

The City of Lake Forest
Plan Commission
Proceedings of the April 20, 2023 Meeting

A meeting of the Lake Forest Plan Commission was held on Thursday, April 20, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.

Commission members present: Chairman Dixon and Commissioners Jamie Moorhead, Louis Pickus, Mark Pasquesi, and Barrett Davie

Commissioners absent: Commissioner Stephen Douglass (one position vacant)

Staff present: Catherine Czerniak, Director of Community Development
Lee Brown, Teska Associates

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

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

2. Consideration of the minutes of the November 9, 2022 and the February 8, 2023 meeting.

The minutes of the November 9, 2022 Plan Commission meeting were approved as submitted.

The minutes of the February 8, 2023 Plan Commission meeting were approved as submitted.

3. Introduction and Opening of Public Hearing: Comprehensive Plan Update – Consideration of the Draft Update of the Central Business District Chapter.
Presented by: City Staff and Consultant - Lee Brown, President, Teska Associates, Inc.

Chairman Dixon asked the Commission for any conflicts of interest or Ex Parte contacts. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing on consideration of an updated chapter of the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan pertaining to the City's Central Business District and swore in all those intending to speak on this agenda item. He clarified that the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a guiding document that looks forward 10 to 20 years and is intended to establish a framework for important community decisions on development, infrastructure, and budgetary considerations. He noted that the Comprehensive Plan is not a regulatory document and does not establish zoning or design requirements, does not mandate certain uses or direct how individual properties should be developed. He stated that the Comprehensive Plan establishes a vision, articulates goals, identifies opportunities, and offers recommendations for addressing

challenges. He stated that the Comprehensive Plan provides direction on where the City should focus attention and provides high level direction to developers and property owners who are contemplating future improvements, changes or development in the Central Business District. He stated that the draft chapter that is before the Commission for consideration states that the Central Business District's distinctive historic character should be preserved along with the quality of life through thoughtful planning and with a focus on the future. He stated that at this meeting, the Commission will begin the formal public process for considering the draft chapter. He stated that the public hearing will be opened and will remain open until a future meeting of the Commission. He stated that the Commission will not take any action on the draft chapter at this meeting. He noted that several pieces of correspondence were received shortly before the meeting adding that at least some of the Commissioners have not yet had time to carefully consider the written testimony. He stated that the correspondence will be reviewed by the Commissioners prior to the next meeting. He noted that unlike some petitions that come before the Commission, in this case, considerable opportunities for public input have occurred throughout the process of preparing the draft chapter that is now before the Commission. He noted that details of the public process to date will be reviewed as part of the presentation. He noted that the Plan Commission is fortunate that two members of the Commission, Commissioners Pasquesi and Moorhead, participated as members of the Adhoc Working Group that provided guidance to City staff and the City's consultant during the process to date. He invited a presentation on the agenda item. He asked the Commission to be prepared, at the end of the meeting, to direct staff and the City's consultant on whether additional information is needed, clarification, or further study on specific topics.

Ms. Czerniak stated that review of the draft chapter on the Central Business District follows the updates to the chapters on the Waukegan Road/Settlers' Square Business District and the Route 60 Corridor which both occurred prior to the pandemic. She stated that work on the update to the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan was paused during the pandemic because of the inability to do in person workshops and meetings. She explained that for both of the previous chapters, Adhoc Working Groups, chaired by former aldermen, were formed to advise City staff and the City's consultant as the draft chapters were prepared. She stated that like the two earlier Adhoc Working Groups, the Working Group for the Central Business District participated in tours of the areas being studied and in one or more workshops. She stated however that because of the importance of the Central Business District to the broader community, opportunities for public engagement were expanded and included a walking tour, a project website, an online poll and interactive comment map, one on one interviews, focus groups, a City-wide post card mailing, and an in person workshop at Gorton Community Center. She stated that to date, there have been considerable efforts to inform residents, property owners, and business owners about the discussions of the Central Business District. She stated that the opportunity for public input on this topic continues with the public hearing which is now open before the Plan Commission. She stated that the draft chapter presented for Commission review attempts to balance the various perspectives heard throughout the public process to date, draw conclusions, present a vision going forward, and a framework for achieving the vision. She stated

that as reviewed by Chairman Dixon, the draft chapter does not direct specifically how development should occur and does not establish requirements. She noted that implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, once adopted by the City Council, could involve future studies, the development of plans, or amendments to regulations that apply to development in the Central Business District. She stated that the Comprehensive Plan is intended to be used to guide appointed and elected officials on future decisions regarding land use and development. She added that the vision established in the Comprehensive Plan may influence budget priorities established by the City Council. She noted that interested parties who have participated in the process to date should be receiving direct email updates on the process. She invited members of the public who are not yet on the interested parties list to provide contact information so they can be added to the email list. She introduced Lee Brown, President of Teska Associates, and acknowledged Teska for the contributions to date in shaping the draft document and credited Teska for the formatting and graphics. She also acknowledged Teska's leadership in providing various opportunities for public engagement.

