

**CITY OF WIXOM
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MONDAY, AUGUST 28, 2017**

Approved
10/02/17

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Day of the Planning Commission at 7:30 p.m. at which time allegiance was pledged to the American flag.

PRESENT: William Day (Chairman), Joe Barts, Peter Sharpe, Anthony Lawrence, Ray Cousineau and Phillip Carter (7:34 p.m.)

ABSENT: Sandro Grossi (Excused)

OTHERS: Carmine Avantini (CIB Planning) [City Planner] and Nancy Fisher (Recording Secretary)

Determination of a Quorum:

A quorum of the Planning Commission was present for this meeting.

Agenda:

No additions or changes were made to the agenda.

Approval of Planning Commission Meeting Minutes:

MOTION and seconded by Commissioners Lawrence and Cousineau to approve the May 22, 2017, June 5, 2017, June 26, 2017 and July 24, 2017 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes and the June 19, 2017 Joint City Council, DDA, Planning Commission and ZBA Meeting Minutes.

VOTE:

MOTION CARRIED

Correspondence:

There was no correspondence to be reviewed.

Call to the Public:

There were no comments made by the public.

Unfinished Business:

1. **SPECIAL LAND USE #17-003: BIG CITY DANCE CENTER, LLC, 29290 WALL STREET, WIXOM, MI 48393:** The applicant is seeking special land use approval to operate a commercial recreation facility in an existing building. A public hearing was held at the July 24, 2017 Planning Commission and then the case was tabled pending submission of a complete site plan. The Municipal Code, Section **18.09.020, Table 9.02**, requires approval from the Planning Commission for this request. The property is located at 29290 Wall Street, and is zoned M-1, Light Industrial District, where commercial recreation facilities are special land uses in that district. The parcel number is 22-08-127-003.

Mr. Avantini referred to his August 23, 2017 review letter. He noted that the Planning Commission previously held a public hearing regarding this matter at its last meeting and that there were no comments made by the public. This is similar to other commercial recreational uses in the past. It meets all general and specific plan conditions. He recommends approval conditioned upon site plan approval and approval of the three variances the applicant will be requesting. Chairman Day confirmed that the variances will be heard by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) and that all of those pertain to parking improvements which is in character with the area. Chairman Day confirmed that the applicant has been operating in an

M-1 district for the last 13 years without any adverse issues. Commissioner Cousineau asked whether the special land use and the site plan can be combined for purposes of tonight's meeting. Chairman Day suggested dealing with the special land use first and then moving on to the site plan review.

MOTION and second by Commissioners Lawrence and Sharpe to approve Special Use #17-003, Big City Dance Center, LLC's request for special land use approval to operate a commercial recreation facility in an existing building conditioned upon site plan approval and approval of the three variances to be heard by the ZBA. The property is located at 29290 Wall Street, Wixom, is zoned M-1, Light Industrial District, and the parcel number is 22-08-127-003.

New Business:

- 1. SITE PLAN REVIEW, SPR #08-011-17, BIG CITY DANCE CENTER, LLC, 29290 WALL STREET, WIXOM, MI 48393:** The applicant is seeking site plan approval for a children's dance studio for Big City Dance Center at 29290 Wall Street. The property is located on the east side of Wall Street which is south of West Road, east of Wixom Road, and includes an existing 7,500-sq. ft. light industrial building and 13 parking spaces. Proposed is a second driveway, which extends along the north side of the building, and an expansion to the front parking lot to accommodate 3 additional parking spaces. Also included is a 1,727 sq. ft. parking lot expansion to the rear of the site and associated restriping. Overall 33 parking spaces will be provided. The property is zoned M-1, Light Industrial District, where commercial recreation uses are considered special land uses in that district. The parcel number is 22-08-127-003.

