

MINUTES
City of Alpena Planning Commission
Regular Meeting (Council Chambers and Virtual)
February 8, 2022
Alpena, Michigan

CALL TO ORDER:

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Paul Sabourin, Planning Commission Chairman.

ROLL CALL: PLANNING COMMISSION

PRESENT: Boboltz (attended virtually), Gilmore, Kostelic, Sabourin,
Bauer, Peterson

ABSENT: Wojda, Vanwagoner

STAFF: Montiel Birmingham (Planning, Development, and Zoning Director), Donald Gilmet (Contractual Staff), Kathleen Sauve (Recording Secretary)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Agenda was approved as corrected.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting January 11, 2022, minutes were approved as printed.

PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMISSION ACTION:

Case # 22-Z-02 – Justin Prena, on behalf of Thunder Bay Property Management, has requested a Conditional Rezone for the property he owns at 327 N. Addison Street, from R-2 to R-T to allow for a residential duplex rental dwelling.

Montiel Birmingham presented the Finding of Fact report and recommendation of approval. (See Appendix A & B).

FAVOR: Geoff Shafto, part owner of and representing Thunder Bay Property Management, presented the board with packets of everything that they provide to their tenants. He explained that they are trying to make more available housing for traveling nurses coming to work at the hospital. He explained that currently, the hospital is staffed by approximately thirty percent travelling nurses that require one-bedroom apartments with monthly leasing options. They are trying to get young professionals to the community and give them ample housing to keep them in our community, and to keep bringing in more young professionals and more money to local

businesses. Over the last six months, people have been sleeping in their cars and renting motels for six to nine months at a time. Shafto states that this property has two full parking spaces and one in the garage and there would be two one-bedroom apartments.

OPPOSITION: Sharon Tolan, next-door neighbor to 327 N. Addison Street, said she went over to meet them, and they did not tell her the property would be converted to a duplex. She is upset that they are putting the door near her bedroom, and that they obtained the building permit and already did the work without it being rezoned first. She inquired whether it was going to change the value of her neighborhood and home. She feels traveling nurses have other places to stay.

Birmingham explained that the building permit was issued for the work being done to the inside of the home with the stipulation that it could not be used as a duplex without Planning Commission approval of the Conditional Rezone request; it will be utilized as a single-family home if the rezone does not pass.

Tolan asked why the door was installed on the other side of the house, to which Birmingham explained that homeowners may install a door wherever they choose on their home.

REBUTTAL: Shafto explained that he feels all property values will increase.

Tolan informed the board that the people working at the home have left garbage in her yard for five days, have had three dumpsters, and the occupant is parking on the sidewalk.

Gilmet informed Tolan that she may call the building department any time to file a complaint, and she would not have to wait five days. He then told the board that in order to convert the home into a duplex, they will have to obtain another building permit for change of use if the conditional rezoning goes through. They will have to submit drawings, showing the length and width of the driveway, plans showing how he is separating it inside and make sure they are meeting the fire and building codes; when/if it does move forward, it will be done appropriately, in compliance with not only the zoning and any conditions put on by this commission, but also in accordance with the building code.

With no other comments, the public hearing was closed for deliberation at 6:15 pm.

Birmingham informed the board that normally a conditional rezone might be used for a commercial type of business, but this is a case where it could be used for residential to avoid spot zoning.

Kostelic asked if they were only targeting travelling nurses to which Shafto replied yes, travelling nurses would be their primary demographic, but would not deny renting to others besides nurses.

Kostelic asked how many properties they own. Shafto said three.

Bauer said Shafto makes a case for the housing need, especially for our travelling medical personnel.

Kostelic asked how much further they need to go before the final building inspections. Shafto explained that the back unit has passed all the building codes in terms of the fire and electrical, and the plumbing inspection would be the following day. He said the back half of the house was previously a mother-in-law suite that was in very bad disrepair and is still down to the studs.

Gilmet asked how many bedrooms and baths it currently has. Shafto said it had two bedrooms and two bathrooms. Gilmet said he has not seen any interior drawings of the construction work that is going to occur to split this single-family home into a duplex.

Sabourin explained to the board that any motion made in favor would have to be subject to plans submitted to the building department for their approval for this to move forward.

Kostelic made a motion to approve the Conditional Rezone request subject to building department approval of submitted plans and inspections.

Gilmore seconded the motion.

Motion **approved** with a vote of 5-0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: By-Laws Finalization – Appendix C - Birmingham reviews the proposed amended By-Laws with the board.

Bauer motions to approve the By-Law amendments as presented.

Peterson seconded the motion.

Motion **approved** by a vote of 5-0.

NEW BUSINESS: Sidewalk Cafes – Appendix D - Birmingham presented the board with proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance Article 3 (General Provisions), Article 4 (Signs), Article 5 (Zoning Districts) and Article 7 (Supplemental Development Regulation) and explained the proposed changes to each.

Anne Gentry, Downtown Development Executive Director offered a brief statement on the goals and intentions of the DDA with the new ordinance regulating sidewalk cafes.

Board members and staff exchanged feedback about the proposed changes to the ordinance and will bring this back to the table at the next regular Planning Commission meeting.

COMMUNICATIONS: None

REPORTS: None

CALL TO PUBLIC: None

MEMBERS COMMENTS: Bauer would like the city to have a strategy to look closely at the Zoning Ordinances in relation to the housing shortage issue and explore opportunities to create more housing. Birmingham informed the board that the city has met once with the county, NEMSCA, and the township to discuss the need for housing. She told the Planning Commission that they would be involved at some point in the process, but if they would like to be involved earlier, their feedback is welcomed. Birmingham told the members there was good feedback from NEMSCA regarding our rental registration program in terms of our price points, the quality of the rental units and how the rental inspection program is improving the quality of the rental housing in the community, as compared to some of our neighboring areas that have very expensive and poor quality rentals.

ADJOURNMENT: With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m., by Sabourin, Planning Commission Chairman.

Steve Gilmore, Secretary