

A Regular Meeting of the Otsego Planning Commission was held Monday, January 28, 2019.

City Clerk Cronen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the following members present: Cyndi Trobeck, Robert Alway, Ric Saucedo, Paul Mitchell, Tom Gilmer, Jayson Ennis, Mark Aldrich, Brent Milhiem and City Manager Mitchell. Absent: None.

CITY CLERK OPENS THE FLOOR FOR NOMINATIONS FOR CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSON

Clerk Cronen opened the floor for nominations for Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Planning Commission. Member Paul Mitchell moved to appoint Member Gilmer – Chairman, and Mark Aldrich – Vice-Chairman, seconded by Member Trobeck. CARRIED.

Member Aaron Mitchell moved to approve the November 26, 2018, minutes, seconded by Member Milhiem. CARRIED

I. PRESENTATIONS:

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Chairman Gilmer explained the public hearing process and explained that this is a legal procedure that is afforded to the applicants, who requested the rezoning and special use permit.

At this time, Tom Fitzpatrick of Storage of America gave his opening comments. He gave an overview of the company's history, their current facilities and locations, and read a letter from the City of Trotwood where one of their facilities is located. He stated there will not be industrial waste at the proposed facility or hazardous waste allowed, per their rental agreements. He commented that the facility would be for household items – like a mini-storage. He stated that it was his job to see what zoning would be the best fit and he concluded that rezoning the property to Commercial 1, with a special use permit would make the most sense. He stated that there would be a retail shop inside the facility. He gave an overview of the proposed layout inside the building. At this time, Tom Wright – Real Estate Agent for Storage of America, commented that commercial zoning fits this property, this is needed in the community, and it is not an industrial warehouse.

A. PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING A REQUEST FROM STORAGE AMERICA TO REZONE 120 SOUTH FARMER STREET FROM CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT CBD, TO COMMERCIAL C1

Chairman Gilmer opened the Public Hearing at 7:24 p.m. Chairman Gilmer stated that the Planning Commission had received letters from the following: Richard & Judy Haugh – not in favor; Roger & Georgia Newman – not in favor; Harding's – clarification of sale, City of Trotwood – reference for applicants; and Advent Community Services – not in favor. The letters will be attached to the minutes.

Jennifer Mitchell, 309 W Hammond – she commented that she was not in favor of the rezoning. She indicated the following reasons: downtown not proper place – should be in industrial area; increased truck traffic; no control once granted – would have to trust the company to comply; and she is not willing to trust them with the downtown.

Stephen Sisson, 308 S Wilmott – he commented that he was not in favor of the rezoning. He read from Chapter Five of the City’s Master Plan, commenting that the Future Land Use Map in the City’s Master Plan identifies the property as CBD and the City’s Master Plan should be followed.

Ron Beattie, 213 E Franklin – he commented that he was not in favor of the rezoning. He indicated the following reasons: downtown not the place; noted that it is close to a church, preschool, and daycare; he asked if Harding’s would remove the stipulations on the sale of the building. Chairman Gilmer commented that Harding’s indicated that there are no stipulations or restrictions on the sale of the building.

Jason Hitchcock, 234 W Franklin – he commented that he is new to the community and lives close to the building. He stated that he had questions regarding the presentation that was given by Mr. Fitzpatrick indicating that the building would not be used for industrial storage. He asked if there were any requests for other uses for the building. Harding’s Dan Hill commented that they have not received any other offers of any kind – no interest period.

Karen Tarpley, 414 W Franklin – she commented that she was not in favor of the rezoning. She thanked the Planning Commission for listening to the comments. She stated that the property abuts a residential area.

Kristen Alkire, 917 Barton – she commented that she understand that there will be no waste now, but asked if the rezoning takes place and the building is sold what would happen. Chairman Gilmer commented that this would be a permanent rezoning to C1 – Commercial and any uses that are acceptable in C1 would be allowable.

