

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



MEETING MINUTES

DATE OF MEETING:

May 9, 2024

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

7:00 pm

Village Hall Board Room
2020 Chestnut Street
Homewood, IL 60430

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Sierzega called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

In attendance were Members Alfonso, Bransky, Cap, O'Brien, Castaneda and Chair Sierzega. Chair Sierzega arrived at approximately 7:15pm and was not present for the initial roll call vote. Present from the Village was Director of Economic and Community Development Angela Mesaros (serving as Staff Liaison) and Assistant Director of Economic & Community Development Noah Schumerth. There were four audience members present. The public was able to watch and listen to the meeting via Zoom webinar. There were no audience members present via Zoom.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Chair Sierzega requested any proposed changes to the minutes.

Member O'Brien requested that language in the previous packet regarding a salon use on the "west side of Dixie Highway" be corrected to "east side of Dixie Highway," as there are no businesses of that use are located on the west side of Dixie Highway at the given location.

Member Castaneda noted that an incomplete sentence beginning with "Member O" should be removed from the first line of the minutes.

Member Castaneda noted that member of the audience "Bill Mott" should be corrected to "Brian Moss" in all instances of the April 25, 2024 minutes.

Motion made to approve the minutes made by Member O'Brien; second by Member Castaneda.

AYES: Members Bransky, O'Brien, Castaneda, Chair Sierzega

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: Members Alfonso, Cap

ABSENT: Member Johnson

REGULAR BUSINESS:**CASE 24-05/24-09: Special Use Permit for Salon/Spa Establishment, Variance for Parking Requirements**

Chair Sierzega introduced the case and called the applicants, Elsayed Elbanna and Shareef Farhoud, to come forward to be sworn in. Chair Sierzega swore in the two applicants and introduced the details of the project.

Applicant Elbanna offered an explanation for the plans for the project, describing the proposed salon suites and the business model associated with the project. The applicant offered a summary of the variance request, citing the desire to use the adjacent public parking area to accommodate demand.

Chair Sierzega asked for clarification about the “salon suite” concept. Applicant Elbanna stated that there will be up to 16 suites within the building with a size of 10’ x 10’ to 10’ x 12’ for the operation of various stylist businesses. Sierzega asked for clarification about what a “smile expert” is, as cited by the applicant. Applicant Elbanna noted that it described someone working with teeth whitening or other cosmetic oral work.

Chair Sierzega asked how the peak capacity of the site was calculated by the applicant, citing the applicant’s claim of a peak demand of 32 people. The applicant mentioned that it included one specialist leasing space in the salon suites building and one customer at a time. Sierzega asked if building managers or proprietors would be present on the site and raise demand further. Elbanna stated that they would be the building proprietors and would not be regularly on site.

Chair Sierzega asked what the proposed hours of operation would be. Applicant Elbanna noted that the hours of operation were worked out with Village staff. Assistant Director Schumerth stated that the hours of operation were restricted from 7:00am to 11:00am with building access by customers restricted to an appointment-only basis. Schumerth also noted that the proposed condition with the Special Use Permit in the staff memo was written incorrectly and should be changed to “no business operation between 11:00pm to 7:00am.”

Chair Sierzega asked if hours of operation would vary throughout the week. Applicant Elbanna noted that the hours are variable due to the nature of the business with individuals renting suites, but that the overall hours of operation for the salon suites would not change throughout the week.

Chair Sierzega asked for clarification about the number of parking spaces on the property owner’s site. Applicant Elbanna stated that there are eight parking spaces on the site.

Chair Sierzega referenced additional questions but opened the topic for discussion by other members of the Commission.

Member Castaneda asked if the Chicago Heights location of the proposed business is in operation. Applicant Elbanna said no.

Member Castaneda asked if staff or the applicant suggested the demolition of the kennel building to add parking area, as alluded to in the staff memo. Assistant Director Schumerth noted that the idea of demolishing the kennel came up as a potential solution for adding parking spaces on the site, but that it

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was an expensive suggestion and must be considered by the Planning and Zoning Commission as to whether the proposed demolition would cause undue burden on the property owner in order to meet the zoning ordinance requirements.

Member O'Brien asked the applicant who the owner of the property is. Jennifer Sjoblom, a member of the audience and the realtor representing South Suburban Humane Society and the applicant, stated that the property is under contract for sale to the applicant and is currently owned by South Suburban Humane Society. Member O'Brien asked that the member of the audience be sworn in. Chair Sierzega swore in Jennifer Sjoblom.

