

The City of Lake Forest
Plan Commission
Proceedings of the June 9, 2021 Meeting

A meeting of the Lake Forest Plan Commission was held on Wednesday June 9, 2021, at 6:30 p.m.

Commission members present: Chairman Dixon and Commissioners Jamie Moorhead and Barrett Davie

Commissioners absent: Stephen Douglass, Mark Pasquesi and Louis Pickus (one position is vacant)

Staff present: Catherine Czerniak, Director of Community Development

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

Chairman Dixon introduced the members of the Commission and welcomed the new members. He reviewed the meeting procedures followed by the Commission.

2. Introduction: Senior Cottages – 12 clustered, attached residential cottages (duplexes) each with an attached single car garage on property located on the Northwest Corner of Everett and Telegraph Roads. *No action is requested.*

Property Owner: City of Lake Forest

Representatives: City of Lake Forest

Community Partners for Affordable Housing - Rob Anthony,
President and Chase Morris, Vice President Real Estate
Development

Chairman Dixon asked the Commission for any conflicts of interest or Ex Parte contacts. Hearing none, he invited an introduction of the petition by City staff.

Ms. Czerniak stated that the construction of additional Senior Cottages in the community has been discussed for a number of years given the success of the five Senior Cottages that were built on City owned land about 20 years ago on Conway Road, at the north end of Telegraph Road. She stated that the existing cottages were made possible through the efforts of former Alderman Tom Tropp and the Senior Cottages Foundation which he established. She explained that the development of the five cottages was a collaborative effort between the Foundation, the City and local business people. She stated that after several years of being owned and managed by the Foundation, the Cottages were transferred into the ownership of Community Partners for Affordable Housing (CPAH) a not for profit group dedicated to providing housing for those who need it. The City has had a long association with CPAH around furthering the City's diversity in housing goals. She noted that recognizing the success of the Senior Cottages and the need for housing for local seniors, the City's Housing Trust Fund Board (HTFB) encouraged the Senior Resources Commission to come forward with

concepts for additional housing for seniors. She stated that the Commission, working with various parties, first came forward with a plan to develop Senior Cottages at Grove Campus, adjacent to the Senior Center in Dickinson Hall. She stated that for a number of reasons, the Grove Campus site was not pursued. She explained that attention was then focused on the City owned property on the northwest corner of Everett and Telegraph Roads. She noted donation of land is a key element in making this type of development workable. She stated that the Council indicated a willingness to donate the property for a Senior Cottage development. She stated that the cottages will be offered in priority order to income qualified seniors living in Lake Forest and Lake Bluff and seniors of families living in the community. She noted that as proposed, the development will be age restricted and will be comprised of 12 cottages in six duplex buildings. She stated that each cottage will be about 1,300 square feet. She stated that CPAH will seek grants and tax credits, the Lake Forest/Lake Bluff Senior Citizens' Foundation will make a financial contribution to the development, the City will donate the land, the City will also make a financial contribution from the City's Housing Trust Fund and other community partners may also contribute to support the development. She stated that the property is zoned B-1, Neighborhood Commercial, and can be developed for a commercial use or for multi-family residential. She noted that the development site is close to medical office buildings, the fire station, the train station, a grocery store, a church, restaurants and other commercial uses. She noted that as proposed, there are two vehicular access points, one from Telegraph Road and one from Everett Road. She noted that Public Safety personnel requested access from both Telegraph and Everett Roads. She noted that a public walking path is located to the west and north of the site and will remain. She stated that on balance, the site appears to be a good location for Senior Cottages adding that the proposed use will be lower impact than a commercial use at the site.

Mr. Anthony confirmed that the existing Lake Forest cottages are very successful and in demand because similar housing types are noted located elsewhere in Lake Forest. He stated that the existing five units are not enough to meet the demand. He stated that the existing development fits well into the neighborhood and benefits from being close to stores, services and transportation. He stated that since CPAH took over ownership of the cottages in 2013, only two of the units have turned over. He stated that most of the residents have resided in the cottages since 2001.

Mr. Morris confirmed that 12 units are proposed of approximately 1,300 square feet each. He stated that the cottages will be a quality product noting that the units will have energy efficient appliances to minimize utility costs for the residents, a one car attached garage, and a small outdoor patio space. He stated that CPAH will own the units in perpetuity adding that these types of units are needed and in high demand.

Chairman Dixon noted that this agenda item is in front of the Commission at this time for information and invited comments and questions from the Commission.

In response to questions from Commissioner Moorhead, Ms. Czerniak clarified that when the site plan for the development is finalized, it is possible that one or more variances

may be required from the adjacent streets. She stated that a plat of consolidation will also be needed because currently, the parcel is comprised of multiple parcels. She stated that at this time it is not clear whether any other requests will need to be considered by the Commission.

In response to questions from Commissioner Moorhead, Mr. Anthony stated that a cottage is a mini home, with direct access to the outside and parking immediately adjacent. He noted that the buildings will be constructed as duplexes, with a single shared wall.