Rosemary Parker, 338 W Franklin – she commented that she was not in favor of the rezoning. She indicated the following reasons: she likes the City’s Master Plan, feels bad that there have been no offers, not an ideal place for a storage facility. She thanked the Planning Commission for explaining the process.

Al Radspieler, Hopkins MI – he directed questions at Mr. Fitzpatrick. He asked the following questions: if they had looked at other properties; how much the purchase price was, would there be only one way entry; if they had a site plan; if they were getting any tax breaks and suggested he should work with the City to purchase other property.

Patrick Glocheski, 123 N Platt – he commented that he was not in favor of the rezoning. He indicated the following reasons: need businesses that will attract people to the downtown and other businesses; the City has worked hard to improve the downtown; location is not the greatest; hazardous material is a gray area; possible expansion; and this type of business should be in an industrial park.

Christina DeGrush, Plainwell – she stated that she represented Justice for Otsego. She asked for clarification of the article where City Manager Mitchell was quoted saying “industrial storage”. City Manager Mitchell commented that through the application process various local businesses (USG, Parker, Haworth, etc.) were identified as possibly being able to utilize the building. She asked if there could be industrial storage with the Special Use Permit. City Manager Mitchell explained that with the Special Use Permit it is allowed.

Richard DeLong, 728 Ruby – he commented that he was on the City Commission when they closed the street and moved DeGoods for Harding’s. He stated that he had a concern regarding the approved uses and what can be added. He asked how many units - as he is concerned with the growth.

Jerry Bohl, 353 19th Street – he stated that he went to the old Harding’s store, the new Harding’s store, and then the big box stores arrived and were blamed. He commented this meeting is taking place tonight because the locals did not patronize Harding’s. He commented that he feels sick about it. He stated that locals do not patronize local businesses and we are going to lose more businesses if we do not start patronizing the local stores more.

Nancy Schmidt, 1683 Oak Street – she suggested that the building be divided up and utilized by various organizations, like her organization Saint Vincent DePaul. She described Saint Vincent DePaul’s current situation.

Gale Dugan, 18th Street – he stated that he is not in favor of the rezoning. He stated that he is in a unique situation being a County Commissioner and a property owner in the City of Otsego. He stated that he owns the home at 210 S Farmer. He stated that he had reviewed the application that Storage of America had submitted. He commented that there are various unanswered questions such as future expansion, parking, lighting, noise, and hours of operation. He stated that a site plan was not attached to the application. He commented that it is hard to control private storage units and what is eventually left behind. He asked the Planning Commission to listen and look at the entire application. He indicated that a site plan would have benefited the interpretation.

James Misner, 512 Dix Street – he stated that he was not in favor of the rezoning. He commented that the property needs to be a retail business that would increase foot traffic and encourage residents to shop locally. He stated that a business incubator site would be a phenomenal idea.

Chris Quigley, 1803 Jefferson Road – she indicated that she is not in favor of the rezoning. She stated that it breaks her heart to see it empty, but this use will not bring people to Otsego. She asked if Storage of America had any plans to show what it would look like on the outside.

Kathy Plotts, 116 W Franklin – she indicated that she was not in favor of the rezoning. She stated the following reasons: no control over the building, property values would go down, and it is not wanted in our City.

Ellen Radke, 757 N Main, Plainwell – she indicated that she was not in favor of the rezoning. She indicated that there were too many unanswered questions.

Amber Balkama, 358 W River – she indicated that she was not in favor of the rezoning. She asked the Planning Commission to think long and hard about it, giving examples of the Allegan Street School and Rock-Tenn.

Brad Peet, 213 South Farmer – he indicated that he was not in favor of the rezoning. He stated not in the downtown.

Pam McQueer, 109 S Fair – she indicated that she is not in favor of the rezoning. She stated

that Otsego is a strong community and the community wants to support the City, but this is not conducive to the downtown and the City. She indicated that it would not increase foot traffic in the downtown. She stated that this type of business needs to be in a rural area. She commented that the community needs to pull together and support local proprietors. She thanked the Planning Commission.

