

**The City of Lake Forest**  
**Plan Commission**  
**Proceedings of the August 12, 2020 Meeting**

A meeting of the Lake Forest Plan Commission was held on Wednesday August 12, 2020, at 6:30 p.m. This meeting was conducted remotely in compliance with Governor's Executive Order 2020-07, issued on March 16, 2020 that suspended certain Open Meetings Act provisions relating to in-person attendance by members of a public body due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Commission members present: Chairman Kehr and Commissioners John Dixon, Jamie Moorhead, Susan Athenson, Michael Freeman, Stephen Douglass and Monica Artmann-Ruggles

Commissioners absent: None

Staff present: Catherine Czerniak, Director of Community Development and Michelle Friedrich, Planning Technician

**1. Introduction of Commissioners and staff and review of meeting procedures.**

Chairman Kehr introduced the members of the Commission and staff and reviewed the meeting procedures followed by the Commission.

**2. Consideration of the minutes of the February 12, 2020 and July 8, 2020 Plan Commission meetings.**

The minutes of the February 12, 2020 meeting of the Plan Commission were approved as presented.

The minutes of the July 8, 2020 meeting of the Plan Commission were approved as presented.

**3. Public Hearing and Action: Public Hearing and Action: Consideration of a request for approval of a Special Use Permit to allow a real estate office to be located in existing tenant space at 284 E. Deerpath, in the B-4 Traditional Business District.**

**Property Owner: Arcade on Deerpath, LLC (James Altounian II 25%, Jennifer Bianchi 25%, Todd Altounian 25%, Nicole Altounian 25%)**

**Tenant: Lori Baker and Alissa McNicholas in affiliation with Compass Real Estate**

**Representative: Peter Coutant**

Chairman Kehr introduced the agenda item and asked the Commission members to declare any conflicts of interest or Ex Parte contacts.

Chairman Kehr noted that she knows Lori Baker from the years their children were on the same sports team and knows Peter Coutant from his time as a member of the City of Lake Forest staff. She stated that despite her previous limited interactions with the petitioners, she is confident that she can evaluate the petition impartially. Hearing no declarations from the other members of the Commission, she invited a presentation from the petitioner and swore in all parties intending to speak.

Mr. Coutant introduced the petition. He noted that Lori Baker and Alissa McNicholas were also in attendance. He stated that a Special Use Permit is requested to allow a new, small real estate office to occupy existing tenant space at 284 E. Deerpath. He stated that he, along with Ms. Baker and Ms. McNicholas recently aligned with Compass Real Estate, a nationwide brokerage firm that was launched in 2012. He stated that currently, Compass is the number two firm in the Chicago market. He noted that Compass is expanding into suburbs in the Chicagoland area and wish to have a presence in Lake Forest. He noted that all three of the petitioners have worked in Lake Forest for their entire real estate careers. He noted Ms. Baker and Ms. McNicholas are lifelong residents of Lake Forest adding that he grew up in Lake Forest and has been a part of the Lake Forest community for his entire career. He noted that the three of them have worked together for the last two years. He stated that they look forward to showing prospective residents around the Central Business District and showcasing all that Lake Forest has to offer. He noted that they will work with clients in the office on a regular basis. He noted that the space is only 950 square feet and although it is not a retail business, they plan to make the office a vibrant space. He stated that in the future, the office may expand to include a few more real estate agents. He stated that no structural changes are planned for the space adding that low key signage will be added to the awning and window.

Ms. Czerniak reviewed that in 2003 the City Council established banks and real estate offices as Special Uses in Business Districts. She noted that Special Uses must be considered through a public hearing process and must be evaluated based on the criteria in the Code. She noted that the staff report provides findings in support of the request. She stated that the property owner confirmed that the tenant space has been vacant for about one year since a jewelry store moved out. She noted that the store front is only about 18 feet wide and is not prominent on Deerpath. She noted that the Griffith, Grant and Lackie real estate office is directly to the west of this space and has a much larger street frontage. She noted that Coldwell Banker, which is further west on Deerpath, is moving to Forest Avenue in the near future so with the location of Compass on Deerpath, there will still only be two real estate offices on the street. She noted that a condition is recommended requiring that all employees of the business park in the public parking lots, not on the street, in order to make the street parking available for customers of all businesses in the area. She noted that minimal signage is proposed on the awning and on the window.

In response to questions from Commissioner Moorhead, Ms. Czerniak confirmed that the proposed use is in compliance with the 10% non-retail limitation.