Mr. Avantini referred to his August 24, 2017 review letter. He met a couple times with the applicant to review the outstanding items. The traffic consultant and others were also present. They agreed on what needs to be done and are satisfied with the results. There are a couple loose ends which can be handled administratively. It is an existing building. There is a 50-foot building setback requirement which it does not meet. The applicant can either upgrade it to make it more compliant with the Ordinance or have the improvements done to make it a better site. They are adding a drive on the side of the building. There is some air conditioning equipment coming out of the side of the building so they are enlarging it enough to provide fire truck access. It does not meet the 10-foot setback requirement. They are adding a few additional parking spaces in the front of the building. They will need a 2-foot variance from the 20-foot parking setback. They will compensate for that with landscaping screening. They have provided a design for the proposed changes. They do meet parking requirements. They will add parking spaces in the back. The drop off zone will be moved primarily to the back. They changed the apron on the drive exiting the site to shrink it and make it more manageable. The waste receptacle will be moved to a location that is satisfactory to the traffic consultant and Mr. Avantini. They need to submit a revised landscape plan. They are not proposing lighting although they may need to add some at some point. He will review this administratively.

Mr. Avantini recommends approval conditioned upon: 1) special land use approval; 2) variances from the ZBA for: a) to reduce the required 20-foot front yard parking setback to approximately 18 feet; b) to reduce the required 10-foot side yard parking setback to approximately 2 feet; and c) to allow total impervious lot coverage of 81.5% which exceeds the allowed 75%; 3) determination by the Planning Commission that the proposed building façade alterations are acceptable; 4) a crosswalk (pavement striping) being provided between the rear parking lot and the building sidewalk/rear entrance, since there will likely be a steady flow of traffic during drop-off and pick-up times; 5) relocation of the waste receptacle enclosure and a cross-section detail, meeting Ordinance requirements, being provided for administrative review; 6) all notes regarding fencing must be consistent. Repair or replacement shall be required as determined by the Building Official; 7) administrative review of future lighting; 8)

submission of a revised landscape plan, indicating starting plant size and required tree replacement; and 9) review and approval from other applicable consultants, departments and agencies.

Commissioner Lawrence said that he understands the need for a variance on the driveway; however, he noted in examining it, it appears that the drive is only wider for a very short run. He asked whether it would accommodate fire trucks. Mr. Avantini said that it will and that the Fire Department has reviewed and approved of it. They measure the variance at the closest location. Commissioner Carter confirmed with Mr. Avantini that the notations on the plans regarding the turning radius emulate the fire trucks' movements. Commissioner Carter asked about the building lighting. Mr. Avantini said that there is existing lighting. If new lighting is needed, he will have to approve it as a full cut-off fixture.

Scott Maynard. He represents Big City Dance. There are two lights over each of the doors. On the rear elevation, there are two circles are exhaust fans. They are existing and they will be kept. The two lights are for emergency purposes and will remain.

Lisa Fruchey, Big City Dance Center. She is the owner of Big City Dance and said that the classes will run until 9 p.m. She confirmed that the big roll-up door will remain. On the north side of the building, there is a door off Studio 6. Mr. Maynard said that it will remain locked, the hardware will be removed and dummy hardware will be installed. The existing mechanical will be used for ease of fire truck circulation.

In response to Chairman Day's question, Ms. Fruchey said she will have five part-time employees. There will be much more parking. Her younger students will be dropped off while the teen drivers will stay. Commissioner Cousineau noted that there is a rear entry. Is that the primary entry into the building? Ms. Fruchey said there is a front entry; however, the traffic consultant asked them to designate the student drop off be designated on the back door. Commissioner Cousineau said that this will better accommodate the parking needs. He encouraged Ms. Fruchey to make sure that it is properly maintained during the winter months. Ms. Fruchey said that she does not think that people will go around the entire building to the front.

Commissioner Carter asked Mr. Avantini whether the crosswalk to the parking area goes to the southeast area. Mr. Avantini said that the traffic consultant will address that. Chairman Day asked Mr. Avantini whether the revised landscaping plan will come back to the Planning Commission. Mr. Avantini said that this will be handled administratively since it will likely only involve one tree.

Chairman Day said that he does not have a problem with it and finds the façade changes to be acceptable.

MOTION and second by Commissioners Sharpe and Carter to approve SPR #08-011-17, Big City Dance Center, LLC's request for special land use approval to operate a commercial recreation facility in an existing building, conditioned upon the nine items referenced in the City Planner's August 28, 2017 review letter. The property is located at 29290 Wall Street, and is zoned M-1, Light Industrial District and the parcel number is 22-08-127-003.

