

**CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
HELD NOVEMBER 14, 2024**

REGULAR MEETING – 6:00 PM.

President Fisher called Meeting to order at 6:00 PM

PRESENT: President Fisher, Vice President Ping, Commissioner Berube, Commissioner Johnson

ABSENT: Commissioner Kavanagh

Also present: Interim City Manager Shrives, Contract Planner Mulcahy, City Attorney Breck, Public Works Clerk Sobczak

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Approval of August 8, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes and September 12, 2024 Housing Study Workshop minutes.

Motion made by Vice President Ping to approve the August 8, 2024 and September 12, 2024 minutes as presented, Seconded by Commissioner Johnson. Motion carried with all present voting AYE.

VISITOR OR PUBLIC COMMENT: (An opportunity for the Public to comment on any items not on tonight's agenda)

No public comment was presented.

PUBLIC HEARINGS AND ACTION:

Request for a zone change from CR-5 to CRA-1 in the Columbia Falls Zoning Jurisdiction:

Boys and Girls Club of Glacier Country, Inc are requesting a Zone Change from CR-5 to CRA-1. The property was previously used for the Boys and Girls Club in Columbia Falls which recently moved to the old elementary school site. A potential buyer of the property would like to open a physical therapy office in the old Boys and Girls Club building. A medical office such as a physical therapist office is a permitted use in the CRA-1 zone but not permitted in the CR-5 zone. The property is described as: Lots 4 & 5; Block 40; Columbia Falls Townsite; Section 8, Township 30 North, Range 20 West, P.M.M., Flathead County.

Contract Planner Eric Mulcahy presented Staff Report CZC-24-01. The potential buyer of the property is Glacier Peaks Mobile Physical Therapy and they are wanting to open a static physical therapy clinic in the existing building. Neighboring zoning is compatible to the proposed zone and the Growth Policy conforms with this proposed use. The 12 evaluation criteria were reviewed and all are compatible with this proposed use. On-site parking will be required for this commercial use but the on-street parking will still exist. Paving of the portion of the alley leading to the on-site parking will also be required. All parking and paving will be reviewed administratively during building permit submittal for the required remodel of the existing building. 4th Avenue West is inline for major reconstruction as part of the RAISE Grant project which will help delineate the on-street parking. Mulcahy recommends the Planning Commission to adopt staff report CZC-24-01 as findings of fact and recommend approval of this zone change to City Council.

The applicant Jackie Bullock owner of Glacier Peaks Mobile Physical Therapy spoke for this request. With growth they would like a bigger facility. The existing building only needs a minor remodel and they would like to maintain the structure and character of the building.

President Fisher opened public comment at 6:10 PM.

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Rachel Williams 609 4th Ave W, Columbia Falls. Commented on what would be allowable under the CRA-1 zoning. She wondered how many therapists would be in the building, how much of the lot would be paved, how much lighting will be added. Concerned that this double lot would be completely paved over and there will be an excess of lighting.

Mack Williams 609 4th Ave W, Columbia Falls. Concerned that since the driveway to his garage is not paved that it will be blocked by parked cars. He was told that since it is not paved it is not an official driveway and can be blocked. Concerned about the added lighting as well and the multi-family uses that are allowed with this CRA-1 zoning.

Bullock, the applicant, responded to the comments presented. Currently have three therapists possibly a fourth would be added with growth. She loves the trees and natural feel of the lot, but they will need to comply with parking requirements. They want to keep the playground for family use. There are no plans to add any additional external lighting at this time.

President Fisher closed public comment at 6:17 PM.

Mulcahy responded to the driveway issue saying that there is nothing that he is aware of that would allow people to block a driveway even if it is unpaved. Normally in reconstruction of a street a driveway would be formalized with curb-cuts even if it is unpaved but there is no plan to reconstruct 6th Avenue West and there are no curbs present in that area.

Commissioner Johnson asked the applicant how many patients they anticipate seeing in a day. Bullock responded that typically it is 1-hour long appointments so about 6-8 patients a day.

A motion to adopt Staff Report CZC-24-01 as Findings of Fact was made by Commissioner Berube. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson. A roll call vote was performed with all Commission members voting AYE.

A motion was made to recommend approval of this Zone Change to City Council was made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Berube. A roll call vote was performed with all Commission members voting AYE.

This Zone Change will be seen by City Council on December 2, 2024 at 7:00 PM.

President Fisher inquired about the Housing Study and how that is progressing. Mulcahy answered that the consultants have put together the Employer Survey and it is out. They have not been getting a big response so they are working with the Columbia Falls Chamber of Commerce and the City will put the survey on their website as well. The consultants are working on the background data and the survey will be a big help with that.

There will be a Planning Commission Regular Meeting on December 12, 2024 at 6:00 PM on a request for annexation and subdivision.

Vice President Ping made a motion to adjourn seconded by Commissioner Berube with all Commission members voting AYE.

ADJOURNMENT – Meeting duly adjourned at 6:23 PM

President

Attest:

Public Works Clerk