In response to questions from Commissioner Moorhead, Mr. Morris stated that the exact height of the cottages has not yet been determined. He confirmed that the cottages will be a single story.

In response to questions from Chairman Dixon, Ms. Czerniak stated that the adjacent public pedestrian walkway is fairly wide. She confirmed that the City maintains and plows the path. She stated that the road and walkways within the development will be private. She stated that consideration will be given to whether direct connections should be made to existing sidewalks in the area. She confirmed that preliminary discussions have been held with the Village of Lake Bluff about participating in the development.

In response to question from Commissioner Davie, Mr. Morris confirmed that the tenants in the existing cottages have been very stable. He stated that early on, after CPAH took over ownership of the cottages, the tenancy of two units changed. He stated that now other changes in tenants have occurred.

Hearing no further questions from the Commission, Chairman Dixon invited public comment.

Steve Potsic, stated that he was on the Senior Resources Commission (SRC) from 2013 to 2019 and served as Chairman his last 3 years. He noted that since 2014, he also served on the Lake Forest/Lake Bluff Senior Citizens' Foundation and currently serves as its President. He noted that the Senior Resources Commission's role as set forth in the City Code is to identify and find ways to meet the needs of local seniors by seeking input and through coordination and cooperation with the City of Lake Forest and the Village of Lake Bluff. He stated that the SRC has been in discussions with the City of Lake Forest and the City's Housing Trust Fund Board about constructing additional senior cottages for some time. He stated that the existing senior cottages were constructed 20 years ago and noted that no housing dedicated to seniors has been constructed since that time. He noted that CPAH has worked closely with the City to enhance the supply of housing at various price points throughout the community adding that CPAH has vast experience in developing housing and knows what works and what does not work. He noted that in community surveys in both Lake Forest and Lake Bluff, residents highlighted the need for attainable housing for seniors and specifically the need for independent

living cottages. He stated that there is always a substantial waiting list for the cottages ranging from 18 people to 40 people, without even advertising the units.

Gale Strenger Wayne, 340 Western Avenue, stated she has been a member of the Senior Resources Commission since 2016 and currently serves as Chairman. She read a letter from a 94 year old Lake Forest resident of 45 years and noted that she has been on the waiting list for one of the existing senior cottages for several years. She stated that there are an untold number of seniors in the community that can no longer afford a home in the community. She stated that they want to stay in the community and the proposed senior cottage development will serve them well.

Paul Lieumeux, 560 Evanston Avenue, Lake Bluff, stated that he served on the Senior Resources Commission (SRC) from 2006 to 2013, and as Chairman from 2011 to 2013. He stated that he is currently on the Lake Forest/Lake Bluff Senior Citizens' Foundation and offered support for the proposed senior cottages. He stated that the role of SRC is to identify and find solutions to issues facing seniors and to work to retain seniors in the community. He said that the Foundation is charged with raising awareness of the needs of seniors, supporting the activities at Dickinson Hall and serving as the funding arm of the SRC. He noted that the Foundation is made up of Former Mayor Kerr, former Aldermen Cathy Waldeck, Jerry Henry and Roger Mohr, and former Lake Bluff Trustee, Mark Dwyer. He stated that the Foundation has unanimously approved funding to support the cottages. He noted the long history of private and public partnerships in the community.

Tom Morsch, 805 Oakwood Avenue, stated that he is a former Lake Forest Plan Commissioner, Alderman, and Housing Trust Fund Board Chairman and is currently serving on the Illinois Housing Authority appointed by the Governor. He stated that Lake Forest needs a diverse housing stock to continue to grow and be welcoming. He noted that he was fortunate to be involved in looking at the site now proposed for the senior cottages many years ago and studying the opportunities for the site. He stated that the City can use the value of the land to create housing for our citizens. He added that in the past, he served on the CPAH Board and confirmed that CPAH is a committed and engaged as non-profit partners.

Hearing no further public comments, Chairman Dixon confirmed with Ms. Czerniak that City staff will return this matter to the Commission when further study is complete and the development is ready for Commission action.

3. Re-Introduction: Redevelopment of the Midwest Bank site located on the southwest corner of Deerpath and Bank Lane, currently addressed as 241 Deerpath, with a mixed use development, commercial on the first floor and residential on the second the third floors, below grade parking is proposed. *No action is requested.*

Property Owner: Midwest Bank Corporation

Contract Purchaser: 241 Deerpath LLC (Todd Altounian 50%, Peter Witmer 50%)

Representative: Peter Witmer, architect

Chairman Dixon asked the Commission for any conflicts of interest or Ex Parte contacts. Hearing none, he invited a presentation from the petitioner.

