

MINUTES
COLUMBIA CITY PLAN COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 4, 2023
7:00 P.M.

WHITLEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
MEETING ROOM A/B, LOWER LEVEL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Walt Crowder
Jon Kissinger
Donald Langeloh
Nicki Venable
Dennis Warnick
Dan Weigold
Larry Weiss, President
Patrick Zickgraf, Vice President

MEMBERS ABSENT

Chip Hill

STAFF

Nathan Bilger
Amanda Thompson

ATTORNEY

(absent)

(E)lectronic participant

AUDIENCE MEMBERS

Three visitors signed the Guest List at the meeting. There were no attendees on the webcast. A Guest List is included with the minutes of this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mr. Weiss called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M. Ms. Thompson read the roll with members present and absent listed above.

CONSIDERATION OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

Minutes from the May, August, September, and November meetings were considered. The members voted as follows:

Mr. Warnick made a motion to approve the May minutes as distributed, Mr. Zickgraf gave the second, and the motion passed, 7-0-1; Mr. Crowder abstained due to not having been present at the May meeting.

Mr. Kissinger made a motion to approve the August minutes as distributed, Mr. Langeloh gave the second, and the motion passed, 8-0.

Mr. Warnick made a motion to approve the September minutes as distributed, Mr. Kissinger gave the second, and the motion passed 6-0-2, with Ms. Venable and Mr. Langeloh in abstention due to having been absent from the September meeting.

Ms. Venable made a motion to approve the November minutes as distributed, Mr. Langeloh gave the second, and the motion passed 7-0-1. Mr. Crowder abstained due to an undeclared reason.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH

Mr. Bilger administered the Oath to visitors planning to speak at the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

1. 23-C-REZ-3

Farm Credit Mid-America requested an amendment to the Columbia City Zoning Map to reclassify 2.27 acres of property located on the northeast corner of Connexion Way and W. Lincolnway from the A-1, Agricultural District, to the GB, General Business District. Mr. Bilger stated that this property was not rezoned when the corporate park was established; the current owner proposed to construct an office building, so rezoning to a commercial district was requested. He displayed the Future Land Use Map and explained that the map indicated Low Density Residential or Commercial; he described that the members should decide how to interpret the Map with respect to the proposal. Mr. Bilger outlined the Review Criteria listed in the Staff Report. There were no questions for Mr. Bilger, and Mr. Weiss requested to hear from the petitioner.

Todd Lanning of Milestone Design Group, Inc. introduced himself as the civil engineer for the project and asked if the members had any questions about the request. There were none. Mr. Weiss asked if anyone else wished to speak with regard to the petition. Hearing none, he closed the public hearing. Mr. Warnick made a motion to approve 23-C-REZ-3. Mr. Kissinger gave the second. Motion passed 8-0. Mr. Bilger stated that a favorable recommendation would be forwarded to City Council.

2. 23-C-DEV-5 - CONTINUED

Mr. Bilger announced that Impact Holdings had requested a continuance, so their development plan would be reviewed at the Plan Commission's January 8th meeting.

3. 23-C-DEV-6

Farm Credit Mid-America requested Development Plan approval for a 5,695± square foot financial institution/office building proposed to be located on the northeast corner of Connexion Way and W. Lincolnway. For reference, Mr. Bilger stated that the approximate address of the site was 1110 W. Lincolnway, and the proposal was contingent upon finalization of the pending zoning request. He described the parking, detention pond, access driveways to both Lincolnway and Connexion Way, and the landscaping. Mr. Bilger displayed an aerial image with contours and explained that the site drains towards Lincolnway where it goes through a culvert under the road to a field and eventually to a legal drain farther south. He referenced comment letters from the Soil and Water Conservation District and from the County Engineer, discussing the capacity of the culvert. Mr. Bilger praised the landscape plan for exceeding Code requirements. He summarized the Review Criteria and suggested 7 conditions of approval.

Mr. Weiss asked if having an access point on Lincolnway would be in conflict with the plan for the future of US 30. Mr. Bilger agreed that it would. Ms. Venable asked if the members should discuss sidewalks. Mr. Bilger referenced page 2 of the Staff Report and suggested the members separately review Lincolnway and Connexion Way for sidewalks. The members considered various options.