Mr. Brown noted that Lake Forest has a long tradition of thinking ahead and establishing guidance for future decisions. He stated that the current work to update the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan is another step in that ongoing process. He noted that over the years, there have been multiple studies of the Central Business District, each leading to some action, but all endorsing the preservation of the distinctive character of the district. He noted however that from time to time, it is appropriate for a municipality to take a step back and rethink and re-envision. He commented that some outside events or forces, most recently the pandemic, drive changes in behaviors and taking a look at how those changes impact decision making is important to set a course for the future. He stated that the Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a look forward, not to the next year or two or three years out, but much further out. He noted that a long term view must be taken whether a community wants to maintain or change its character. He noted that in the case of the draft Central Business District Chapter that is before the Commission for consideration, the vision is stability for the Central Business District over the long term, to limit change, but to be proactive in preserving character, investing in infrastructure, and assuring ongoing vitality in the district. He stated that the draft chapter balances the interests of the Central Business District with those of the larger community and noted that "everyone owns a piece of the Central Business District". He noted that the Adhoc Working Group contributed significantly to the draft chapter and identified the members of the Working Group. He noted that the group's charge was to evaluate or re-evaluate the established land use patterns, to identify redevelopment opportunities that might exist, to support the vitality of the Central Business District, to identify pedestrian corridors, to evaluate parking, to plan for open spaces, to consider transition areas, and to review streets and streetscapes. He noted that early on, the Working Group agreed that providing various opportunities for public input was critical. He stated that a project website was established to present information and seek public input. He noted that individual interviews and focus groups were held, the Working Group took a walking tour, an online poll was conducted, an interactive comment map was offered on the website, a City-wide postcard was mailed to all addresses in the City

with information about the work underway, an in person workshop was held at Gorton Community Center, and afterwards, the workshop was available online providing additional opportunities for public engagement in the process. He provided some data noting that there was broad and representative involvement from the community. He stated that 564 individuals responded to the online poll and noted that there were 2,500 individual views of the interactive comment map on the website with many people checking back in to see how others were commenting on the map throughout the process to date. He noted that 130 people attended the in person public workshop at Gorton Community Center. He stated that throughout the public engagement process and the Working Group meetings, the themes, vision, and ultimately the draft chapter, were developed and refined on an ongoing basis. He reviewed some key themes heard throughout the process, one being not to change the Central Business District but instead, to enhance it, build on its strength, and maintain the unique character. He stated that other themes included maintaining vitality in the district to attract and retain businesses, strengthening the cohesiveness throughout the district by providing connectivity, and maintaining the sense of safety, comfort, and ease of access to and through the district. He noted that in all the conversations to date, there was a strong recognition of the importance of preserving and protecting Market Square and the surrounding area and the fact that the Core area is known regionally and nationally as an architecturally distinctive and well planned town center. He read the vision statement as now presented to the Commission for consideration noting that the vision statement captures the often heard direction to not change the Central Business District into something different but instead, to build upon its strengths. He explained that the vision guided the development of goals and recommended actions which are detailed in the chapter. He noted that the Working Group recognized early on that the Central Business District is not uniform in character throughout and that different areas of the district serve different functions, are comprised of different uses, and have different building types and characters. He pointed out that that discussion led to considering and identifying three distinct subareas within the overall Central Business District, the Core, the Inner Ring just beyond the Core, and Neighborhood Business Areas at the north and south end of the overall district. He reiterated that the draft chapter emphasizes that the Core, Market Square and just beyond, must be preserved, maintained, and protected. He noted that the Inner Ring presents the greatest opportunity and potential for change and recommends pro-active planning for this area. He explained that the Neighborhood Business Areas, to the north and south of the Core and Inner Ring, meet every day needs of residents with retail, restaurants and service businesses generally oriented along Western Avenue. He stated that the Working Group also identified the east/west street "corridors" that extend through the Core and Inner Ring, Illinois Road, Deerpath, Westminster, and Wisconsin Avenue, and identified opportunities to provide enhanced north/south connections between these corridors in some areas, along Bank Lane and Forest Avenue in particular. He stated that the Working Group discussed the opportunities to enhance Bank Lane as a pedestrian corridor and the potential benefit that could have adjacent and nearby properties. He reviewed the goals articulated in the draft chapter noting that maintaining an active business district, building on existing strengths, addressing identified weaknesses, and pursuing opportunities for public/private collaboration are

