

**Observer Report
Planning and
Development Committee
August 10, 2009**

Observer: Nancy Bashook

Aldermen Present: Jean-Baptiste, Wilson, Wynn, Holmes, Rainey

Staff: Dennis Marino, Dominic ? (Zoning Planner)

Media: EvanstonNow, Evanston Review

Meeting began: 7:02 p.m

Meeting ended: 8:29 pm

Items for Consideration

(P1) Authorization of submittal of an application to Cook County, Illinois for funding under the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP1) in the amount of approximately \$4,000,000. This application must be submitted by August 14, 2009. This application is for the acquisition and rehabilitation of affordable housing. \$154,000 is earmarked for additional green improvements. This is similar to the state application but a larger geography is included.
Approved

(P2) Consideration of ordinance permitting a special use for “The Ultimate Chicken Bar” restaurant at 1739 Sherman Avenue in the D2 “Downtown Retail Core District”. ZBA recommends approval with condition regarding litter and garbage collection plan.
This is a redesigned storefront and was formerly a bookstore. Ald. Fiske is concerned about adding another Type 2 restaurant on the block. She is in support of this request, but wants to address in the future what types of businesses should be encouraged in that block.

The owner explained that all the chicken is grilled, served Japanese style with teryaki and steamed vegetables. It is mostly carryout. Ald. Wynne reminded him about the conditions for litter and garbage.
Approved.

(P3) Consideration of ordinance to grant major variations at 2150 Sherman Avenue from Section 6-16-2-7 of the Zoning Ordinance. These variations would allow an aisle width of a double loaded module parked at 90 degrees to be 19.9’ where the minimum requirement is 24’; and to allow the double loaded module width parked at 90 degrees to be 55.7’ where the minimum requirement is 60’. ZBA recommends approval.

A couple of citizens spoke against this saying this was eliminating too much space. Concerned about how to get to autos and dumpsters. The rep for the management company said there is no place to put garbage cans. Because of lost space he proposes to move garbage cans into the alley. Currently, one dumpster and two recycling cans are in an adjacent building for \$150 per month.

Dennis Marino encouraged the committee to introduce this and then make certain there is sufficient space for vehicles to get in and out without much trouble. Suggested they do a template study.

Approved to introduce to Council and refer back to committee for further discussion.

(P4) Consideration of approval for a sidewalk café for Type 1 Restaurant: Las Palmas. This is a first-time request.

Ald. Fiske said she cannot support this and suggests holding in committee until more creative ideas are considered. This would be a nuisance to people in the Sherman Garden Apartments.

Ald. Baptiste amended the request to three tables instead of four and closing at 8 pm during the week, instead of 9 pm. The weekend closing should be at 9 pm. This could help through this season, and next year Ald. Fiske's creative ideas could be considered.

Ald. Wilson is also concerned that this is a very small area and would still not be good for three tables. Ald. Holmes thinks three tables is a good compromise on a trial basis.

The manager of Las Palmas explained that business is going down every summer, so this is a way to make money, and he would like to give his employees more hours. Outside tables always stay busy, and he gets calls asking for outside seating.

Citizens explained that the patio would be right next to the building and 8 feet from the windows. Safety, noise, property values, and people working at home are concerns of the neighbors. Ald. Rainey called these noise issues "sounds of summer" and has a problem with the opposition.

Manager wants to close at 9 pm on weekdays, Sunday through Thursday and 9:30 pm on weekends. Revised amendment is weekdays 8 pm and weekends 9:30 pm. Intent is to stop serving at closing times, but people can sit for awhile, especially if they haven't finished their meals.

Approved motion as amended.

(P5) The Housing Commission recommends continuing the monthly assistance with construction loan interest payment for Reba Place Development Corporation and Evanston Community Development Association, as they attempt to close out sales of the affordable units at 602 Mulford and 736-38 Dobson. The monthly funding is \$2,800 for RPDC and \$1,600 for ECDA, totaling \$4,400 per month.

Rainey has been opposed to this issue from the beginning. She expressed her anger at having to continually support these developers and their empty units, when there are

people who have a fear of going into foreclosure and we could help them instead. Ald. Wilson agrees and would like to develop some exit strategies.

With the economic downturn it is difficult to get people to qualify for these units. If they are not supported, it would expose the city to \$256,000 and \$465,000 if units not occupied by income eligible households. The city has an obligation to HUD to repay a pro rata share of HUD funds. The deadline for paying back is negotiable with HUD.

Rainey suggested meeting with HUD. Dennis Marino said he and Dona have already engaged HUD about this, and HUD says city must show good faith effort. This is their consistent response.

Developer Keith Banks from ECDA asked the Council not to abandon them in these tough economic times. Units could convert to rentals, but not fair to current owners.

Rainey asked that staff provide new board members with thorough background of past discussions on this issue.

Held in committee and link to PD1 for further discussion.

Items for Discussion

PD1 Recommendation to provide additional \$175,000 in HOME funds to reduce purchase prices on affordable units at two city-assisted condominium developments at 602 Mulford and 736-38 Dobson. The funding consists of a total of \$110,000 for RPDC's seven units and \$65,000 total for ECDA's three units.

Comments:

Ald. Wynne watched the clock and made sure the meeting concluded on time.