

MINUTES

Members Present: Chair S. Ferrigno, C. Chukwuogor, D. Fecho, L. Watson, M. Hirschorn, W. Okeson

Ex-Officio Member Present: A. Moran

Ex-Officio Member Absent: B. Shaiken

Staff Present: C. van Zelm, Executive Director - Mansfield Downtown Partnership, L. Painter, Director of Planning and Development, and M. Ollennu, Administrative Assistant - Mansfield Downtown Partnership

Guests: R. Aylesworth (Town Manager), Tom Cody – Robinson & Cole, Amanda Wallis – Capstone Communities, David Fresk – J. E. Shepard Company, Don Powers – Union Studio Architecture + Community Design, Mohammed Mohsen – Niles Bolton Associates, Tom Ryan – Ryan Associates Landscape Architecture, and Geoff Fitzgerald – Bohler Engineering

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Ferrigno called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chukwuogor MOVED, Hirschorn SECONDED, to approve the February 18, 2021 regular meeting Minutes. Motion PASSED unanimously.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS AT MEETING

A. Presentation- J.E Shepard Property

Tom Cody, attorney at Robinson & Cole, introduced the development team for the Capstone Communities/J.E. Shepard ownership team. He gave a brief overview of the upcoming multifamily housing building project. Mr. Cody noted that members of the team have been working on the project for three years and have met with the EDC several times in the past. A special permit application has been submitted to the Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) and a public hearing is scheduled for April 19, 2021 on the application.

Don Powers, architect with Union Studio Architect + Community Design, took members through a three dimensional view of the design of the buildings, the scale of the building to other buildings in the project's environs, and the creation and use of modern interior design techniques and finishes.

Mohammed Mohsen, architect from Niles Bolton Associates, gave an architectural overview of the project which is made up of ten residential buildings with a total of 358 units known as the Villas at Four Corners. The units will include a mix of studios, 1, 2 and 3 bedroom designs. 48 units will be townhomes and 310 units will be stacked flats. The 358 units will include a total of 674 bedrooms with modern interior finishes such as LED lighting, aligning of daylight in living spaces and interior design with modern amenities. In conclusion, he stated that an additional 12,000 sq. ft. of inside space will be provided for leasing and community amenities. The total building footprint of the project will be approximately 137,306 sq.ft.

Tom Ryan, with Ryan Associates Landscape Architecture, also briefed members on the development's concentration of maintaining the landscape with conservation areas, a reforestation plan for existing wetlands and woods within the perimeter of the project, and the provision of public and private amenities such as walking trails, bocce courts, Frisbee golf, picnic tables, pollinator and rain gardens, the restoration of a colonial era cold storage for food preservation, a multi-purpose artificial turf area, fire pits, a climbing wall and an emphasis on an innovative storm water filtration system. Most of the outdoor amenities will be open to the general public.

Mr. Cody said the project will include 30 affordable units and 15 workforce units. The team is seeking a maximum density bonus under the Town multi-family regulations. They have spoken to the Mansfield Housing Authority about a \$1.4 million fee in lieu payment to be used toward an affordable housing project. A parking garage on site also meets one of the density bonus requirements.

The Villas at Four Corners will have significant economic impact through an increase tax base to the Town, the creation of other extended businesses such as restaurants and retail shops in the Four Corners area to cater for the increased residential population, the creation of 150-200 construction jobs, and the addition of 20 or more full-time and part-time positions once the project is operational.

The project also meets the provisions of Mansfield's Plan of Conservation and Development by encouraging growth in the Four Corners, increasing affordable housing, and improving quality of life by creating housing opportunities outside of traditional neighborhoods.

Ferrigno thanked Mr. Cody and other team members present for an in-depth presentation and asked EDC members if they had any questions, suggestions or comments. A period of questions and answers followed.

Chukwuogor suggested going beyond the affordable housing efforts as noted. Mr. Cody noted the options provided for a fee in lieu of creating more affordable options included developing a housing trust fund or finding a specific project to receive the money. They chose the latter as noted above.

Chukwuogor asked when the project will begin. Mr. Cody said next steps include the special permit approval, and state traffic and stormwater permits. They are at least a year away from construction.

Hirschorn asked what they need from the EDC. Mr. Cody said the public hearing will open and the development team will make a presentation. He said the Town hired its own peer consultants on behalf of the PZC to review the application. The development team and those

consultants have had an on-going dialogue and the consultants will present their findings at the hearing. Once the hearing is closed, the PZC will deliberate. The final decision on approving the special permit is the PZC.

