

**Planning Commission  
MINUTES - Workshop Meeting**

**January 8, 2014  
City of Hagerstown, Maryland**

Douglas S. Wright, Jr., chair, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m., on Wednesday, January 8, 2014, in the Conference Room, Fourth Floor, City Hall. Also present were commission members C. Coleman, D. Miller, R. Thomas, and J. Wheeler. The following staff members were present: K. Maher, Planning Director; S. Bockmiller, Development Planner/Zoning Administrator; A. Rohrbaugh, Planner; and D. Calhoun, Secretary.

**Approval of Minutes: December 11, 2013 –Regular Meeting.**

**MOTION:** (Miller/Wheeler) I'll make a motion to approve.  
**DISCUSSION:** None.  
**ACTION:** APPROVED (ABSTAIN – Thomas, Wright)

**Younger Auto Group – 212 All Star Court (Lot 1) – Parking Area, Site Plan, Case No. ZS-2013-07.**

This item was removed from the agenda at the request of the applicant's engineer.

**Kiwanis Park – 371 Dynasty Drive – Parking Lot, Site Plan, Case No. ZS-2013-08.**

Staff Report: This site plan is for the construction of a ten-space parking lot for Kiwanis Park. Park improvements will be addressed in a future site plan. The concept plan for stormwater management was approved by the Planning Commission on November 13, 2013. The applicant seeks a waiver to reduce the required parking lot buffer from an adjacent property from ten feet to 6.4 feet at its narrowest point for a small area adjacent to the westernmost parking space. In addition, landscaping has been augmented in this area to offset the small incursion into the buffer. This was discussed when the concept plan was reviewed by the Planning Commission, and there was general support for this deviation from standards, given topography and other factors. Staff has no objection to this request. Forest Conservation for this property was met with the development plan for the subdivision within which it is located. There are forest conservation easement areas on this lot, but none are affected by the proposed construction. The site plan was routed for review and all agencies have approved it. Staff recommended approval of the site plan, subject to approval of the waiver request.

Applicant Presentation/Commission Discussion: Mr. Wright asked whether access to Antietam Creek will be completely on Lot 20. Mr. Bockmiller stated that access will not encroach onto the adjoining property.

**MOTION:** (Miller/Thomas) So moved (to approve with the previously approved exceptions).  
**DISCUSSION:** None.  
**ACTION:** APPROVED (Unanimous)

**West City Elementary School Concept Plan – Update.**

David Trostle of Frederick, Seibert & Associates, Inc., engineers for the project, stated that since the amendment to the PUD, his firm has been working with Washington County Public Schools (WCPS) and the architect for the project to meet the school board's requirements and staff requirements. A copy of the latest plan was distributed and is in the meeting file. This plan has been approved by the WCPS. As currently proposed, the project will consist of two phases. The new concept plan shows the school building closer to Hager's Crossing Drive by 70 feet and the building itself is now oriented toward Hager's Crossing Drive. Staff parking is shown further from the building; visitor parking is near the building. Potentially, 20 additional parking spaces could be added in Phase 2.

Bus loop/drop off will be off of Buell Court and is separate from the parking area. The loop will be one way entering from the north and exiting at the south. The parking area on the west side of the site allows adequate stacking per WCPS specifications and there not be a problem with queuing backing up onto the roundabout. Play areas have been combined and moved closer to the building. The stormwater management pond has been revised and will be shared with the community center. Two play areas are shown close to the school for younger children.

Aaron House of BFM Architects stated that Phase I construction will be a two-story wing for Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Grades 1 and 2. Second floor will house Grades 3 through 5. If Phase 2 is warranted, Grades 4 and 5 will occupy the second floor only. Lower grades would be concentrated on the first floor.

Mr. Thomas had questions about how students will access the play areas and was concerned about the distance small children might have to walk through the building to access play areas. One of the school board representatives present at the meeting pointed out that the play areas will be close to the cafeteria. Mr. Wright's biggest concern was to make certain that the younger students be separated from the older students. He asked if there will be fencing around the play areas. A school board representative said fencing around the play areas has not been determined. Any proposed fencing will be shown on the site plan. Due to the school building's location on the property, Mr. Trostle noted that any fencing around the play areas would not encroach into the required front setbacks. Play areas will be available to the general public. Play fields proposed for the rear of the site will not be fenced and fencing near playgrounds would have gaps so the public can access the areas.

Handicapped parking spaces are provided in three locations. Number of spaces provided exceeds the ordinance requirements. All handicapped parking is located in the parent area on the west side of the building. The bus loop is handicapped accessible with depressed curbs. Mr. Bockmiller noted that the walkway near the traffic circle is not symmetrical. Mr. Trostle stated that there are topographic issues and a crosswalk is provided further up the drive.

Mr. Bockmiller commented on the architectural drawings and asked if it would be feasible to add elements to give the feel of a traditional school façade rather than a building side view.

Mr. House said they are considering each side independently; however, they must take into consideration the overall scale to be respectful of the neighborhood. Textures and different masonry materials/patterns will be used to help bring the scale of the building down.