Member O'Brien asked about a statement in the memo claiming the building has "structural issues which create challenges for redevelopment to accommodate any use," and also noted that the memo claims that the "building will require significant renovation work to meet code requirements, and is in poor condition and may deteriorate further without a new user." O'Brien asked how the Special Use Permit can be evaluated if such structural issues are apparent, and suggested that the item be tabled.

Assistant Director Schumerth noted that the building must meet local building code requirements regardless of the use proposed, and that the condition of the building is addressed through building permit reviews. Schumerth noted that even in the event of a complete building reconstruction, the code requirements would still need to be met, and the amount of investment required to meet code is a matter of private project financing which does not pertain to the case being considered by the Commission.

O'Brien asked for further clarification. Schumerth noted that the statements in the memo regarding the building's condition were "broad statements" which state the level of investment which may be required to meet Village codes.

Staff Liaison Mesaros asked if it is certain that the building needs structural work. Jennifer Sjoblom said that engineers had been out to the site and that she was unsure where the information was coming from. Applicant Elbanna asked if the statements are referring to the kennel area or the building as a whole. Sjoblom noted that the roof and HVAC systems will require work, and the entire building will need some work to meet modern code requirements. Schumerth noted that the roof and HVAC work were the primary concerns being raised in the memo, and that the terms used in the memo may have been blunt and more precise language could have been used. Sjoblom noted that she was not aware of larger structural issues on the site.

O'Brien said that the statement in the memo was "quite a statement," and that if there are structural issues with the site, it will substantially increase project costs. O'Brien asked if any quotes or estimates have been made to measure the cost of the work that will need to be done on the site. Schumerth stated that the statement referencing "structural issues which create challenges for redevelopment to accommodate any use" is referring to a foundational issue of parking shortages on the site which will prohibit any redevelopment under its current zoning classification. The other statements in the memo referencing the condition of the building and substantial building renovations required for the site are the statements which are referring to the roofing, HVAC, and overall building rehabilitation projects which will need to be undertaken to support the business. Schumerth also noted that the kennel buildings are in poor condition and will require rehabilitation or demolition to be used for another use. Schumerth apologized for the poor use of language and lack of clarity, and suggested a replacement of the word "structural" on page 12 of the memo with "foundational."

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Staff Liaison Mesaros noted that one of the only ways forward to provide parking on the site would be to remove the kennels, and that there are constraints on the site due to its size and location to provide parking on-site without a variance. Mesaros noted this makes development more difficult on the site.

Member O'Brien asked if there statement that "there are structural issues which create challenges for redevelopment to accommodate any use" was accurate, and even if the word "structural" is removed, if the building could accommodate any use without extensive repair. Mesaros noted that the statement in question is referring to parking on the site and that the amount of parking on the site is deficient for any use which could go into this building as it is now.

Member O'Brien asked for clarification about what was meant by staff on page 17 of the agenda packet regarding the condition of the building. Schumerth stated that it is a reference to the building's need for substantial renovation work to meet modern code. Schumerth noted that on page 13 of the agenda packet, significant site work will need to be done to allow the site to be developed under ordinance without a variance due to the lack of parking on the site.

Member O'Brien asked for clarification about the correct PIN number on the site, citing different property ID number (PIN) references on page 22 and page 11 of the agenda packet. Assistant Director Schumerth noted that the subject site consists of three properties, with PIN numbers ending in 001, 002, and 003. Schumerth clarified that the referenced made in the Special Use Permit application on page 22 refers to the consolidated property record assigned by Cook County ending in 000, since the three properties are owned by one property owner for a single use.

Staff Liaison Mesaros asked if the property with a PIN ending in 004 was included in the subject site, as the staff exhibits at the end of the agenda packet include 004 in the list of properties included in the subject site. Schumerth said that the property with a PIN ending in 004 belonged to Blueberry Hill Pancake House and was not included in the site, and that this will be corrected.

Member O'Brien asked why the packet references a peak demand of 34 people early in the packet, and cited that the peak demand number should be 32. Schumerth noted that the number 34 was a mistake and should have read 32. Applicant Farhoud noted that this number is an absolute peak demand and does not reference the total number of people who will likely be on the site at any given time.

Member O'Brien asked if the applicant had worked in the local real estate market previously. Applicant Elbanna stated that they are in the local restaurant business.