Mr. Cody said if the EDC favors the project, a letter of support to the PZC would be much appreciated.

Ferrigno asked about a commuter van as mentioned in a prior presentation. Mr. Cody said the project envisions the provision of a private shuttle bus to Downtown Storrs and the UConn campus for residents of the apartments and the public.

Watson asked if a traffic study for Middle Turnpike was required. Mr. Fitzgerald said a traffic study was done and showed minimal impact to Middle Turnpike. There has been a third party review and those comments are being reviewed.

Fecho asked about maintenance costs. Mr. Cody said the maintenance costs will be taken care of by the owner.

Chukwuogor asked how the public will know about the amenities. Mr. Cody and Mr. Ryan said signage and info on the Town website (if applicable) will help get the word out.

Ferrigno suggested that a letter of support should be sent to the PZC in support of the J.E. Shepard/Captstone Communities proposal. Watson MOVED to have Chair Ferrigno write a letter of support, Chukwuogor SECONDED. MOTION passed unanimously.

The J.E. Shepard/Capstone Communities team left the meeting.

B. Discussion of Referral from PZC re: Temporary Extension of Outdoor Dining Provisions.

Painter briefed members on the Governor's Executive Order 7MM which will increase indoor dining to 100% capacity. She noted that businesses will still be required to maintain social distancing which might be difficult in practice. She referred to proposed Town regulations to extend the outdoor dining provisions from spring 2020 to December 31, 2021. Watson MOVED to have Chair Ferrigno draft a letter of support to the PZC, Fecho SECONDED. Motion PASSED unanimously.

C. Recommendation of member to the Water System Advisory Committee to Town Committee on Committees.

Painter briefed members on the need to have an EDC member on the Water System Advisory Committee which will need to start reviewing projects such as the J.E. Shepard/Capstone Communities project. Former EDC member Adrienne McPherson had served on the Committee but with her resignation on the EDC, a spot opened up. Watson volunteered to serve on the Committee. Chair Ferrigno and members thanked Watson for graciously agreeing to serve on the Committee.

D. Approval of By-Laws

Ferrigno asked for any changes to the final draft of the EDC bylaws. Chukwuogor asked whether meetings could be set for six months per year vs. every month. Moran said it is easier to cancel a meeting than to set a special meeting. She suggested sticking to the annual calendar of meetings that the EDC set in January.

Chukwuogor asked about clarifying what is an acceptable reason to miss three meetings in a row. Moran and Ferrigno suggested adding “unexcused” meetings to the draft bylaws with respect to determining whether a member is considered to have resigned. Ferrigno and van Zelm will work on the necessary changes for further discussion at the next meeting.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Member Updates- New EDC Members

Ferrigno updated members on his outreach to possible new members. He has one person interested thus far who he will refer to Town Manager Aylesworth for consideration.

B. Staff Updates

Van Zelm updated members on the Four Town Economic Vitality Plan and developments so far with meetings aimed at fine tuning a regional calendar that will connect to Town calendars, and inventory of assets. An update was also given on the continuing distribution of the Mansfield Your Place to Grow guides to realtors, chambers of commerce, and human resource offices in and around Mansfield with plans to distribute to other locations. Van Zelm informed members of an advertisement to promote Mansfield in Site Selection magazine with a further update at the next meeting.

C. Business Updates (Closings/Opening)

Van Zelm said there is a sign for Farm Fork Café in University Plaza but she does not have further updates at this time.

D. Housing Updates

Painter briefed members on the PZC’s approval of a special permit for Mill Court Ceramics for the opening of a pottery studio that will have on site classes. A special permit for Earth Dynamics to store their products was also approved by the PZC. She updated members on the upcoming public hearing schedule for April 19 at 6:30 p.m. for the Agbotic Smart Farm proposal. She commented that two other potential applications will also be forwarded to the EDC for review.

E. EDC Calendar

There was no discussion on the calendar.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

All noted.

7. FUTURE MEETINGS

A. Upcoming Meeting Schedule

Next regular meeting is scheduled for April 15, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

B. Future Meeting Topics

Ferrigno will meet with staff to discuss future topics.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Ferrigno thanked Mr. Hirschorn for his long standing and active service on the EDC as this was his last meeting. EDC members also applauded Mr. Hirschorn's contributions.

Ferrigno adjourned the meeting at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Mary Ahima Ollenu
Administrative Assistant