identified in the draft. He noted that the draft chapter identifies recommendations for achieving the vision and goals by subarea. He summarized some of the recommendations noting that adaptive reuse of significant buildings is encouraged along with enhancement of infrastructure to support the vitality in the Central Business District and encourage private investment. He commented on the different roles of private property owners and the City as the owner of infrastructure and publicly owned property. He noted that the City has some control over privately owned property but not absolute control. He noted the benefits of establishing a vision around what is desired by the community while at the same time understanding that market demands and economic feasibility of uses and types of development must be considered. He noted that the City manages and maintains City owned infrastructure including parking lots, on street parking, streets, sidewalks, storm sewers, and public amenities and public spaces. He pointed out that private property owners are responsible for buildings, private properties, and development, and responsible for attracting businesses and services that the market demands and will support. He noted that retail businesses in Lake Forest cannot compete with big box stores and must offer unique and different products and services. He noted that the City, together with private property owners, are responsible for maintaining the distinctive character that draws people into the Central Business District keeping it vibrant and relevant. He noted that the City cannot completely dictate what goods and services are offered by local businesses. He concluded asking the Commission to provide feedback on the draft chapter: do the subareas as proposed make sense, are the strengths and weaknesses of the Central Business District accurately characterized, does the Vision as articulated ring true, is there a proper balance between preservation and future opportunities, what is missing. He emphasized that the document presented is a draft, refinements, edits, and clarifications are welcomed as the review process moves forward.

Ms. Czerniak emphasized that the draft chapter is being introduced to the Plan Commission now that the Adhoc Working Group has completed its work. She stated that the Plan Commission review and opening of the public hearing begins the formal review process of considering the draft chapter as an update to the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan. She reminded the Commission that the Comprehensive Plan is not a regulatory document and does not mandate or dictate what can or must be done with private property but instead, is intended to set out a vision, goals, and recommended actions. She invited Commission input and questions on the draft chapter.

Commissioner Pasquesi commended the Working Group and the City's consultants for asking questions and spurring conversation about the Central Business District. He stated that the consultants and staff listened well and ultimately created a strong draft chapter for consideration.

Commissioner Moorhead agreed with Commissioner Pasquesi's comments.

In response to questions from Commissioner Pickus, Mr. Brown stated that the public input raised questions and offered comments that prompted discussion by the Adhoc

Working Group. He explained that the Working Group was provided with the comments received along with summaries that identified areas where multiple comments focused on similar issues or ideas. He confirmed that the draft was developed as a result of the comments and ideas received, clarifying that the process did not start with the draft chapter. He stated that the draft was shaped all along the way by public input. He stated that the Working Group's discussions reflected the different perspectives that were offered throughout the public engagement process to date.

In response to questions from Commissioner Pickus, Ms. Czerniak commented that the draft chapter started out as a collection of ideas, an outline. She noted that the public input received broadened the initial focus of the chapter from a focus on opportunities to include strong statements about the importance of preservation and protection of the Core area, important buildings outside of the Core, and the unique character of the Central Business District overall. She noted that this shift led to the identification of the Core and Inner Ring as distinct from the Neighborhood Business areas to the north and south.

Commissioner Barrett noted that some of the correspondence received by the Commission raised questions about the process to date. He noted that in his opinion, the Adhoc Working Group was comprised of an interesting mix of individuals including people with business interests in the Central Business District, architects, developers, people interested in historic preservation, and others.

In response to questions from Commissioner Barrett, Mr. Brown commented that many communities rely solely on the Plan Commission or other elected or appointed officials to review updates to Comprehensive Land Use Plans. He noted that in this case, the process started with a Working Group comprised of individuals that represented various interests in the community beyond those that are already involved in local government.

In response to questions from Commissioner Barrett, Ms. Czerniak said that the City has used Adhoc Working Groups in the past at the start of studies or projects, to provide early input and guidance to staff in developing draft documents for public review. She noted that Working Groups intentionally bring together people with different perspectives, interests and experiences. She confirmed that the early public engagement opportunities offered during the process to date are expanded from the public engagement opportunities offered in the past including the project website, an interactive comment map, and a poll that was available City-wide and announced in a postcard that was mailed to every address in the City.

