

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. on January 13, 2021.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL

Present virtually were Commissioners Berke, Blinova, Malik, Sprague, Thompson and Yedinak. Chairman Johnson and Marcy Knysz, Village Planner were present in person. Mallory Milluzzi, Village Attorney was present virtually.

4. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA - None

5. CITIZEN CONCERNS AND COMMENTS - None

6. CONSENT ITEMS - None

7. ITEMS FOR REVIEW

- A) Concept Review for Wheeling Workforce Housing
231 Wheeling Road

Mr. Josh Hafron and Mr. Sig Strautmanis, General Capital Acquisitions, 6938 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Milwaukee, WI were present for the concept review.

The petitioner presented the project for concept review to the Village Board in late December. In December, the Illinois Housing and Developmental Authority Board approved the transfer of the housing tax credits for the project to the site at 231 Wheeling Road. Workforce and affordable housing projects require approval and cooperation of Federal, State and local governments. To already have the credits for a project was critical and somewhat unusual and eliminates the need to wait and see if the project would receive a credit award to move forward.

They will present their schematic plans in preparation for submitting a full PUD package. Progress has been made and they have invested significant dollars into the project. Principles of General Capital will be the developers and the owners of the project for at least the next 15

years. They are a real estate development group from Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Josh is in their Northbrook office and Sig is from their Milwaukee office. The company was founded by two brothers in the mid-90s who still lead the group along with 23 employees with different backgrounds. There are two sides of the business, one is commercial development, and the other is residential. They have completed 35 housing transactions similar to the proposed development. They have been completed in Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. Currently, they have 5 projects under construction and are under the process of closing three transactions that have already received credit awards including the Wheeling project.

Photos were provided of a Milwaukee 140-unit built along the Milwaukee River which was completed in 2012. The project is in one of the highest rent districts in Milwaukee. The commonality between the Milwaukee project and the Wheeling Workforce project is that it is indistinguishable from the market rate projects that line the river even though it is a workforce project. Another commonality between the projects is the mixed income nature of the project. There are tenants in the building paying \$1,800 in rent and some paying \$400 in rent and both tenants enjoy the common areas of the building which include a gym, coffee area and other areas.

They commissioned a third-party market study analysis for the project. They will have tenants living in the building making up to 80% of the area's median income. A family of 5 living in a 3-bedroom apartment in the building can earn up to \$77,000 a year and still be income qualified to live in the building. There will also be units at 30% AMI and 60% AMI. Based on the study, there are 14,783 households in Wheeling and of those households, 8,229 make less than \$75,000 a year as a household so about 55% of Wheeling's households are eligible to live in the building. The study was positive and projected that the building once completed would lease up in 2-3 months but based on the demand, they think it would lease up much quicker. Their goal is to be pre-lease full and move people in within the first month.

Mr. Strautmanis described the site as a 1/3 of a mile south of Dundee and directly across the tracks from One Wheeling Town Center. It is considered a transit-oriented development location and supported by the MXT Zoning District. The site is in a great location and the adjacencies were currently fine with open space and insulated from the industrial to the south. They think it is a nice pocket piece associated with the Metra station.

The proposed is a single 4-story building with 53 units. It will be built to Village standards using Type 2 construction with a metal non-combustible building. They believe it is a nice compliment to the higher-end residential. They have some income restrictions, but they are intending to serve the middle market of housing. One of their signature elements of all their properties is they like to create a sense of community so they focus on creating gathering places where the residents can network, meet friends and have activities. They create the environment for community through lounges, Wi-Fi cafes and then the residents take it over. They seek a third-party sustainability certification and this project will be a LEED Certified building with some high-tech mechanicals and fixtures.

The site includes 3 parcels with the drainage ditch on the south end of the property. The drainage ditch is being used for their storm water and the east side includes Heritage Park. There is a pedestrian crossing over the tracks just north of the property that allows their residents to

walk over to Wheeling Town Center. The property directly to the north is also in transition and is currently vacant that they hope will be positively redeveloped. They will work with the Village and developer to create a strong pedestrian connection that goes directly to the Metra Station.

The site is currently vacant and use to be the old Orange Crush asphalt site. They just received the Phase 1 environmental study and are currently doing their Phase 2 investigation and probing their site. They are comfortable with the existing adjacencies. The high-tension wires are located on the west side of their property and cross over the road to the south end of their property, so they are never directly near their project.

The site plan includes the parking behind the building toward the tracks. The site includes two access points, one on Wheeling Road and one off of Catherine Court. The Village will look at the locations regarding the alignment. The petitioner has hired a traffic engineer to help locate the access point to ensure they are safe. There is an access drive around the entire building. There are 106 parking spaces but half of them will be covered or underground so the spaces closest to the tracks are in carports which further buffers the building from the track.

