

**Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Planning & Zoning Committee**

June 6, 2016

Members: Russ Iona, Chair
Jeff Iula
Vince Rubino

Mr. Iona called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. All members were present.

The minutes from the May 2, 2016 meeting were approved as written.

Legislation Discussed:

Temp. Ord. A-41

Temp. Ord. A-42

Discussion:

Temp. No. A-41

An ordinance accepting the Planning Commission one-year extension for the Menard's site plan at 75 Graham Road, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Fred Guerra, Planning Director, stated that Temporary Ordinance 41 is providing an additional year for site plan approval for the Menard's project. On February 3rd, 2015, the Planning Commission approved the site plan. City Council approved the site plan on February 23rd, 2015. The code states that the project should start within one year and take two years to finish. Even though Menard's started the project by tearing down the old Giant Eagle facility, the Planning Commission felt, since Menard's has not started building, that it was prudent to provide an additional year. This ordinance will allow them to commence construction on or before June 14th, 2017, which will give them a little bit over a year to start construction. Menard's said that they are delayed and they plan to start construction. Normally, they start construction in late winter of the year, February, March, April, to be open the following growing season. This will allow them until next summer to start construction. Mr. Guerra stated that Mr. Tom O'Neil, from Menard's, was present to give Council an update of what is going on.

Mr. Tom O'Neil, Menard Incorporated, 5170 Menard Drive, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, stated that they are requesting an extension of the site plan approval. Menard's has a lot of store expansions going on, but, for 2016, they have placed a lot of store construction on hold. It is not anything specific to Cuyahoga Falls. It was a decision by the family ownership of Menard's to hold off, because of a little bit of uncertainty as far as the economy and as far as the fall political process playing out and making sure that they comfortable moving forward. Menard's would like to put off construction until 2017 and make sure that the site plan approvals coincided with that desire. They request and appreciate Council's approval of the site plan extension.

Mr. Iula moved to bring out Temp. Ord. A-41 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Rubino. Motion passed (3-0).

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Temp. Ord. A-42

An ordinance accepting the Planning Commission approval, findings and conditions of the major site plan for the Wallhouse Hotel on Parcel 02-18226, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Guerra stated that River Falls Property III, LLC has purchased Urban Renewal Development Parcel 107 from the City. They plan on constructing an 83-room, 8-story boutique hotel named the Wallhouse Hotel. The hotel will be operated by Nivea Hospitality, from Walnut Creek, Ohio. Nivea Hospitality operates six hotels. Two other ones are the Wallhouse brand. The architect of record is William McCullough, and ABA, Alan Burge Architecture, has done the exterior design of the facility. On May 12th, 2016, the Historic Design & Review Board recommended approval of the hotel to the Planning Commission with three stipulations: All the building materials must be approved by the Historic Design & Review Board; all exterior lighting must meet the Cuyahoga Falls General Development Code requirements, and all signage be approved by the Planning Commission. On May 17th, the Planning Commission found the proposed site plan that includes the design met all appropriate sections of the code, and they recommended approval with the same stipulations of the Historic Design & Review Board.

Ms. Susan Truby, 2976 Devan Vale, Cuyahoga Falls, stated that she would like take a few minutes to introduce their team. Jason Rice, with Aventis Development, is the project manager, contractor and also a partner in the project. Tom Bartlebaugh is a partner and an owner of River Falls Development. Ms. Truby stated that she has been a consultant on the project, as well. River Falls Development owns the Fountain Pointe Building downtown and the Powerhouse at Water's Edge, which houses the Burntwood Tavern. Their corporate offices are in the Fountain Pointe Building, the point being that they really have a vested interest in downtown and watching its progress move ahead. Mr. Bartlebaugh has also been a development partner in Bath Creek Estates, the nursing rehab center on Bath Road in Ward 8 and the new Memory Care that just opened earlier this year. Going back in time, he was a partner in the Blossom Glen and Regent Park subdivisions.

Ms. Truby stated that this is going to be a boutique hotel, \$8 million, 83 rooms, and a restaurant at the top level. At this point in time, the operator of the restaurant has not been selected. The project is going to create 35 new, full-time jobs with a \$1 million payroll and a construction payroll of about the same amount. They closed on the property on April the 25th, and are getting ready to fence in the property. They are ready to move forward to break ground. They have been a very strong proponent of reopening the mall to vehicular traffic and wrote a letter of support to the Mayor's request for the TIGER Grant application. Notwithstanding all the development that is occurring on south Front Street, this project will be the first substantial investment in the downtown since Falls River Square, in 2014, or the Developmental Disabilities Building, in 2008, on Oakwood Avenue. Mrs. Truby stated she was very excited about this project. She was a project manager on the first hotel and is happy to have the opportunity to be instrumental in building the second hotel in her hometown. She stated that she will now turn things over to Alan Burge, who will go over the site plans.

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Mr. Alan Burge, Allen Burge Architecture, 356 Rose Boulevard, Akron, Ohio, 44313, stated they are the design architect on this project. What they initially did was take the site plan and integrate it with the current MKSK plan that has been approved or is working through the approval process with Planning and through Mr. Guerra. In the site plan, what they have done is align the building with the faces of the existing buildings to retain the continuity of the streetscape, which is a pretty basic, important planning element. Mr. Burge showed Council and the Administration 3-D versions of the site plan. In the first scheme, it was shown how the new building will interface with the existing buildings along Front Street. On the first two stories, there will be a stone veneer and some other masonry materials that would pick up and mimic some of the other materials that are already in Cuyahoga Falls. The majority of the building is a brick. They are looking at samples of brick from different buildings in and around the region in an effort to blend that and come up with something that would be sympathetic to Cuyahoga Falls. The building is kind of a classical parti with a two-story base and a top shaft, or column. Some of the other renderings display a capital, or a top that will put on the building which will be the restaurant that was mentioned earlier.