Mr. Langeloh expressed concerns about drainage and especially regarding the proposed access point on Lincolnway. He stated that the area is dangerous, and the speed limit should

be reduced. The members asked what the process was for amending the speed limit. Mr. Bilger said he would speak with the County Highway Director and the County Engineer. There were no further questions for Mr. Bilger, and Mr. Weiss requested to hear from the petitioner.

Todd Lanning reported that Farm Credit requested an entrance that directly accessed the front of their building, which they wanted to face west. He said they also discussed that if a customer accidentally drove past Connexion Way, they would still be able to enter the property. Mr. Warnick and Mr. Langeloh asked if there would be a deceleration lane and a passing blister. Mr. Lanning stated that they did not do any trip calculations to determine if these would be necessary. The Commission members expressed that the traffic in this area was excessive, especially in the morning hours. Mr. Bilger asked if the Commission would want the petitioner to do a traffic study. Several members expressed a preference for eliminating the Lincolnway access.

Mr. Weiss said he would like to see the Connexion Way access widened and curbing added such that the entrance would match that of the restaurant to the south. Mr. Lanning stated that he could meet this request. Mr. Kissinger asked how many employees would be on-site at a time. Mr. Lanning replied they would regularly have 5-6 employees, each of which might expect to help 1-2 customers per hour. The members considered the amount of parking proposed. Mr. Lanning said Farm Credit typically requests 25-30 spaces for their sites as this helps to accommodate customers driving larger trucks and trucks with trailers. The Commission members considered that a wider driveway would additionally assist such customers. Mr. Kissinger also pointed out that these bigger/slower vehicles would add to the concerns already expressed regarding the Lincolnway access.

Mr. Lanning said he would verify that the culvert wasn't plugged and have his engineer verify the drainage capacity. He confirmed for Mr. Bilger that the drainage calculations had been completed for the entire site, and he was not aware of any plan to develop the northern portion of the lot.

Mr. Zickgraf asked if Farm Credit would consider an agreement to install sidewalks on Lincolnway if/when development would occur north of their property. The members discussed several additional options regarding sidewalks. Mr. Bilger suggested deciding which streets need sidewalks and providing the option for installing them or putting an equivalent amount into ESCROW or a performance bond.

There were no further questions for Mr. Lanning, and Mr. Weiss requested to hear from other speakers. Darren Daniel introduced himself to the Commission and inquired about the lighting and signage proposed for the site. He expressed that his property is negatively impacted by the lights on the surrounding commercial properties. Mr. Lanning described that the parking lot lighting would be directed down, and the pole sign would be internally lit, not digital. Mr. Daniel requested the Board consider the effect of any light pollution. Mr. Weiss read the suggested conditions that were intended to address this issue. Mr. Daniel additionally expressed severe concern for public safety with regard to the proposed Lincolnway entrance. He described the intense amount of traffic in the area and concluded by stating that he was not against the project but was against more light and the Lincolnway entrance.

No one else wished to speak. The members discussed conditions for approval. Mr. Lanning stated that the conditions were acceptable. Mr. Warnick made a motion to approve the proposal with the conditions, as discussed. Mr. Crowder gave the second; motion passed 7-1 with Mr. Weigold voting against. The conditions of approval are as follows:

1. Approved as presented.
2. Address the comments from the SWCD/MS4.
3. Work with the County Engineer to ensure adequate drainage flow is available through the Lincolnway culvert to prevent standing water in the side ditch.
4. Remove the driveway access from Lincolnway or complete a traffic study, the recommendations of which are to be implemented.
5. Exterior lighting must be directed and/or shielded to prevent glare onto public rights-of-way.
6. Light spillage shall not exceed 0.5 foot-candle at any residential property line.
7. Any refuse container/dumpster must be fully enclosed with an opaque screen.
8. Install 5' sidewalks on the north side of Connexion Way and the east side of Lincolnway, with the option of a performance bond or escrow agreement.
9. Increase the width of the drive on Connexion Way to 30' and add curbing.

Mr. Weiss called a 5 minute recess, and the meeting resumed at 8:15 P.M.

