

MINUTES
CITY OF DEKALB
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
February 19, 2020

The Planning and Zoning Commission held a Meeting on February 19, 2020, at the City of DeKalb Municipal Building, 200 South Fourth Street, DeKalb, Illinois. Chair Max Maxwell called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

A. ROLL CALL

Recording Secretary Aaron Walker called the roll. Planning and Zoning Commission members present were: Chair Max Maxwell, Steve Becker, Ron Klein, Jerry Wright, and Trixy O’Flaherty. Commissioners Vicki Buckley and Christina Doe were absent. Principal Planner Dan Olson was present representing the City.

B. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA (Additions/Deletions)

Chair Maxwell requested a motion to approve the February 19, 2020, agenda as presented. Mr. Wright motioned to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Becker seconded the motion, and the motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. February 5, 2020 – Chair Maxwell requested a motion to approve the February 5, 2020 minutes as presented. Mr. Klein motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Wright seconded the motion, and the motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Open Floor to Anyone Wishing to Speak on Record)

None

E. NEW BUSINESS

1. **Public Hearing** – Petition by DeKalb Community School District #428 for a special use permit to allow a private school to locate in the former Chesebro Elementary School located at 900 E. Garden Street.

Tammy Carson, representing Dekalb Community School District 428, noted that District #428 Superintendent Jamie Craven, District #428 Director of Student Services Cristy Meyer, and three representatives from The Menta Group were also present to answer any questions regarding the proposed therapeutic day school.

Ms. Carson advised the former Chesebro Elementary School has been closed since 2011 and has been used as a storage facility. She stated District #428 has been in discussions with The Menta Group to open a therapeutic day school in the former Chesebro School. She mentioned The Menta Group currently has an Aurora facility that District #428 students are currently attending due to a lack of proper facilities within DeKalb. She noted if a therapeutic day school was to open in the former Chesebro Elementary School, they could bring their students back to DeKalb.

Ms. Carson advised the cost of renovations to Chesebro School would be split between District #428 and The Menta Group. She noted the proposed alterations and construction would begin in the late summer, with plans to open the facility in January 2021. She stated The Menta Group would occupy approximately 80% of the facility and District #428 would occupy 20%, which would be used for administrative offices, storage, and the Barb Food Mart.

Ms. Carson said the parking lot location would not be changing with students and staff using the parking lot off E. Taylor Street. She noted there had been discussions regarding adding a parking lot or drop off area along E. Garden Street in the future, however that has not been determined yet.

Principal Planner Dan Olson went through the staff report dated February 14, 2020. He stated DeKalb School District #428 has petitioned to locate a therapeutic day school in the former Chesebro Elementary School located at 900 E. Garden Street, which requires a special use permit. He advised the school district would lease the building to The Menta Group, a non-profit organization that serves students with special needs that require varying levels of therapeutic support. Mr. Olson noted District #428 currently has 36 students in The Menta Group's Aurora facility.

Mr. Olson advised Chesebro Elementary School was constructed in 1974 and received a special use permit in 2003 for an addition to the southeast portion of the building. He noted renovations are currently planned for the building, which will include a new roof and interior improvements to prepare for the therapeutic programs. Mr. Olson stated there are exterior improvements planned as well, to include restriping of the parking lot, resurfacing the sidewalks around the building, and repairing/replacing parking lot signage.

Mr. Olson advised The Menta Group will serve approximately 60-80 students in the facility, from grades K-12, with approximately 25 Menta staff members during operating hours. Mr. Olson stated the operating hours will be Monday-Friday from 8:30am to 2:00pm for students and 8:00am to 3:30pm for staff between the months of September through June and 8:00am to 12:00pm for students and 8:00am to 3:30pm for staff between the months of June through August. He noted there will be occasional after-hour activities, but they shouldn't last past 8:00pm.

