

Observer Report
Planning and Development Committee
December 10, 2007

Observer: Fran Seidman

Meeting began: About 6:45 PM.

Present/Absent: All aldermen present except Steve Bernstein, who arrived about 1/2 hour late. Angina Hansen was the Chairperson. Meeting was well-attended. A goodly amount of staff was present--Julia Carroll, Jim Wolinski, Legal Dep't representatives.

Minutes of November 26th meeting were approved,

Significant Items:

First item was Ordinance to allow a 93 day extension of the Downtown Moratorium. This had been the subject of contention at the last Council meeting, and a compromise had been reached to extend moratorium until 12/11, and make a decision tonight. Alderman Wollin said that having watched the recent meeting of the Plan Commission, she felt they needed more time to work on the plan, but she did not feel that the hold should go beyond March. Alderman Jean-Baptiste raised the issue of the need for office space and commercial space, and seemed to indicate that this planning would take time. Alderman Rainey said we can't erect a sign saying "No development welcome here" and the developers should decide how to offer plans for further development. Julia Carroll said that it is unlikely that an office-based project will come forward.

After further spirited discussion, there seemed to be agreement to support another 93 day period of moratorium. A voice vote was taken--it seemed the ayes carried, and I could not determine who voted against it.

Alderman Bernstein arrived in time for the discussion of request for extension for completion date for project at 1603-1629 Orrington. Problem seems to involve Exit ramp coming up onto Orrington, which impedes the planning for retail development at that location. Council members seemed impatient with delay, but did pass it--only Alderman Moran voted "no".

Proposal for a Type 2 restaurant at 809 Davis Street (Redmango) was approved for Introduction. There is to be no cooking there, and from what I could understand, their cuisine consists solely of yogurt.

Committee voted unanimously in favor of giving the honorary name of "Dr. Mike Martin Drive" to a section of Prairie Ave. between Grant and Colfax.

Three additional items were added to the agenda for discussion. One was to be a presentation by a representative of Washington Mutual, regarding changes in their operations. The representative was not present. A second item referred to proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, which will involve input by the P & D Committee, the Plan Commission, and the

Zoning Board of Appeals. Apparently there will be a distinction between minor and major zoning variations, and it all seems quite complicated.

A final item was a presentation by John LaPlante of the findings of a traffic study, identifying three major problem areas where traffic does not move smoothly and efficiently. The model showed very clearly how coordinated changes would correct some of the existing problems. This is an updated model, and apparently has some relevance to downtown planning. I found it most interesting but did not hear the applications for the immediate future.

Meeting adjourned at about 8:30 PM.