generally its not an issue when selling lots.

Administrator Kofoed explained the board can add conditions to a rezoning since the developers are asking to change the rezoning law. Kofoed explained that zero lot construction has been outpacing single family construction in this country the last several years and West Branch is not unique to that trend. Kofoed expects those trends will continue as the increase of housing prices have vastly outpaced increases in income, plus increased interest rates are only adding more difficulties for homeowners to afford a single-family home. Kofoed reminded the board that it is the commissions duty to vote in compliance with comprehensive plan: Here are some samples of the housing chapter:

- The number two goal in the housing chapter is housing diversity. R-2 provides more options, while R-1 restricts options.
- 2011 and 2017 West Branch and Cedar County comprehensive plan surveys, that housing options and affordability scored much higher than single family atmosphere.

A discussion occurred between the board about if adding restrictions to the rezoning was necessary. Fuller and Conley believed the board should follow the comprehensive plan and let the market decide what housing people desire. Building inspector Goerdts preferred housing be occupied. Councilperson Sexton expressed concern they could all go R-2. Van Scoyoc suggested he would like some sort of restrictions as he is concerned it could all be R-2. Developers stated it takes much longer to sell \$500,000 single family homes. They would like to build more R-1 lots but the market can absorb that many. Kober and Bowers questioned about the conditions and shared some concerns that they could all be R-2. Fuller encouraged the commission to put a timetable on the restrictions since developers. Van Scoyoc mentioned that maybe there could be an economic hardship if single family was not selling.

Bowers made a motion to approve the rezoning with a condition that at least 50% of the lots be reserved for single family lots and if they did not sell in three years that requirement would be removed. Seconded by Fuller. Motion passed 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

Reports

Inspector Goerdts provided good news with an increase in building inspections this spring. Goerdts mentioned there was not much selling in single family homes in the Iowa City area and West Branch is in a good position with development.

Kofoed explained nuisance abatement season will be starting and if someone they know gets a letter to please have them get in touch with the city right away. Our partners at ECIA may have funding available.

Adjourn

Motion by Van Scoyoc, second by Bowers to adjourn the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting. Motion carried on a voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:41pm.

Submitted by:

Adam Kofoed

City Administrator