Mr. Burge stated that in another view from the corner of Portage Trail and Front Street, a little bit more of the top of the building and the scale and the massing of it can be seen. They have tried to break that down, so it reads as not multiple buildings, but the scale of the building reads as multiple bays. The glass turning the corners lightens up the structure and creates something that has a less-imposing presence. Mr. Burge stated that the rear of the building resembles a walkout basement. There is a partial story there at the lowest level, and then the building climbs up from there. The restaurant structure on the top has good visibility from the expressway. Mr. Burge stated that the materials on the back of the building consists of a small amount of stucco, but is mostly masonry, metal panels and, obviously, the glass aluminum structure. In general, this is very much a contemporary building, but very much in keeping with what is in Cuyahoga Falls with the historic context, both in materials and proximity, location and layout. It also meets all of the current code requirements within the Cuyahoga Falls Development Code.

Mr. Guerra stated that what they have tried to do is make those first two stories blend in with the buildings that were there and break up the mass above the building. To make the hotel financially work, it was a requirement that they have 80 rooms. Everybody is pleased with the design. This is going to help promote other things in the downtown. Just by having the building being proposed, they are getting a lot more interest from other retailers and other people wanting to do things downtown.

Mr. Iona stated that from the Historic Design & Review Board to what was presented to the Planning Commission up until now, they have been very flexible. Some of the things he likes about the project are that it fits in with the city and it's going to be a centerpiece for revitalization of Cuyahoga Falls. Mr. Guerra had some suggestions with the Historic Design & Review Board and there were suggestions from Planning. Everything that was suggested, all along the route, they've done, and he is very impressed.

Mr. Pallotta stated that he counted 18 parking spaces in the back of the building. He asked Mr. Guerra if that was the total amount of parking available. Mr. Guerra stated that in the agreement to sell the property, there was a provision to lease them 80 parking spaces within the Blue deck.

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That is a monthly payment and a per-car payment that runs with the term of the tax abatement and can be renegotiated after the tax abatement. It helps to utilize the upper levels of the deck, which aren't being used now. The cost of renting out those spaces also helps with the maintenance of the deck.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that she loves the idea that there is going to be some income to offset maintenance of the decks. She asked Mr. Guerra if that income is specifically dedicated to that. Mr. Guerra stated that was correct. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if the per-space provision is per space used per day or the entire amount per day. Mr. Guerra stated that it was use. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that she agreed with Mr. Iona about the amount of flexibility. At the Planning Commission meeting, the speakers were very complimentary. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that it is a great plan. The view from the restaurant is going to be phenomenal. It will be a destination place that people will want to come to. She asked if there was going to be retail in the ground floor of the building. Mr. Guerra stated that there is space for it.

Mr. Iula stated he would like to thank them for doing the project, and that this project is just a great improvement and way to kick off Front Street. It is going to look different, because most of the buildings are only about two stories, and this building is going to be five stories higher, but he thinks it will look good.

Mrs. Pyke thanked Mr. Rice and Mr. Bartlebaugh for their patience. A lot of demands were made on them through the Historic Design & Review Board, but, being the first new building down there, it was important to stick with the historic design that the Board wanted to see down there. At one point, they saw a presentation that provided a virtual tour of traveling through Front Street. When walking down at the first level, the first two stories really blend in with everything. Mrs. Pyke stated to Mr. Burge that he did a very good job with the restaurant on the top. She still questions the little piece that comes out, but it looks like they shortened it some. She asked Mr. Burge what they call that top piece. Mr. Burge stated that they did shorten it a bit. It is really just an architectural element. It can be called a wing or any number of things, but it serves as an identification for the building and for the restaurant. It is really like a cornice or cap built in at the top. Mrs. Pyke stated that she remembered going to the Top of the Town Restaurant, in Cleveland, and that this restaurant will be a destination point as that was. She stated she looks forward to it, and that there are some really exciting things happening downtown.

Mr. Colavecchio stated that he is looking forward to this hotel being built. He and his wife ventured to Amish country this weekend and stopped in at the Wallhouse Hotel located there. It was very beautiful and elegant. They were informed that the hotel sells out with people who want to visit Amish country. He asked if the eco-friendly practices that that Wallhouse Hotel incorporates, such as a saltwater pool and recycling soap, were going to be implemented at the hotel here. Mr. Burge said yes. Mr. Colavecchio stated that the hotel was amazing. They were shown some of the rooms. The hotel even has their own specialty coffee, which was excellent. They were very friendly and accommodating, and the hotel was lovely and a destination hotel.

Mayor Walters stated that he would just like to echo what everyone said. Although, there is a lot of interest in the two blocks of the pedestrian mall, no one wants to be first. He stated he would

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like to hand it to River Falls Property Investments III, LLC for being the first. That will serve as a huge catalyst, because, thereafter, when the road opens and everything is accessible and visible, it just explodes from that point. Mayor Walters thanked them for their great investment in a great project.

Mr. Bartlebaugh stated that although modifications were requested, from their perspective, it was always considered a team effort with everyone all working together to get a good project and a successful project. He stated that Mr. Guerra having Mr. Burge become involved in the project was indispensable. He did a tremendous job with his team, and the end result here is going to be a very successful project.

Mr. Rubino moved to bring out Temp. Ord. A-42 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Iula. Motion passed (3-0).

The meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.