Mr. Witmer stated he and Mr. Altounian have been negotiating for this site for about seven years. He noted that the site is walkable, close to the train, restaurants and local stores. He noted that the site is a little over half acre and is currently developed with a two story building with surface parking and 3 curb cuts, one on Deerpath and two on Bank Lane. He noted that most of the site is currently impervious, covered in paving. He stated that a preservation consultant is currently researching the property and preparing a report detailing and evaluating the historic integrity and significance of the property. He noted that the property to the west, 225 E. Deerpath, was redeveloped several decades ago. He said that the property to the south, 580 Bank Lane, was developed in the 1960's with an apartment building. He reviewed the proposed site plan and the site circulation for both vehicles and pedestrians adding that a traffic study is underway. He stated that at the City's direction, angle parking is proposed on the west side of Bank Lane and a Bank Lane is envisioned as a one way street to the south. He stated that on street parking will be for customers of businesses in the new building as well as other businesses in the area. He stated that the ramp to and from the underground parking is proposed at the southeast corner of the building, at the lowest point on the site. He stated that the building will step back from the property line along Deerpath, meeting the required five foot setback. He stated that landscaped pedestrian walkways are proposed on Bank Lane, one along the street and one under an arcade element of the building leading to an outdoor gathering space at the south end of the building. He stated that there will be private outdoor spaces for each residential unit. He reviewed the floor plans and pointed out that First Midwest Bank will remain on the site, with frontage on Deepath in a space of about 3,000 square feet. He noted that drive through facilities are not as important to banks as they used to be and noted that a drive through ATM will be located underneath the building, in the parking garage. He stated that there will be two levels of underground parking, a level for the residential units and a level for the commercial uses. He stated that consideration was given to locating residential units on the first floor but determined that commercial uses are appropriate on the first floor in this location. He noted that the outdoor terraces for the second and floor units will front on Bank Lane, not on Deerpath. He stated that currently, 10 to 14 units are planned in varying sizes, between 2,000 to 3,000 square feet.

Ms. Czerniak stated that the proposed development will require review under the provisions of a Special Use Permit. She noted there in the B-4 zoning district, additional square footage can be authorized if residential units are incorporated into a development through a Special Use Permit process. She noted that the adequacy and configuration of the parking on the site is still being studied and refined. She said that the development will require review by the Historic Preservation Commission for consideration of the proposed demolition of the existing building, the design aspects of the proposed building, a height variance, and the landscaping. She noted that the recently completed Deerpath Streetscape study recommended consideration of converting Bank Lane to a one way street, southbound, south of Deerpath to help reduce congestion on Deerpath and open up sightlines. She noted that the Police

Department is supportive of the change to Bank Lane as recommended by the Deerpath Streetscape Working Group.

In response to questions from Chairman Dixon, Ms. Czerniak noted that some of the residents in the condominiums further south on Bank Lane have expressed interest in seeing Bank Lane converted to a one way street from Deerpath to Vine Avenue.

In response to questions from Chairman Dixon, Mr. Witmer stated that based on current design concepts, the height of the building will be similar to the height of the buildings in the Kelmscott Park development. He stated that height is essential to achieve a modern interior space. He noted the neighboring tall buildings stating that the building will be lower than some of the surrounding buildings.

In response to questions from Commissioner Davie, Mr. Witmer stated that as the population ages in Lake Forest, residents are looking for spaces in buildings like the one proposed. He stated that they have engaged a consultant to study the market. He stated that the goal is to target a lower price point than the condominium units on McKinley Road.

In response to questions from Commissioner Moorhead, Ms. Czerniak stated that the Comprehensive Plan does not speak to moving residential uses out of the Central Business District but instead, locating office and retail west of the railroad tracks to concentrate them away from the residential neighborhoods. She noted that the zoning districts in the Central Business District offer a square footage bonus for providing residential units. She noted that in recent decades, it is estimated that approximately 100 residential units have been lost in the Central Business District.

In response to questions from Commissioner Moorhead, Mr. Witmer noted that First Midwest Bank is comfortable with a below grade ATM. He stated that he is not aware of another location with an ATM below grade. He stated that a preservation consultant has been engaged to study the viability of reusing components of the existing building such as the front door. He stated that today, after various alterations, there is not much remaining of the original building. He confirmed that rooftop terraces are proposed as part of the units on the top floor.

In response to questions from Commissioner Moorhead, Ms. Czerniak acknowledged that rooftop terraces are being incorporated into more and more buildings. She stated that other than the rooftop terraces on the two recently constructed McKinley Road condominium buildings, she is not aware of rooftop terraces on other condominium buildings in Lake Forest. She stated that the terraces have been identified as a desirable feature by some residents.

In response to questions from Chairman Dixon, Mr. Witmer confirmed that the ATM drive thru lane could easily be converted to parking spaces if the ATM is no longer needed. He stated that private outdoor spaces, including rooftop terraces for the top floor units,

are an important amenity and offer a way to enjoy Lake Forest from a different perspective. He stated that rooftop terraces are in demand.

Chairman Dixon noted that there are many outdoor terraces associated with multi-family units throughout the community and a second floor balcony at a restaurant on Bank Lane. He invited public comment, hearing none, he thanked the petitioner for the introductory presentation.

4. Additional public comment on non-agenda items

There were not public comments on non-agenda items.

5. Additional information from staff.

There was no additional information presented by City staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Czerniak
Director of Community Development