CITY OF Bloomington ILLINOIS

MINUTES
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS - REGULAR SESSION
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2023, 4:00 PM

The Zoning Board of Appeals convened in regular session at 4:01 PM, December 20, 2023. Chair Straza called the meeting to order.

Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Terry Ballantini	Vice Board Chair	Present
Michael Straza	Board Chair	Present
Ross Webb	Board Member	Present
Tim Foley	Board Member	Present
Zachary Zwaga	Board Member	Present
Nikki Williams	Board Member	Present
Victoria Harris	Board Member	Present

City Staff present included Jon Branham, City Planner; John Myers, Assistant City Planner; and George Boyle, Assistant Corporation Counsel.

Public Comment
Individuals wishing to provide emailed public comment must email comments to publiccomment@cityblm.org at least 15 minutes before the start of the meeting. Individuals wishing to speak in-person may register at cityblm.org/register at least 5 minutes before the start of the meeting.

No public comment provided.

Consent Agenda
Items listed on the Consent Agenda are approved with one motion; Items pulled from the Consent Agenda for discussion are listed and voted on separately.

Vice Board Chair Ballantini made a motion, seconded by Board Member Harris, to approve the consent agenda as presented.
AYES: Vice Board Chair Ballantini; Board Chair Straza; Board Member Webb; Board Member Foley; Board Member Zwaga; Board Member Williams; Board Member Harris.
Motion carried (viva voce).

<u>Item 4.A. Review and approval of the minutes of the November 15, 2023, regular meeting of the Bloomington Zoning Board of Appeals.</u>

Regular Agenda

The following item was presented:

Item 5.A. **V-14-23** - Public hearing, review, and action on a request submitted by Western Avenue Community Center (WACC) for approval of **Variances** to allow reduced off-street parking setbacks, reduced parking design standards, and reduced minimum parking lot landscaping requirements, for the properties located at 601 N. Western Avenue and 1210 W. Locust Street (PINs:21 -05-252-016 and 21-05-252-009) and reduced minimum off - street parking requirements for the property located at 600 N. Western Avenue (PIN: 21-05-251-035).

Mr. Branham presented the staff report and background on the request, with a recommendation for approval. He noted the variances include reduced off-street parking requirements, reduced parking design standards and setbacks, and reduced minimum parking lot landscaping requirements. He noted the variances are a part of a project to expand and renovate the existing Western Avenue Community Center (WACC). Mr. Branham discussed the proposed site plan, which includes removal of the existing park located north of the existing parking area, to create a larger parking area with a total of 69 spaces. He added that the Applicant is also working with Public Works on an alley vacation as part of the project. He noted the Applicant is proposing providing a fee-in-lieu related to on-site stormwater detention.

The Board asked staff for clarification of the fee-in-lieu item and if there could be stormwater issues for surrounding neighbors, specifically the property adjacent to the east.

Mr. Branham stated that the applicant and Public Works have been reviewing stormwater detention. He added that Public Works will conduct an analysis to ensure that stormwater issues do not affect the surrounding neighbors.

Board Member Foley asked about the timeline of the alley vacation and what would happen in the event the vacation is not approved.

Mr. Branham stated there is not an exact timeline and if it is not approved the project would likely be terminated. He stated the applicant is meeting with neighboring properties in the next few weeks to initiate that part of the discussion.

The Board asked if there has been any public opposition.

Mr. Branham responded that staff has not received any comments in opposition prior to the meeting.

Elizabeth Megli (115 W Jefferson St #400), Attorney on be-half of Applicant, provided further details on the request. She noted that the Applicant has been working on the project for an extended time and has been challenging due to limited room for the proposed expansion. She stated Western Avenue Community Center is a non-profit and they have been working to maximize what the City requires, while ensuring the project is economically viable. She noted that most of the time the existing parking lot is not at full capacity, and the number of staff is limited - typically 2-3 full-timers and some volunteers. She stated that during times of overflow, there are currently oral agreements between the neighbors to accommodate parking. She also noted that most people who use the facility do not use individual vehicles as their primary mode of transportation. In addition, she discussed stormwater detention noting that if on-site stormwater detention is required then it would eliminate additional parking spaces and make the project economically infeasible.

Board Member Webb expressed concern about the park being removed.

Ms. Megli stated that there are nearby recreational facilities, and she noted that the current park was underutilized.

Mr. Branham noted that O'Neil Park is located within two blocks of the property.

Ms. Megli addressed the alley vacation stating that they are currently reviewing with Public Works and neighbors. She confirmed that in the event it is not approved, the project would be terminated.

Mr. Branham noted that currently the alley is not accessible by vehicles.

Board Chair Straza inquired about funding and timeline of expansion of the Community Center.

Ms. Megli stated that currently there are no fundraisers for the expansion due to its reliance on the current project. She noted that there are community members who have reached out that are interested in funding. She stated that the Community Center wanted the project approved before seeking funding.

Board Chair Straza closed the public hearing.

Vice Board Chair Ballantini expressed concerns about the extent of the parking variance.

Mr. Branham reviewed the required parking for the use. He noted that standards were related to maximum occupancy of the facility and highlighted the underutilized existing parking area.

Vice Board Chair Ballantini discussed ensuring that the Board is not granting an exception that others are not granted.

Board Chair Straza stated that he believed this is a unique case and that he still has concerns about stormwater management.

Mr. Branham reiterated that Public Works will still fully review the plans to ensure stormwater does not negatively impact surrounding neighbors.

Vice Chair Board Ballantini expressed concern that the variance for the setback item may negatively impact the neighbor directly east of the property. He reviewed the landscaping and fencing options.

Board Member Zwaga noted that the Board may be making assumptions. He stated that the Board should be encouraging these types of infill projects, because the Community Center is vital to the neighborhood.

Vice Chair Board Ballantini cautioned the precedent the case may have in the future.

Board Member Harris made a motion, seconded by Board Member Zwaga, to establish finding of face that the standards for approval of the Variances are met, that carrying out the strict letter of the Code does create a practical difficulty or particular hardship for the petitioner, and to approve the Variances with no conditions.
Roll call.
AYES: Board Chair Straza; Board Member Webb; Board Member Harris; Board Member Williams; Board Member Zwaga.
NAYES: Vice Board Chair Ballantini; Board Member Foley.
Motion passed.

New Business
None

Adjournment
The Meeting Adjourned at 4:36PM

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

Michael Straza
Michael Straza, Board Chair

Jon Branham
Jon Branham, Staff Liaison