Member O'Brien said that the Findings of Fact are not correct, and that the square footage in Finding #3 does not align with the area numbers referenced in the packet, noting that the packet referred to the building and the kennel structure separately. Jennifer Sjoblom said that the buildings were connected as a single structure. O'Brien asked how the building was used previously. Sjoblom said that the room was used as an animal hospital with indoor dog kennels with outdoor areas. O'Brien said that the Finding of Fact claiming that the subject site was previously used as an animal shelter and kennel use was incorrect. Staff Liaison Mesaros noted that this was correct based on the zoning ordinance, even as the building was used as an adoption center. Sjoblom clarified that the use was used both as a shelter and an animal hospital.

Member O'Brien noted a need for clarification about why the application claims that the total area of the building is 3,200 square feet, but is referenced elsewhere in the memo as 3,850 square feet. O'Brien

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also asked why the applicant stated that circulation was not affected on the site when the parking variance was being applied for, and checked “no” on the checkbox asking for this information from the applicant. Assistant Director Schumeth said that because they are not modifying the parking area on the site as the project is proposed, the applicant can note that they are not affecting circulation and parking on the site with their development plans.

Member O’Brien said that if staff is suggesting modifications to the subject site to add parking, then the applicant should state that they are modifying site circulation and parking on the site with the appropriate checkbox on the application form. Schumeth said that the proposed parking additions are recommended by staff as options to add parking to the site, but are not proposed by the applicant. O’Brien asked why staff does not deem the proposed options to be modifications to site circulation and parking. Schumeth said that the applicant has not proposed such changes and has not opted to amend the site circulation or parking on the subject site.

Member O’Brien noted that on the application form, the applicant did not select “Variance” from the application type checklist. Assistant Director Schumeth said that the application for the proposed project was originally only made for a Special Use Permit, and it was determined in project review that a Variance would be required to move forward with the site as proposed. Schumeth stated that staff generally allow other zoning reviews to be filed with the same zoning review application originally filed. Schumeth noted that this situation is why the case has two project numbers, as the variance project number was assigned after the original special use permit project number was assigned.

Member O’Brien expressed concerns to staff about the ability for the building to be accessed at all times, as mentioned in the narrative material submitted by the applicant. Applicant Elbanna said that since the suites are being leased in the building, lessees using space in the building should have access to their spaces and belongings inside the building. Applicant Farhoud further clarified that this access would be for lessees renting space in the building, and would not be for general customers to come in at any time of the day. Staff Liaison Mesaros asked how hours of operations will be restricted at the building. Applicant Elbanna noted that most uses allow for the owners or lessees operating a business in a building to access a building after hours of operation are over. Elbanna said that the hours of operation will be a restriction put into building leases, and that security cameras will be used to confirm potential violations of terms of leases in the building.

Member O’Brien stated that the peak demand of 32 parking spaces for the building is very high and asked for clarification about why the number deviates from other references to the number of additional parking spaces needed for the operation of the use. Assistant Director Schumeth stated that the zoning ordinance requires 19 total spaces on the site.

Member O’Brien noted addition errors in the parking table provided to measure business demand in the public parking area near the intersection of 183rd Street and Harwood Avenue. Assistant Director Schumeth identified the error and corrected it, stating that the public parking need for the proposed use should be reduced by 3. Member O’Brien noted that the new total of 25 spaces out of 68 spaces reserved for various uses near the lot is an extremely high number of spaces. O’Brien referenced that this is the first development project reviewed in the downtown area following the approval of the Downtown Transit-Oriented Development Master Plan, and that there are problems with taking away 11 spaces from public parking lots which are designed to support traffic in the downtown.

Member Bransky asked for clarification for the total square footage of the building and if the kennel is considered part of the building. Assistant Director Schumeth said that the total square footage of the building is 3,850 square feet, and that number includes the kennel because the applicant has included it in their development plans.

Member Cap said that salons are the most common use considered by the Planning and Zoning Commission. Member Cap noted that parking is the primary concern with salon uses. Cap stated that salon demand is highest on weekday mornings, but that conversation must continue around when peak hours for salon uses are actually experienced. Member Cap noted that many people are concerned about the availability of parking in the downtown area.

Member Alfonso contested Member Cap's statement, claiming that the general public is less interested in the issue of parking than is generally understood from Planning and Zoning Commission business. Member Cap maintained that he receives many comments about parking from members of the general public. Cap noted that the Village encourages creative parking solutions but that peak hour conflicts can create real problems for the ability for businesses to operate and that the Village needs to be factual and deliberate in measuring potential peak demand conflicts from uses.

