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Community Development Department

31 West Quincy Street • Westmont, Illinois 60559
Tel: 630-981-6250 Fax: 630-968-8610

Village of Westmont Planning & Zoning Commission April 10, 2024 - Approved Minutes

The Village of Westmont Planning and Zoning Commission held its regular meeting on Wednesday, **April 10, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.**, at the Westmont Village Hall located at 31 W. Quincy Street, Westmont, Illinois 60559.

Chair Doug Carmichael led in the following:

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Roll Call**

In Attendance: Chair Doug Carmichael, Commissioners Jill Peterson, Chris Lavoie, Boyar Zekiri, Village Attorney John Zemenak, and Senior Planner Scott Williams

Absent: Commissioners Matt Scales, Harold Barry III, and Craig Thomas

3. **Pledge of Allegiance**
4. **Swearing-in of testifying attendees**
5. **Reminder to silence all electronic devices**
6. **Reminder to sign-in for any public testimony**
7. **Approval of the Minutes of the March 13, 2024 regular meeting**

MOTION to approve the regular meeting minutes on March 13, 2024.

Motion by: Lavoie

Second by: Zekiri

VOTING

Scales: Absent

Lavoie: Yes

Zekiri: Yes

Thomas: Absent

Peterson: Yes

Barry: Absent

Carmichael: Yes

8. **Review of Public Hearing Procedures**
9. **Old Business** - none.

9. New Business

PZC 004-2024 Request by BAMTHEATRE, LLC (Petitioner) and GRANT PARTNERS (Owner) at 522 North Cass Avenue, Westmont, Illinois, 60559 for the following:

1. Map Amendment request to rezone from O/R-1 Office Research One District to B-2 General Business District.



Presentation: Peter Coules spoke on behalf of BAMTHEATRE as well as the two owners of the properties associated with the two requests before the Commission. Coules presented BAMTHEATRE's zoning requests and business proposal which included rezoning both 522 and 520 North Cass Avenue from Office Research to B-2 General Business, which he stated would align with the Village's comprehensive plan. The petitioner requested to rezone 522 North Cass Avenue to provide continuity between properties, but there were no proposed changes or development being proposed on that property, only to 520 North Cass Avenue. If the rezoning were approved for both properties, BAMTHEATRE's performing arts use would then be permitted, contingent on the approval of a special use permit.

Coules noted that the previous use, which was a bank, had been vacated during Covid. Coules discussed various site modifications for safety such as the traffic flow of the parking lot since the use would require pickup and drop offs at the back door. Coules wanted to emphasize that the location and use would not be detrimental or dangerous, and would not impact traffic or property values.

Coules touched on the parking requirements, and believed the amount of spaces would be sufficient. They did not have a solidified number of seats since construction had not yet taken place, but it was stated that there have been preliminary discussions with Phillips Flowers if there was a need for a shared parking agreement for overflow parking on certain performance nights.

Melanie Lamro, owner and Artistic Director of BAM THEATRE which was founded in 2001, discussed the history and background of the award-winning and nationally known performing arts program. Lamro described a variety of different programs and classes they offer, and stated they are the only performing arts organization in the Chicagoland area to offer programming at over 20 schools from over 10 neighboring districts. Lamro discussed some of their preliminary plans for the proposed space, also noting they are looking to purchase the building. Proposed hours of operation would include September through May, afternoon and evening times Monday through Friday, and Saturdays 10am to 5pm and then Sundays would be 1pm to 9pm. In the summertime, June through August, summer camp hours would include Monday through Friday, 9am to 10pm. Lamro commented that there would be restrooms on the second floor and basement, and then one single stall on the main floor. Lamro concluded with some details regarding pick up and drop off protocols.

Staff Comment: Senior Planner Scott Williams described both properties and their current status, 522 North Cass being currently vacant and owned by Phillips Flowers, and 520 North Cass which is where the former bank sits that was originally approved in 1999. The bank at that time had to request a text amendment to allow the bank itself and ATM facilities. The building has been up for lease and sale, and has remained vacant since 2023.

Williams described the chain of events that led to BAM Theatre's requests, including the two options they had for zoning requests to obtain the space for their specific use. The request they chose not to pursue was to ask for a text amendment for the OR-1 district, and instead they chose to rezone the property, and then ask for a special use which was staff's recommendation. Staff recommended the second option because it was in line with the comprehensive plan, and with 522 North Cass agreeing to rezone as well, the request wouldn't be considered spot zoning and wouldn't create any adverse impacts. Williams then provided an overview of the special conditions outlined in the staff report.

Public Comment: Jim Lesco, Westmont resident and neighbor to the site, was fully supportive of the request noting that his daughter is a student of the program. Lesco added that he has been in the Finance industry for 23 years and expressed that since Covid, there has been the worst building crisis ever imagined, and that Westmont would be lucky to have a business like BAM occupy and repurpose the space.

Westmont residents Amy Rodde and her family discussed how BAM has positively impacted their daughter Joanna's life giving her a sense of community, confidence, and many opportunities.



Westmont resident David Christ who lives across the street from the proposed site and represented other residents of 511 N Cass Avenue, although excited for a new business, had some traffic and noise concerns. Christ suggested a modified parking and drop off configuration that would include a sidewalk, and allow more cars to pull in at one time in hopes of alleviating traffic congestion on Cass. He also suggested sound proofing to help with the noise.