In response to questions from Commissioner Artmann-Ruggles, Ms. Czerniak acknowledged that it is difficult to continually monitor whether employees of local businesses are parking on the street. She stated that business owners are expected to enforce the requirement that employees must not park in the on street parking spaces which are intended for customers. She noted that the Community Service Officers monitor parking on an ongoing basis to the extent possible.

In response to questions from Commissioner Athenson, Mr. Coutant acknowledged that if additional agents are added to the office in the future, more space may be needed. He noted however that it is unlikely that many real estate agents would be in the office at the same time and that agents often share work spaces.

In response to questions from Commissioner Athenson, Ms. Czerniak acknowledged that the parallel parking on Deerpath can be difficult. She noted that diagonal spaces are provided on Western Avenue, around the corner.

Hearing no further questions from the Commission, Chairman Kehr invited public comment. Hearing no requests to speak from members of the public, she invited final comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Moorhead stated that the application appears to satisfy the criteria for a Special Use Permit.

Commissioner Artmann-Ruggles stated support for the petition.

Commissioner Douglass stated agreement with the findings detailed in the staff report in support of the Special Use Permit.

Commissioner Freeman stated support for the petition and welcomed Compass to the community.

Commissioner Dixon stated support for the petition.

Commissioner Athenson stated support for the petition and commented that the new local real estate office will be managed by long time Lake Forest residents and will be an asset to the community.

Hearing no further comments from the Commission, Chairman Kehr invited a motion.

Commissioner Freeman made a motion to recommend approval to the City Council of the request for a Special Use Permit authorizing Compass Real Estate to occupy the first floor space at 284 E. Deerpath subject to the following conditions of approval. He noted that the motion also incorporates the findings as presented in the staff report and the Commission's deliberations.

1. All employees and Sales Associates shall park in public employee parking lots. Public on street parking spaces shall be used by customers only. The Office Manager shall institute policies to enforce this condition.
2. Jockeying of cars in on street parking spaces on Deerpath, Western Avenue, Oakwood Avenue, Bank Lane, in Market Square or on other streets in the Central Business District by employees and Sales Associates, in violation of the City Code, shall be considered a violation of this Special Use Permit.
3. All building and window signage shall be approved and permitted consistent with applicable Code requirements.
4. No exterior or interior alterations shall occur which limit the future re-use of this space for retail or restaurant uses.
5. The "store front" windows shall remain generally open to allow views into the space for the purpose of providing pedestrian friendly streetscape.

Commissioner Dixon seconded the motion and it was approved by the Commission by a 7 to 0.

**4. Public Hearing and Action: Consideration of a request for tentative and final approval of a plat of resubdivision for a 2-lot subdivision of the property addressed as 120 W. Alden Lane and associated variances.  
Property Owner and Representative: Green Flash LLC – 120 Alden Lane (Eugene Martin 100%)**

The item was not heard at the request of the petitioner.

**5. Additional public comment on non-agenda items**

Rommy Lopat, 410 E. Woodland Road, commented on the recent Library Board discussions about renovation and expansion of the Lake Forest Library. She noted that in 2016, the Plan Commission recommended parameters for the McKinley Road Redevelopment, but a master plan for the Library was never created. She noted that in 2019 the Library began considering improvements to their site. She suggested that the Plan Commission should assist the Library Board with the site planning process.

In response to a request from Chairman Kehr, Ms. Czerniak noted that the Library Board is responsible for developing a concept for the Library project. She stated that

as currently envisioned, the project includes renovation, repairs and updating to portions of the existing building and a proposed addition to the north side of the Library. She stated that the concept developed by the Library Board and the Library consultants will go through a City review process including review by the City's Historic Preservation Commission once the Council authorizes that process to proceed. She stated that because the City will likely be asked to play a role in financing the project, the vision for the future of the Library will need to be presented to the City Council for discussion at a public meeting. She stated that the City review process will likely get under way this fall. She stated that the current concept for the project does not require any action by the Plan Commission. She noted that the Plan Commission's past discussions about the McKinley Road Redevelopment project included discussion about a transfer of some land to accommodate some additional parking for the Library and a publicly accessible green space to the north of the Library.

In response to questions from Commissioner Freeman, Ms. Czerniak confirmed that based on what she knows of the project so far, no Plan Commission action is required. She noted that the Historic Preservation Commission will review any changes to the building and site because the property is in the historic district. She added that if any zoning variances are requested, the Zoning Board of Appeals would also be involved in the review of the project.

In response to questions from Commissioner Dixon, Ms. Czerniak stated that for more information, members of the public should visit the Library's website. She noted that the website has a detailed summary of the deliberations of the Library Board and the work done on the project concept to date.

#### **6. Additional information from staff.**

No additional information was presented by staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Czerniak  
Director of Community Development