Cap mentioned that 37% of parking in the lot is proposed to be used for other uses to meet parking demand. Cap stated that he was surprised by the applicant's statement about peak hours, and asked how peak hours can be controlled. Applicant Elbanna stated that the peak hours will be 9am to 12pm or 12:30pm and that it is hard to control peak hours of a business. Cap asked how the applicant determined peak hours. Elbanna noted that he has worked with salons previously and this has been his general experience of busier hours for salon uses.

Member Cap asked how the applicant would respond to further restrictions on hours of operations. Applicant Elbanna stated that restrictions could make it difficult to recruit tenants into the proposed salon suites. Cap discussed the need to balance parking demand with the immediately adjacent business at Blueberry Hill. Cap noted that many people are likely to get hair done on a Saturday or Sunday morning, contrary to the expected peak hours mentioned by the applicant. Cap asked for consideration of how to control demand for parking when the Blueberry Hill restaurant adjacent to the public parking area in question has issues with parking on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

Member Cap asked how we collectively control peak hours for other businesses sharing a public parking lot if surrounding uses already have issues accommodating parking at peak hours, even when utilizing adjacent public parking areas.

Member Cap also noted that the building will serve as a multi-tenant commercial building, creating the potential for 16 new spa uses. Member Cap stated that the Special Use Permit should be considered as a multi-tenant shopping center with 16 tenants.

Cap noted that the number of salons and spas has dramatically increased in the downtown area, and asked whether supply may soon exceed demand. Cap noted a need to keep a balanced business mix in the downtown area. Jennifer Sjoblom noted that demand patterns vary with salons, with salon customers generally loyal to specialists and traveling with them as their location changes. Jennifer Sjoblom noted that the move to create more salons is likely bringing in existing demand from other Chicagoland locations, rather than competing for existing demand in the Homewood area.

Applicant Elbanna also noted that the salon suites use proposed is significantly smaller than many other similar uses. Elbanna referenced locations in Hazel Crest and Orland Park which have 30-40 salon suites, significantly larger than the 16 proposed at the Homewood location.

Jennifer Sjoblom noted that there is parking available regularly in the public lot adjacent to the South Suburban Animal Hospital. Member Cap suggested that the parking availability is at night, and that Homewood residents enjoy having lots of parking available for businesses. Cap summarized parking concerns throughout the downtown area. Cap reiterated that the use of too much public parking for a single use could cause detriment to other businesses. Cap noted that there is an opportunity cost to allowing parking variances if a business can dominate public parking resources in a given area, restricting the possibilities of current or future businesses to grow and attract customers. Cap stressed the importance of weighing “benefits and disadvantages” for each individual businesses potentially affecting a large number of new parking resources.

Member Bransky asked how the Planning and Zoning Commission can make a decision about a Special Use Permit if the success of the project and details about the operation of the project are largely being based on speculation. Assistant Director Schumerth stated that the conditions placed on the Special Use Permit are the primary vehicle for determining how a use will operate, and that specific uses are restricted in the conditions placed on the proposed special use. Schumerth noted that a salon suites use creates challenges in how to restrict uses, but that a wide range of conditions can be placed on the use which must be enforced by the applicant. Schumerth noted that conditions such as the requirements for hours of operation and business access management allow for more clarity about how the use will be used. Schumerth noted that any lessee in the building will be able to perform any use permitted in a “salon/spa establishment” as identified in the Zoning Ordinance.

Member Bransky requested clarification about the condition language for building access management to ensure that it is specifically commercial operation of businesses which is restricted at some hours of the day, since business lessees will still benefit from accessing the business space. Bransky said that concerns about 24-hour access can be alleviated with the adjustments to condition language in the final recommendation to the Village Board.

Member Alfonso asked if laundry facilities would be included in the building. Applicant Elbanna said there would be laundry facilities. Member Alfonso asked for the applicant to identify the location of such facilities. Applicant Elbanna noted that the utility room is to include laundry facilities, but the final placement and size of such a room will be determined when architectural plans are made.

Member Alfonso asked how large the suites will be for tenants. Applicant Elbanna stated that the spaces range from 100-113 square feet at the Chicago Heights location, and will be around 110 square feet at the Homewood location. Member Alfonso praised the privacy afforded by the suites in this type of building. Member Alfonso suggested that existing parking demand may influence the behavior of potential clients at the salon, and people may modify their appointment times to times when they know that parking demand will be lower. Alfonso states that she has concerns about comparing the demand caused by salons to demand from other uses.

Chair Sierzega said that the applicant was not correct in their assessment of peak hours for salon uses, citing that peak hours for salons are in the early to mid-afternoon based on previous experience with a neighboring tenant of his own business.