Westmont resident Laurel Rugen who lives directly behind the proposed site on Grant Street requested that the fence in the rear of the 520 N Cass be fixed since it's been in disrepair for many years. Rugen recalled several occurrences of people wandering into her and her neighbors backyards. She also expressed concern for noise and traffic on Cass as well.

Lamro replied that they would be more than happy to replace the fencing and ensured that the noise from the performances would be contained to the building.

Planner Williams suggested that if the Commission wishes to require the fencing, they should put it as a condition of the special use. As is, the fencing is not on the approved site plan so unless it's required as a condition, it does not need to be there.

Phillips Flowers representative Don Phillip stated they did not have any immediate plans for the 522 lot, but commented that they have at times wished they could expand and add more parking, but unless partnered in the improvement, it would currently be cost prohibitive. Phillip added that they would be happy to fix the fencing at the rear of the property. Phillip also stated that they would be happy to work with BAM to do short term leasing for the shared parking, especially since they have differentiating operating times.

Commissioner Comments:

Lavoie : Commissioner Lavoie was fully supportive of both requests, and felt it was great for the community and an ideal adaptive use for the building. Lavoie's only concern was the parking lot configuration, spaces and traffic on Cass Avenue, but noted that adding the cross over sidewalk would help alleviate those concerns. He also strongly recommended getting a shared parking agreement in place ahead of time. Lavoie stated he was not in support of the findings of fact when it comes to adequate parking being available on site, he did not agree.

Traffic Engineer Andrew Bowen wanted to clarify that the circulation and flow pattern presented is primarily for the everyday pick up and drop offs, and for the bigger events, the cars would not be circulating but rather parking. Bowen also recommended one directional flow for ease of use and for understanding of drivers. Bowen also said that they looked at the number of people when the entire auditorium is filled, with additional staff and found that there would be an overflow of approximately 20 spaces and that would only be for the event nights at max capacity.

Lavoie noted there was a discrepancy in the traffic report for seating, and the floor plan for seating but Coules clarified that the main auditorium would seat 150, and there was additional seating on the second floor, but there wouldn't ever be two shows at one time.

Zekiri : Commissioner Zekir was fully supportive of the request and any concerns he had, mainly regarding parking, had already been addressed.

Peterson : Commissioner Peterson was fully supportive of the requests and enjoyed seeing such passion in a business owner. Peterson felt it was a good location and fit for the town.

Carmichael : Commissioner Carmichael inquired about the property to the south of 520 North Cass, where there is a single family residence, however it is currently zoned OR-1. Carmichael asked the business owner Ms. Lamro how parking was on event nights at their Hinsdale location. Lamro wanted to assure the Commission that any parking issues would be addressed ahead of time because they would never want to hurt the business and its customers. Lamro had not had any complaints for parking issues from their smallest venue at Hinsdale United



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Methodist Church.

MOTION 1

Motion to recommend to the Village Board of Trustees to approve a request by BAMTHEATRE, LLC (Petitioner) and GRANT PARTNERS (Owner) at 522 North Cass Avenue, Westmont, Illinois, 60559 for a Map Amendment request to rezone from O/R-1 Office Research One District to B-2 General Business District.

Motion by: Lavoie

Second by: Zekiri

VOTING 1

Lavoie: Yes

Zekiri: Yes

Thomas: Absent

Peterson: Yes

Barry: Absent

Scales: Absent

Carmichael: Yes

Motion Passed

PZC 005-2024 Requests by BAMTHEATRE, LLC (Petitioner) and OLD NATIONAL BANK (Owner) at 520 North Cass Avenue, Westmont, Illinois, 60559 for the following:

1. Map Amendment request to rezone from O/R-1 Office Research One District to B-2 General Business District.
2. Special Use Permit request for a Performing Arts Studio.

MOTION 1

Motion to recommend to the Village Board of Trustees to approve a request by BAMTHEATRE, LLC (Petitioner) and OLD NATIONAL BANK (Owner) at 520 North Cass Avenue, Westmont, Illinois, 60559 for a Map Amendment request to rezone from O/R-1 Office Research One District to B-2 General Business District.

Motion by: Lavoie

Second by: Zekiri

VOTING 1

Zekiri: Yes

Thomas: Absent

Peterson: Yes

Barry: Absent

Scales: Absent

Lavoie: Yes

Carmichael: Yes

Motion Passed

MOTION 2



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Motion to recommend to the Village Board of Trustees to approve a request by BAMTHEATRE, LLC (Petitioner) and OLD NATIONAL BANK (Owner) at 520 North Cass Avenue, Westmont, Illinois, 60559 for a Special Use Permit request for a Performing Arts Studio.

Motion by: Lavoie

Second by: Zekiri

VOTING 2

Thomas: Absent

Peterson: Yes

Barry: Absent

Scales: Absent

Lavoie: Yes

Zekiri: Yes

Carmichael: Yes

Motion Passed

10. Open Forum - No one spoke during Open Forum.

11. Miscellaneous Items -

1. Next PZC on May 08, 2024, the meeting time will be 7pm. If the meeting time is to change to 6pm, the earliest it can be enacted is June.

12. Adjourn

Motion by: Lavoie

Second by: Zekiri

Meeting adjourned at 8:36pm