VOTE:

MOTION CARRIED

- 2. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW, TIMMIS GROUP, LTD, 51155 GRAND RIVER AVENUE, WIXOM, MI 48393:** The applicant is seeking preliminary feedback on a potential PUD rezoning that would allow the subject property to be used as a Montessori style school for grades K-8. A concept plan has been provided for your information and includes a building addition, new parking spaces, and a drive that connects to the abutting St. Catherine's

site. Formal action by the Planning Commission is not needed and this is an opportunity for the applicant to obtain feedback prior to the filing of an application.

Mr. Avantini noted that this property is zoned IRO which only allows for trade schools but not elementary or secondary schools. The applicant is requesting that it be rezoned to Planned Unit Development (PUD). This zoning gives the applicant and the Planning Commission the most flexibility and provides potential continuous connections between that site and St. Catherine's. He recommends that the applicant have its conceptual plan reviewed by the traffic consultant early on if they choose to move ahead with its plan. They would then apply for PUD rezoning which would come back to the Planning Commission for a recommendation to City Council.

Chairman Day asked whether this would be a special land use within this district if they did not do a PUD. Mr. Avantini said that he does not. It may be a special land use. Chairman Day asked what the difference is between going through PUD rather than a special land use. Mr. Avantini said that the applicant may have to do both. It needs to be rezoned one way or another. St. Catherine's was either IRO or Multiple-Family Residential.

Truman Timmis, Timmis Group. He is the Project Manager/Development Manager. He will have no operational role in the school and Ms. Bhatia will be the school's President. He is an attorney, real estate consultant and he assists in the acquisition of the land, retains architects, oversees construction and hires the construction manager. He will be the grand overseer of this project. The site is just east of Napier on Grand River and just north of St. Catherine's. It needs PUD approval to move forward. He believes St. Catherine's was zoned IRO prior to PUD. The current tenant is District Alliances. This would be a newly founded Montessori School. The existing building is great and represents a wonderful blank canvas. It has over 30,000 square feet on 4.6 acres. They are in deep conversations with the owner of this property. He has not yet approached St. Catherine's and the real estate broker suggested holding off on that initially. He thinks they can share resources and opportunities with St. Catherine's.

Rajeshri Gandhi Bhatia. She is the founder of the school. It would be a very special school with unique academic opportunities. The closest schools to the one she is proposing are in Ann Arbor and Birmingham. She grew up in Southeast Michigan and has dedicated her life to improving academic education. She attended Detroit Country Day School and returned home to Michigan from Southern California. She has spent the last 5 years getting to know the area and thinks this is a great community. She is the Founder/Owner of School Smarts, an educational consulting company. She comes from a very entrepreneurially savvy family. Her proposed school would be the only non-sectarian private school in this area. She is looking to engage families within the community and partner with local businesses. Her school would create 20-25 jobs. Chairman Day confirmed that the nearest similar schools are Green Hills in Ann Arbor and Cranbrook and Detroit Country Day in Birmingham. He asked whether she intends to move into secondary education. She said that she will keep it restricted to kindergarten through eighth grade. Montessori focuses on the individual student but as part of a group. She will create her own model and not strictly follow Montessori or Waldorf.

Commissioner Lawrence suggested that the applicant involve a traffic consultant. He drove the property over the weekend and believes the biggest issue will be Grand River which is only two lanes with no turn lane. The westbound students could tie up traffic in the mornings. There may not be an approach lane. In response to Commissioner Cousineau's question, the applicant said that there will be 250 students. The project will be phased. She would start with 40 percent of the eventual student body (100-120 students in the younger grades). Then she would introduce the sixth grade over the next 2-3 years and get to full capacity within the first 5 years. Commissioner Cousineau noted that traffic circulation will be very, very critical. He confirmed that the roadway connection to the south does not currently exist. Mr. Timmis said that if you look at the aerial view, the drive provides a convenient point of connection. This

is at a very early conceptual stage. Commissioner Cousineau noted that the connection to the St. Catherine's drive provides a connection to Grand River.

Commissioner Cousineau asked whether the applicant is proposing an addition to the building. Mr. Timmis noted that proposal has already been completed. Commissioner Cousineau asked Mr. Avantini whether there are any fundamental issues with respect to zoning parameters. Mr. Avantini confirmed that access to the site and circulation around it including appropriate lane width, the right turn lane and the location of the connection to St. Catherine's would require the input of a traffic consultant. That could be tweaked. The flexibility can drive a higher quality design.