The landscaping plan includes a lot of landscaping including a hardscape pedestrian plaza near the entrance. There are hardscape and softscape elements. On the south end of the building, they added some bike racks and a small fenced in play area for the residents. On the far south end of the site there is a storm water detention basin which is sized to accommodate their storm water and will discharge to the drainage ditch to the south of them under the tracks.

The main residential entry, leasing office and community spaces are on the ground floor facing the street. The short end of the building closest to the street is all the community and leasing spaces and has a commercial feel that face the street. The building is 4-stories and is slab on grade with steel construction.

Their architect took direction from Staff on differentiating the architecture of their project from One Wheeling Town Center. They used a Midwestern farmhouse aesthetics on the elements. The overall impression is to break down the scale to have a combination of the architectural style with more of a masonry building. Their intent is to create four-sided architecture, so every side has the same elements with no back side to the building.

The interiors of the units include open floorplans with a contemporary design. High quality vinyl wood plank flooring is used with carpeted bedrooms. Sustainably harvested cabinets are used, and all the fixtures are high efficiencies LED. The units will be from 700 square feet to upwards of 1,200 square feet for the largest units. Half of the units have three bedrooms.

They have started the PUD process and are working with Staff and hope to be in the PUD approval process in March.

The petitioner asked for feedback from the Plan Commission.

Commissioner Thompson questioned if there was a minimum credit score for the tenants. Mr. Hafron explained the building would be no different than a market rate deal. There are minimum

credit scores, criminal and landlord checks that are the same as any other apartment building. They use a third-party property management company from Madison, Wisconsin. Commissioner Thompson hopes there is a little flexibility and understanding when looking at previous situations and not just a number. Mr. Strautmanis explained each file is reviewed but the process must be fair and consistent.

Commissioner Thompson questioned if there would be a staff member onsite. Mr. Strautmanis explained they hire a management company, but an onsite local property manager will be hired. There will also be a local maintenance company hired to handle any maintenance issues.

Commissioner Thompson questioned if there would be assigned parking spaces. Mr. Strautmanis explained every tenant would be guaranteed a parking space on the surface lot and there will be a handful of spaces for visitors. The assigned spaces are in the carports. Commissioner Thompson expressed concern about broken down vehicles left in the parking lot. Mr. Strautmanis confirmed the management company would handle it.

Commissioner Thompson questioned if they worked with local real estate agents to help place people. Mr. Strautmanis was unsure how they would work with a local real estate agent since he felt there was already a lot of demand but would be open to it. Commissioner Thompson referred to other projects that work with local real estate agents.

Commissioner Yedinak questioned if they were researching other names. Mr. Strautmanis was open to suggestions. Commissioner Yedinak suggested using a name that reflects the specific area.

Commissioner Yedinak questioned if there was a chance this deal could fall through like what happened with their other site. Mr. Strautmanis explained this site already had the zoning in place and that their previous site fell through because of trickier zoning. Ms. Knysz reminded the Commission to stay focused on the proposed project and no other properties.

Commissioner Yedinak referred to Staff's concern about the pedestrian track crossing. He questioned if the petitioner had contacted the commercial condos about the pedestrian pathway. Mr. Strautmanis confirmed they had not approached the commercial condos west of the vacant property. They believe the key would be to get a new pedestrian connection on the vacant property. They do not have complete clarity about how it would happen. Ms. Knysz explained it was in the very preliminary stage now and would need to be investigated in greater detail.

Commissioner Yedinak asked if they were planning to add a sidewalk at the front of the property along Wheeling Road. Mr. Strautmanis confirmed they were adding a sidewalk along their property, but it will end at the south.

Commissioner Yedinak asked about Staff's concern about counting the access to Catherine Court as an entrance. Ms. Knysz explained it was related to the proximity of tying into a cul-de-sac adjacent to the exit from Catherine Court to Wheeling Road. Mr. Strautmanis explained the access point they were showing to Catherine Court comes off their property and is within their property boundaries. Currently they do not need an easement but if they would go farther north it would require an easement.

Commissioner Yedinak questioned who would be eligible for the covered parking. He expressed a concern that it would create two different classes of tenants. Mr. Strautmanis explained the covered parking was a nice amenity that cost extra so they do not see it as creating different classes. Commissioner Yedinak questioned if they would use assigned spaces to make sure every unit that had a vehicle would be able to park. Ms. Knysz explained this topic would be dealt with at the Staff level and were not issues that needed to be addressed at this time. This meeting was too early to discuss specific details and the concept review should only address land development, big picture items, the use and overall look.

Commissioner Yedinak questioned the reason the design did not include balconies. Mr. Strautmanis explained they were at the upper cost threshold that is allowable on a building under the program. Balconies with Type 2 construction become extremely expensive. He also explained balconies required additional management and they were comfortable with renting the units without balconies.

Commissioner Malik likes the overall concept.

Ms. Milluzzi clarified that it was OK to mention concerns about parking but not discussing specific operational concerns. She explained that Commissioners can express overall concerns but just not specific details.

Commissioner Malik expressed concern about lack of parking for the number of 3-bedroom units in the building.