4. 23-C-DEV-7

Indiana Car Wash Holdings requested Development Plan approval for reconfiguration of the site at 508 N. Main Street. Mr. Bilger stated that the property was formerly occupied by Advanced Auto, and a Development Plan had been approved in 2005 with setback and landscaping Variances. He clarified that reconfiguration of the parking and access caused the need for a new Development Plan review. Mr. Bilger detailed the plan to convert the existing structure to a drive-through car wash. He displayed the revised site plan and discussed traffic flow, adding that he highly recommended removing the access to Earl Avenue as it conflicts with the flow of traffic and could promote confusion; per the Code, it was also too close to the intersection. Mr. Bilger listed 13 suggested conditions in the Staff Report. He noted that some of the conditions had been addressed by the revised site plan, but he recommended including them so they would still be in effect if changes were made in the future.

Corey Smith, MLS Engineering, was present on behalf of Indiana Car Wash Holdings. He described that the site proposal included stacking for 22 vehicles, plus 3 vehicles inside the building, and the Indiana Department of Transportation had reviewed and provided an approval for the stacking vehicles. Mr. Smith stated that the owner wanted to keep the Earl Avenue access and had proposed to install an A-frame grate and delineator posts to block traffic but allow emergency vehicles. He explained that sidewalks were planned to be added along Earl Avenue. Mr. Bilger confirmed that the City was planning a sidewalk project for Main Street. Mr. Smith said the owner also intends to install the delineator posts through the site instead of striping the traffic flow and etc. The members discussed the traffic flow and other aspects of the proposal.

There was no one else who wished to speak, and Mr. Warnick made a motion to approve the proposal with the conditions listed in the Staff Report. Mr. Langeloh gave the second. Mr. Zickgraf requested clarification on the conditions, and the members discussed at length. Mr. Warnick confirmed that his motion was to approve the proposal with the conditions in the Staff Report while amending #3 such that the driveway to Earl Avenue be “closed” and replaced with a gate, and also eliminating condition #8 (which had required Main Street sidewalks). The members voted 4-4, with Mr. Weigold, Ms. Venable, Mr. Kissinger, and Mr. Weiss voting against. Mr. Bilger clarified that the motion yielded no action, and therefore, the motion had died. Mr. Weiss requested a new motion. Mr. Kissinger made a motion to approve 23-C-DEV-7 with the conditions listed in the Staff Report, excluding condition #8. Ms. Venable gave the second. The motion passed 5-3 with Mr. Zickgraf, Mr. Langeloh, and Mr. Warnick voting against. The conditions of approval are as follows:

1. Address the comments from the SWCD/MS4.
2. Clarify the capacity of the carwash and adjust stacking number to meet the code requirement of stacking spaces equal to five times the capacity.
3. Remove the driveway access from Earl Avenue and replace with landscaping area.
4. Redesign the aisle and parking spaces along the south side of the building to meet the code.
5. Make the Garland Ave. driveway “exit-only” to prevent conflicts with the stacking lane into the carwash.
6. The removed trees be replaced with an equivalent amount of landscaping, subject to the approval of the Community Development Director and Planning Director.
7. Install 5’ sidewalk along the Earl Avenue frontage between Garland Ave. and Main Street.
8. Lampposts are not to exceed 25’ in height.
9. Exterior lighting must be directed and/or shielded to prevent glare onto public rights-of-way.
10. Light spillage shall not exceed 0.5 foot-candle at any residential property line.
11. Any refuse container/dumpster must be fully enclosed with an opaque screen.
12. Signage to conform to the requirements of the sign code.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

Mr. Bilger suggested the Commission consider revising their Rules of Procedure to include a policy for regular review of the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction area. It was the consensus of the members that they would plan to make a formal decision on an amendment of the Rules in January.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Kissinger made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Venable gave the second, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:01 P.M.

GUEST LIST

1. Darren Daniel 1021 W. Lincolnway, Columbia City
2. Todd Lanning 108 Daventry Lane, Louisville, KY
3. Corey Smith 10060 Bent Creek Boulevard, Fort Wayne

GUEST LIST (WEBCAST)

4. None.