Chair Sierzega asked for clarification about the attachments which showed only 12 spaces on an architectural plan. Applicant Elbanna noted that the plans are from the Chicago Heights location, and that the Homewood location could have up to 16 spaces.

Chair Sierzega expressed concerns about competing for parking with the Blueberry Hill Pancake House and Lassen's Tap restaurants. Sierzega said that he believes that the proposed use will create far too much traffic to exist alongside surrounding businesses, and that a future business at the former Citgo site at 2124 W 183rd Street will require additional spaces to support a restaurant. Sierzega said that he believes that there will be a big parking problem in the area.

Applicant Farhoud said that they will continue to look at options to accommodate parking on the site, including removing the kennel building attached to the main building on the subject site. Sierzega asked how many spaces would be created if the kennel was removed. Assistant Director Schumerth noted that 4-7 spaces could be removed depending on the parking configuration.

Applicant Elbanna said that the building was unlikely to be fully rented out at any given time, which could reduce the total demand for parking at any given time. Elbanna also noted that many salon proprietors do not work every day of the week and that demand will be varied throughout the week depending on when lessees are operating their businesses. Elbanna stated that the proposed peak demand of 32 spaces is an absolute worst case scenario for the business. Chair Sierzega said that the Village must plan for the "worst case scenario" and that the Village has an interest in the business being fully occupied.

Member Cap asked how the current salon suites business on Halsted Street is operated. Staff Liaison Mesaros stated that the existing salon suites use in Homewood is operated 24 hours a day in a zoning district where the business is allowed to operate by-right. Mesaros noted that the Special Use Permit is only method for regulating the hours of operation of most businesses.

Assistant Director Schumerth stated that the proposed restriction on the hours of operation was agreed upon between staff and the applicant, based on concerns about the operation of a business adjacent to residential uses across Harwood Avenue.

Member Cap asked where overflow parking goes after the public parking lot near the subject site is filled. Member Bransky and Staff Liaison Mesaros noted that parking generally overflows onto street parking. Mesaros also noted that Lassen's Tap also is permitted to overflow into the Goodspeed Cycles parking lot because of an existing agreement with the business. Member Cap noted that parking will be pushed onto residential streets, which will upset residents of the nearby area. Member Bransky noted that the parking must be considered based on the potential maximum parking demand generated by a given site. Cap noted that the competition will be greatest around late-afternoon into the evenings when nearby restaurants are busy.

Member Cap stated that the demolition of the kennel could mitigate the variance and both reduce total overall parking requirements on the site while increasing parking supply. Member Bransky noted that there is a "cost/benefit analysis" for this decision that must be considered.

Assistant Director Schumerth stated that the number of suites is limited to 16 spaces, and that the Commission may further restrict the number of tenant spaces which the applicant can provide in the space to further restrict demand, which can be controlled through the total number of leases which can

be provided by the applicant to business operators as lessees. Member Cap suggested that there needs to be more analysis done on what might be feasible from a business perspective.

Applicant Elbanna noted that a variance would still be required if the kennel was removed and parking spaces were added. Member Cap noted that the variance would be mitigated and the effect on neighboring businesses would be reduced. A discussion occurred about the costs of various measures to mitigate the variance on the site.

Chair Sierzega recommended that the case be continued to allow for time to assess the cost of removing the kennel and to assess the number of suites. Member Castaneda suggested that the addition of parking spaces on the east side of the existing parking area on the site would be feasible if the trash dumpster on the site was moved to another location. Assistant Director Schumerth identified that the addition of each parking spaces absorbs 5-6% of the total parking requirement onto the site, and thus has a significant impact on the total variance being requested.

Chair Sierzega asked when the case could be continued to for discussion. Staff Liaison Mesaros stated that the discussion of the hearing item could be continued without additional legal notice on May 23, 2024. Chair Sierzega stated that if more time is required to discuss project details, the applicant should reach out to Village staff to ensure another continuation of the case and further staff meetings are arranged.

Member Cap made a motion for continuance of Case 24-05/24-09 to May 23, 2024; seconded by Member O'Brien.

AYES: Members Alfonso, Bransky, Cap, O'Brien, Castaneda, Chair Sierzega

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

ABSENT: Member Johnson

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

None

ADJOURN:

Member Cap moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Member O'Brien; all members present voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Noah J. Schumerth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Noah" being more prominent.

Noah Schumerth

Assistant Director of Economic and Community Development