Mr. Olson stated there are no plans to expand the building and the proposed therapeutic day school will be compliant with all regulations of the Two-Family Residential District and Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

Mr. Olson stated four citizen response forms were received by the City. He advised Robert Cook, of 953 E Taylor St, indicated his support for the proposal but wanted to see more specifics. Mr. Olson noted Mr. Cook was contacted and had his questions answered, to which he was satisfied. Mr. Olson advised Jose Juan Huerta, of 802 Roosevelt Ct, noted his support for the project. Mr. Olson also stated Cathy Tiberi, of 525 S 10th St, sent an e-mail noting her support but was concerned with the amount of trash that was blown into her yard when Chesebro School was open. He advised the concern was forwarded to District #428, who said there will be a dumpster on site and properly screened per standards of the UDO. Mr. Olson finally noted a letter of support was received after the Commission packet went out last Friday from Meghan Jordan, of 957 E. Taylor St.

Chair Maxwell then invited attendees in the audience to speak.

Robert Erickson, of 915 E Garden St, had no issue with the project. He stated his only concern was regarding bus and foot traffic off E. Garden Street. He noted bus traffic on E. Garden Street is a hazard to students and residents due to the width of the street and the number of vehicles that utilize street parking in the neighborhood. He requested all school bus and student traffic be directed to use the parking lot off E. Taylor Street. He also noted a concern regarding the maintenance of the park adjoining the school. Ms. Carson advised the DeKalb Park District maintains the park, but the School District will if necessary.

David Gersic, of 927 E Garden St, advised he was in favor of the private school but noted a concern regarding trash blowing onto his property from the school, as it was a common occurrence in the past. He also noted his concern with traffic off E. Garden Street.

Chair Maxwell gave the Commission members the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Wright questioned how many students were currently being bused to The Menta Group's Aurora facility. Cristy Meyer of the school district advised there are 36 students currently being bused to Aurora each day from DeKalb. She said neighboring districts also have students being bused to Aurora daily and having a local facility would help communities tremendously. Ms. Meyer advised they are expecting 60-80 students in the building, which will include DeKalb and neighboring communities. She stated the Aurora facility is frequently at maximum capacity, so a new location would be able to provide more students with the services they need.

Mr. Wright inquired to how many students attended Chesebro School before it closed in 2011. Ms. Carson advised approximately 300 students attended the school previously. Rory Conran, representing The Menta Group, noted traffic should be much less than it was in the past due to the student size being less than 1/3 of what it was. Mr. Conran advised there will be approximately ten 10-person vans in use to shuttle students to the school.

Mr. Becker questioned if the building will eventually be fully turned over to The Menta Group. Ms. Carson advised that District #428's portion may be lowered to 10%, at which time they would relocate staff but keep storage on site.

Chair Maxwell inquired if there is separate access to the food pantry, in order to keep traffic away from the student population. Ms. Carson advised food pantry customers would still use the main entrance to the building, but they would be isolated from the student area.

Chair Maxwell questioned if the Aurora site is the same size as Chesebro. Mr. Conran advised that Aurora is 24,000 square feet with approximately 260 students and is their largest facility. Mr. Conran advised most of their facilities accommodate approximately 60 students.

Chair Maxwell gave the public one more opportunity to speak. There was none.

Mr. Wright moved the Planning and Zoning Commission forward its findings of fact and recommend to the City Council approval of a special use permit for a private therapeutic day school in the former Chesebro Elementary School located at 900 E. Garden Street, as shown on the site plan received on January 29, 2020 attached as Exhibit A to the staff report and subject to the following conditions:

1. The school district restripe the parking lot, resurface the sidewalks around the building and repair or replace the parking lot signage all in compliance with the Unified Development Ordinance prior to an occupancy permit being issued for the private therapeutic day school.
2. The placement of a trash/recycling dumpster on the site and permanently screened per the provisions of Article 7.11 "Screening of Rubbish, Garbage, and Dumpster Facilities" of the Unified Development Ordinance prior to an occupancy permit being issued for the private therapeutic day school.

Mr. Klein seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken. Mr. Becker – yes, Mr. Klein – yes, Mr. Wright – yes, Ms. O'Flaherty – yes, Chair Maxwell – yes. Motion was passed 5-0-2. Ms. Buckley and Ms. Doe were absent.