Other points discussed:

- Initial capacity will be 471 students; with the Phase 2 expansion, capacity would be 745.
- The water quality area will be in the form of a bio-retention facility and will look like landscaping; any standing water will be underground.
- Sidewalk on the southwest corner at the traffic circle is nonexistent. WCPS officials assured the commission that the sidewalk will connect when the project is finished.
- The stub end of Potter Bell Way will be converted to a ten-foot turnaround with curbing.
- Time frames for the project include: approval of the stormwater management plan in early February; site plan review by the Planning Commission in late February; building permit application in late May; construction to begin in August 2014.

Ms. Maher and Mr. Wright commended WCPS and its design professionals for the good job in responding to staff and commission comments. Rob Rollins, WCPS, thanked Planning staff for its help and support throughout the process.

### **Local Conversion District Status Review.**

Mr. Bockmiller and Mr. Rohrbaugh presented a status report on the Local Conversion District (LCD) overlay district (report is in meeting file). The LCD Overlay process has been in effect since January 2010. To date the City has three Local Conversion District overlay districts in place: the former View Street Diner; the former Corsi's Pizza at the intersection of Maryland Avenue and West Wilson Boulevard; and April Hodge's pet grooming business on North Locust Street. Of these three sites, two of them are viable businesses and the third building is very slowly being renovated.

Staff has received numerous inquiries about the zoning overlay process, but only three of these inquiries has led to an application. Several of them became less interested when they found out that they needed to bring the properties up to a certain standard in exchange for the zoning and the new use would require building code upgrades. Due to staffing limitations a planned outreach program has not been undertaken.

Staff brought up several points of the overlay program for discussion:

- Staff believes that expectations for signage should be somewhat higher. The types of signage used so far have been ineffective in some cases and unprofessional in others. At Charlie's (the former Corsi's Pizza site), metal stick-on numbers have been attached to the siding of the building to advertise the telephone number. The main sign is too small to be effective. At the Hodge property, the window lettering could have been done more professionally.

**Planning Commission  
MINUTES - Workshop Meeting**

**January 8, 2014  
City of Hagerstown, Maryland**

- Should LCD overlay sites be limited to truly mixed-use buildings and clearly commercial buildings or should buildings rather residential in nature, similar to the Corsi's site, be considered? "Corsi's" is a house with a constructed basement and small side addition.
- Should owners of property covered by LCD overlays be granted an indefinite number of extensions? Ordinance currently gives owners two years to get the business up and running. If that does not occur within two years, the zoning reverts back to the original zoning. However, extensions can be approved by the Planning Commission.

Concerning the first point, Mr. Wright was opposed to making the process more onerous for small businesses. Signage can be expensive and businesses just starting out may have difficulty finding funds in their budget for professionally made signage. In the case of the Corsi's site, none of the neighbors in the area had a problem with Corsi's before it closed. It was his recollection that the Local Conversion District overlay was portrayed as an opportunity to bring empty storefronts back into use and to allow a property owner with an empty storefront in a residential area to be able to productively use it again. Also, the commission was in favor of creating "walk-to" businesses and Mom-and-Pop shops in neighborhoods.

Ms. Wheeler recalled the initial discussions when the Local Conversion District overlay district was being considered. Part of the rationale was to not treat these as strictly economic decisions. She recalled the distinct discussion that we're supposed to be helping improve the neighborhood. There is a different kind of cost of not having to go in for the rezoning to allow the Conversion District overlay. The commission was supposed to see an improvement also in the property itself. She is personally disappointed with what ended up happening at Corsi's. She thought the intention was to create an opportunity for improvement, especially at a major corner. The Corsi's project failed in that respect. Neighbors might not complain, but Ms. Wheeler did not believe the city got a project that made an improvement to that major corner location.

Ms. Wheeler added that during the initial discussions, Mr. Wright had asked about making change to the overall environmental impacts on adjoining properties at the Corsi's site.

Mr. Bockmiller noted that staff's intention from the beginning was a tradeoff: commercial zoning for property improvements. Ms. Maher said the LCD overlay was designed to help properties that developed as a commercial use before there was zoning in the city.

Commission and staff agreed that more work should be done up front to make sure applicants understand what is involved with placing an LCD overlay on a property. Recently staff has been meeting with potential applicants along with the Chief Code Official because usually a change of use building permit is necessary for these uses. Commission members suggested adding city staff from the Economic Development office to possibly find business financing for new businesses. Ms. Maher indicated that she would look into whether the Sign and Façade Grant program could be extended to include Local Conversion District properties, thereby making them eligible for funding for more professional-looking signage. Ms. Wheeler suggested looking into partnering with the Barbara Ingram School for the Arts to help design signage. Partnerships could also be formed with SCORE or business students at Frostburg University.

**Planning Commission  
MINUTES - Workshop Meeting**

**January 8, 2014  
City of Hagerstown, Maryland**

Concerning infinite extensions, staff will look at the wording in the ordinance to see if there might be a way to tighten up the requirements.

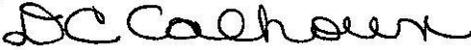
**Other Business.**

Ms. Wheeler reported that at a recent Neighborhoods 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, someone from one of the neighborhoods brought up Collegiate Acres. This person was outraged that the City allowed the new apartment units to be approved. The feeling is that this development could become another CortPark. Ms. Maher noted that she was made aware of the problem by Councilmember Penny Nigh and Ms. Maher has put together a packet of information for Ms. Nigh explaining the differences between the two developments.

**Adjourn.**

It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn at 5:27 p.m.

1/29/2014  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Approved

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Debra C. Calhoun - Secretary