Commissioner Malik mentioned the exit was close to the bend south of Wheeling Road.

Commissioner Blinova referred to the comprehensive plan and thought maybe the building should be built closer to the road since it is close to the walkable town center. She wants to see the transition to the other side.

Commissioner Berke is in favor of the concept and appearance. He wants the same design on all sides.

Commissioner Berke questioned the height and length of the proposed fencing to separate the railroad tracks from the property. Mr. Strautmanis explained it would be the entire length of the east side of the property down to the drainage ditch. He is hoping it would be a 6' high fence. They will be planting up against the fence with dense vegetation. Ms. Knysz confirmed 6' was the permitted height.

Commissioner Berke questioned the proposed surface material for the playlot. Mr. Strautmanis thought they would use woodchips.

Commissioner Sprague was in favor of the proposed concept. He referred to concepts included in the comprehensive plan for the station area. He mentioned additional pedestrian crossings for the railroad track. He suggested a collaboration with the Park District. He referred to the

comprehensive plan that includes street forward buildings. He suggested moving the building toward the road and eliminating the parking in the front.

Commissioner Sprague referred to the exit to Catherine Court and asked if they considered moving the exit straight out to Wheeling Road on the north side. Mr. Strautmanis confirmed it could be considered but mentioned his personal concern was that the access point would be too close to Catherine Court.

Chairman Johnson wants a focus to keep kids off the tracks using something attractive from the trackside.

Chairman Johnson is in favor of a name change and will try to come up with some suggestions.

Mr. Strautmanis brought up the street forward suggestion. He explained his is normally in favor of it in an urban design but expressed concern about having the building too close to a busy street. They pushed it forward to have a presence on the street but questioned how it is done with maintaining the drive aisles. He questioned how strong the Commission felt about moving the building forward since it is a major design change for them.

Chairman Johnson – Likes the proposed design since it has a buffer from the tracks and a buffer from Wheeling Road. He felt it was a good use of the site.

Commissioner Yedinak – Agreed with Chairman Johnson and the petitioner. He felt a street forward makes sense if the first floor was retail. He was not in favor of having an apartment so close to the street. He does not think it is necessary to change the design.

Commissioner Blinova – She mentioned moving the building forward toward the street was because this project was the start for the area. She referred to the empty lot at the intersection of Wheeling and Dundee Roads and the previous discussions to have buildings located closer to the road, so it feels more like a walkable downtown feel. She agrees about the noise for the first-floor units. She likes the proposed building design.

Commissioner Berke – Agreed with keeping the proposed design. He feels having a buffer was important.

Commissioner Sprague – Mentioned it is included in the comprehensive plan but he thinks the petitioner has a valid point about having a buffer from Wheeling Road and agrees with it.

Chairman Johnson thinks having a street forward building was more for retail and hiding the parking in the back. Ms. Knysz agreed to take the Plan Commission's comments into consideration and will work with the petitioner.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A)** Approval of Minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 16, 2020 (including Findings of Fact for Docket Numbers 2020-25, 2020-35 and 2020-36)

Commissioner Yedinak moved, seconded by Commissioner Sprague to approve the minutes dated December 16, 2020 as presented.

On the roll call, the vote was as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Berke, Blinova, Johnson, Malik, Sprague, Thompson, Yedinak
NAYS: None
ABSENT: None
PRESENT: None
ABSTAIN: None

There being seven affirmative votes, the motion was approved.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Knysz announced the January 27th Plan Commission meeting will be a Plan Commission training meeting with no other items on the agenda. She asked the Commissioners to submit any items or questions they would like covered.

Commissioner Sprague referred to the street forward concept in the comprehensive plan and questioned if Staff needed to look at the Codes for setbacks. Ms. Knysz explained they would be reviewing the Code but some of the larger developments come in as PUDs.

Commissioner Sprague referred to a comment he heard at the Village Board meeting about Wheeling's Codes and stated that codes were needed in the Village. All the surrounding towns have them and without them, there would be a lot of inconsistencies. They keep things safe and attractive and helps attract new businesses and residents to the Village. If there is a code someone disagrees with, they have a right to enter a comment for the Board to review.

Commissioner Yedinak would like to discuss colors at the training session.

Commissioner Yedinak gave a positive shout out to Waggles. He asked residents to visit the new doggy daycare business.

Chairman Johnson noticed the house on Valley Stream had been demolished.

Ms. Milluzzi asked the Commissioners to email Marcy with any specific topics they would like covered at the training session.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Sprague moved, seconded by Commissioner Yedinak to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

**Wheeling Plan Commission
Regular Meeting**

January 13, 2021

On the roll call, the vote was as follows:

AYES: Commissioners Berke, Blinova, Johnson, Malik, Sprague, Thompson, Yedinak
NAYS: None
ABSENT: None
PRESENT: None
ABSTAIN: None

There being seven affirmative votes, the motion was approved.