2. **Public Hearing** – Petition by JLAR Illinois LLC, represented by James Mason, for a special use permit for a proposed coffee and ice cream shop with a drive-through to be located at 1406 Sycamore Rd, Suite D.

Jim Mason, of 120 Annie Glidden Rd., advised the proposed tenant operates restaurants in both Sycamore and Rockford. He stated his tenant will open a Mexican ice cream and coffee shop at the proposed location. He advised it will have a two-window drive-through and will open within 90 days once the special use permit is approved.

Principal Planner Dan Olson went through the staff report dated February 14, 2020. Mr. Olson advised the proposed project will occupy 2,170 square feet in one of the four tenant spaces in the building. He advised the operator of the proposed project, Francisco Morales, will also be operating the new Eggsperience Café in Suite A in the same building.

Mr. Olson noted there are currently three parallel parking spaces along the east side of the building that will have to be removed to make room for the drive-through. He stated the proposed drive-through will accommodate five stacking spaces without interfering with traffic flow, as required by the UDO. Mr. Olson advised the City has worked with the applicant on making changes to the site plan to modify the traffic flow in order to accommodate the drive-through. He said the drive along the east side of the building where the drive-through will be located will be made a one-way (northbound from Oakwood Avenue) and the drive-through lane will be striped to better designate its location.

Mr. Olson noted motorist's coming from the north in the existing parking lot will be required to go the east and then south along the west side of the Secretary of State's Office to exist the site. He added the drive to the west of the Secretary of State's Office will be made one-way going south to Oakwood Avenue. Mr. Olson advised angle parking already exist to the west of the Secretary of State's Office so the re-configuration will match the current conditions. He stated the far eastern access along Oakwood Avenue to the Secretary of State's Offices will be made one-way going into the site. Directional signage will be added to direct motorist to the drive-through and throughout the parking lot and access drives. Mr. Olson stated there are a total of 189 parking spaces provided in the shared parking lots between the shopping center and various surrounding parcels. He noted only 166 parking spaces are required based on the requirements in the UDO.

Mr. Olson advised one Citizen Response Form was received. He said Sean Niklas of Saren Restaurants, representing JD Wesley Inc, owner of the adjacent Wendy's Restaurant along Sycamore Road stated he had no objections to the proposal after reviewing the plans for the drive-through.

Chair Maxwell then invited attendees in the audience to speak. There were none.

Chair Maxwell gave the Commission members the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Klein, Mr. Becker, and Ms. O'Flaherty shared concerns regarding parking and traffic flow with the addition of the drive-through, due to the already heavily trafficked area due to the Secretary of State's office. Mr. Mason advised that new signage will help control and direct traffic. Mr. Olson added the recommended changes to striping, signage, and traffic patterns will also help with traffic flow and direction. He also noted it will not be as busy as a McDonalds and should not interfere with the traffic in the shopping center.

Mr. Becker inquired how much seating the proposed project will have. Mr. Mason advised there will be enough seating for approximately 50 customers. Mr. Wright suggested the directional arrows shown on the plan to the north of the drive-through were probably not needed.

Chair Maxwell gave the public one more opportunity to speak. There was none.

Mr. Klein moved the Planning and Zoning Commission forward its findings of fact and recommend to the City Council approval of a special use permit for a drive-through for a coffee and ice cream shop located at 1406 Sycamore Rd Suite D per the site plan dated February 14, 2020 and labeled as Exhibit A.

Mr. Wright seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken. Mr. Becker – yes, Mr. Klein – yes, Mr. Wright – yes, Ms. O'Flaherty – yes, Chair Maxwell – yes. Motion was passed 5-0-2. Ms. Buckley and Ms. Doe were absent.

F. REPORTS

Mr. Olson advised there are three public hearings scheduled for the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting on March 4th. He stated the public hearings will be for a vehicle tow facility and storage yard at 110 Industrial Drive, a drive-through restaurant with an outdoor seating area for Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers Restaurant at 2411 Sycamore Road, and a UDO text amendment petition by the City regarding amendments to the sign regulations.

G. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. O'Flaherty motioned to adjourn, Mr. Wright seconded the motion, and the motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The Planning and Zoning Commission adjourned at 6:58PM.