Angela Newton, 1002 Comstock Court – she stated that she is the manager of the Farmer’s Market. She stated that she was not in favor of the rezoning. She noted the following: a concern regarding the buyer’s ability to check for hazardous waste; it would be an eye sore; and not help the downtown community and Otsego Main Street.

Bob Julianus, 203 W Franklin – He was not in favor of the rezoning. He had a concern with what the buyers will do with the rest of the property, parking, and the property becoming an eye sore.

Bruce Meles, 125 W Allegan – he stated that he has mixed emotions regarding the rezoning. He stated the problems he has is that it will bring in just a few jobs and little foot traffic. He also stated that it is dangerous for a building to sit empty. He stated that in a perfect world it would be a grocery store, but the community didn’t support it. He stated that Harding’s is a first class operation. He stated that they were a great part of the community, but they are not coming back. He communicated that the offer needs to be considered, as it is going to be hard for a business to come up with that kind of money to purchase the building.

Storage of America’s Environmental Assessment Company – stated that they run a clean operation and they do not allow hazardous waste.

At this time, Mr. Fitzpatrick answered questions that were brought up in the Public Hearing.

Chairman Gilmer closed the Public Hearing at 8:49 p.m.

B. PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING A REQUEST FROM STORAGE AMERICA FOR A SPECIAL USE PERMIT AT 120 SOUTH FARMER STREET, ALLOWING A WAREHOUSE IN A COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Chairman Gilmer opened the Public Hearing at 8:50 p.m. There being no comments, the Public Hearing was closed at 8:51 p.m.

III. CONSIDERATIONS:

A. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FROM STORAGE AMERICA TO REZONE 120 SOUTH FARMER STREET FROM CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT CBD, TO COMMERCIAL C1

Chairman Gilmer answered various questions and concerns that had been brought up in the public hearing. He concluded that the request would be considered spot zoning and would not follow the Master Plan and he would be voting no. Member Trobeck asked questions of Mr. Fitzpatrick regarding the reference to hazardous waste. She indicated that she supports the City’s Master Plan. Member Milhiem stated that he feels the City’s Master Plan should be followed. Member Alway stated that the business is not appropriate for the downtown. Member Saucedo stated that he does not think that it would fit the Master Plan and it doesn’t fit in a small community. Member Ennis echoed the comments of the other members. He stated

that he did not support spot zoning. Member Aldrich commented that zoning is in place for a reason and agreed with the other member's comments. Member Aldrich stated that he doesn't want to see an abandoned building in the downtown that is not maintained. City Manager Mitchell stated that the building will have to be maintained by the owners. Member Paul Mitchell stated that it doesn't fit the Master Plan and agreed with the other members. Member Aaron Mitchell stated that he agreed with all of the members comments.

Member Aldrich moved to approve the request from Storage America to Re-Zone 120 South Farmer Street from Central Business District – CBD to Commercial C-1, seconded by Member Milhiem. Roll Call Vote – Yes – 0 and No - 9. Rezoning Not Approved.

B. CONSIDERATION OF A REQUEST FROM STORAGE AMERICA FOR A SPECIAL USE PERMIT AT 120 SOUTH FARMER STREET, ALLOWING A WAREHOUSE IN A COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Member Milhiem moved to grant a Special Use Permit to Storage of America, which was dependent upon the rezoning to C-1, seconded by Member Aaron Mitchell. Roll Call Vote. Yes – 0 and No – 9. Special Use Permit Not Approved.

IV. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Al Radspieler, Hopkins – commented that the Planning Commission did a very good job.

The meeting was adjourned on motion by Member Alway, seconded by Member Paul Mitchell.
CARRIED –9:11 p.m.

Angela M. Cronen, MMC
City Clerk