Commissioner Cousineau asked who is funding the initial construction. Mr. Timmis said that it will be privately funded. It will not be taken off the tax rolls. Commissioner Cousineau noted that using PUD zoning gives the City a lot of flexibility. Mr. Timmis noted that Ms. Bhatia's family is very successful and has the financial wherewithal to fund this project. They have done a number of capital intensive projects.

Commissioner Sharpe asked Mr. Timmis if there is a need for a non-sectarian private school in the Wixom area. Is that need specific to the planned site? Is there a customer base for this? Mr. Timmis said that there is a need and there are lots of young families moving to this area with a lot of pre-schools and day care centers cropping up within a 5-mile radius. Ms. Bhatia believes that this option will appeal to a certain population. It borders another school which presents partnership opportunities.

Commissioner Carter noted that it is interesting that there is a lot of parking behind the school between the building and the play area. Mr. Timmis said that they are aware of that issue and will address potential safety concerns. He referred the Commissioners to the large-scale conceptual site plan. He noted that traffic will enter off Grand River subject to cross access with St. Catherine's in order to create stacking room for the drop off. They are very open to staggering the start time with St. Catherine's to decrease traffic congestion. He anticipates needing 142 parking spaces which could be shared with St. Catherine's for events. Michigan law requires them to create a storm shelter for which they will use their assembly area. It is the assembly area parking requirements which drive up the need. They are showing detention onsite. They are not adding much hard surface. There will be 14 classrooms including a music area, science/art rooms and a tech/A.V. (audiovisual) room. He anticipates the ability to create wonderful common learning areas. The existing building has a 3-1/2 to 4 foot grade difference between portions of the building. There are steps leading from the lower section of the building. The upper school commons is actually part of the lower and vice versa.

Chairman Day said that there is probably a market for this type of school and that the area demographics will support it. Commissioner Cousineau noted that the applicant will need to address the parking issue. He asked whether the applicant knows how much this project will cost. Mr. Timmis said that is not yet known. It will be a gut/rehab. The warehouse portion will require an all new mechanical system. They will likely replace the roof and windows. Commissioner Cousineau said that this is an exciting project.

Call to the Public:

There were no comments made by the public.

Staff Comments:

Mr. Avantini noted that there will likely be no meeting on Wednesday, September 6, 2017. However, a final decision regarding this meeting will be made tomorrow. Several Commissioners said that they would be unable to attend the meeting on the 6th since they will be out of town due to the holiday.

Mr. Avantini said that things continue to be busy and there are a lot of things in the works.

Mr. Avantini noted that he did not approve the massage place on the corner of West Road. There was a meeting today. They need to show that they are a licensed massage therapist. They are talking it through.

Commission Comments:

Commissioner Cousineau noted that he has been through a lot of PUD processes and that it provides a lot of flexibility. However, if an applicant were to go to Novi or Lyon Township, their process is extremely arduous. Those communities will demand to see full blown plans as well as a demonstrated benefit to their community which is unrelated to their building site. Wixom is very builder friendly. It would typically take 1-1/2 years to get through the PUD process. Mr. Avantini noted that there is a tendency on the part of Planning Commissions to micro manage the entire process which extends the process time wise. Wixom is more interested in moving applicants through the process and making sure it is a quality development.

Commissioner Barts asked whether having four Commissioners would have been sufficient if he had abstained on the Big City Dance matter tonight. Mr. Avantini said that four votes are always required by the ZBA boardmembers. Attorneys differ regarding the criteria used to judge a variance rather than a site plan. He thinks that he could vote yes tonight and then vote no if they did not meet the criteria. Commissioner Barts said that he forgot that the law was intended for City Council since they are elected and not appointed.

Commissioner Carter asked what is going on with the first multi-family unit next to Alex's. There is concrete ripped up and caution tape is wrapped across the front of the building. Commissioner Cousineau noted that all of the porch slabs have been replaced.

Chairman Day noted that a right hand turn lane is being put in on northbound Beck Road at Maple Road. How long before that happens? Mr. Avantini noted that there is a County program that offers joint funding for that and that this project goes that far back. Chairman Day noted that the light has been installed.

ADJOURNMENT:

This meeting of the Planning Commission was motioned and adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Nancy Fisher
Recording Secretary