In response to questions from Chairman Dixon, Mr. Brown confirmed that the Working Group did not call for a change in the character of the Central Business District or a change in the quality or character of buildings within the Core area. He stated that in fact, preservation of the Core is a focus of the draft document. He noted that opportunities are called out for enhancement of the streetscapes in a manner consistent with the character and quality that makes the Core so distinctive. He noted that the Working Group acknowledged that some areas beyond the Core are likely to

be the subject of redevelopment discussions in the future. He stated that the Working Group made a conscious decision not to call out individual buildings or sites that may be redeveloped but suggested that the City should be ready to provide guidance on how redevelopment should occur if or when it is proposed. He stated that assuring that adequate parking is available to support businesses is critical to maintaining a vital Central Business District. He acknowledged that some of the parking needs can be met with on street parking but noted that the additional parking currently provided by the City owned surface parking lots provides essential parking to support the Central Business District. He noted that it is reasonable to ask the question of whether the surface parking lots are the best use of the City owned parcels and explore whether there are opportunities to still provide and perhaps increase the availability of parking, while at the same, time enhancing the aesthetics and providing a more appropriate transition to the adjacent residential properties. He stated that the Comprehensive Plan does not dictate when or if a parking structure should be developed, but instead encourages some proactive thinking about the parcels. He stated that as redevelopment is considered, it is important that parking not be lost because of its importance to a vital business district.

Hearing no further comments from the Commission, Chairman Dixon opened the public hearing and swore in all those intending to speak.

Brian Norton, 90 E. Woodland Road, stated that he is representing the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation. He summarized the letter submitted earlier in the day by the Preservation Foundation. He stated that there is broad consensus that preserving the historic, inviting, and vibrant character of the Central Business District is essential. He stated that there is agreement that the Core must be preserved along with the significant buildings. He pointed out that according to the poll conducted as part of the process to date, 92 percent of the respondents agree that the character of the Central Business District is a defining element of the community. He stated that the Foundation agrees with the proposed Vision that the Central Business District should not be changed, but instead, be enhanced and the architectural aspects of the distinctive buildings and open spaces preserved. He stated that the Foundation is concerned that the draft chapter does not go far enough in detailing how the Vision will be achieved. He stated that character guidelines and parameters are needed to set realistic expectations for property owners. He suggested that nationally recognized experts should be engaged to prevent inconsistent development. He stated that developing a Master Plan for the CBD or amending the Zoning Code will ensure that development is consistent with the existing architectural styles in the Central Business District. He suggested that the boundaries of the Historic District be expanded to include the entire Central Business District, rather than just the Core, to assure that buildings are subject to review by the Historic Preservation Commission and adhere to the standards used by the Commission. He stated that design parameters should be referred to the Historic Preservation Commission for review.

Laure Luce, 111 Ridge Lane, stated that her property abuts the Inner Ring. She stated that she applauds some of the language in the draft chapter but is skeptical and

concerned that the language may just be lip service. She stated that the City's approach to development has been piece meal and bait and switch at best. She expressed concern that the City Council set a precedent when it overturned a decision of the Historic Preservation Commission and approved a third condominium building in the McKinley development. She said that the 17 standards used by the Historic Preservation Commission are at risk and future Historic Preservation Commission decisions may be overturned. She stated that the City should adopt codes to assure that future development is appropriately shaped. She noted that to the east of her house, there is a small area that is not included in the Historic District and questioned whether the boundaries were gerrymandered to allow for development that would not be approved within the Historic District. She noted that there are threats and warnings that must be acknowledged, congestion from new development and the comment that adaptive reuse of existing buildings could be expensive thereby suggesting possible demolition. She stated that the process to update the Comprehensive Plan is moving too fast and doing irreversible damage to the Central Business District. She noted that the Oakwood Avenue residents were not aware of the discussions about the Central Business District. She stated that the process has not been transparent and has not offered the opportunity for collaboration and input. She stated that she and others are on high alert to assure that there is no project creep, and no back room deals with developers. She suggested that an expert be hired to develop a Master Plan that assures that any new development will adhere to the 17 standards that the Historic Preservation Commission is charged with using to evaluate development. She encouraged the Commission to pause, preserve, and protect the unique development that defines the Central Business District.

Tim Downey, 475 E. Westminster, agreed with the previous speakers. He stated that the third condominium building in the McKinley Road development left a deep scar on the community and demonstrated a lack of respect for the standards which the Historic Preservation District is charged with applying. He stated concern that the standards are not being respected. He acknowledged that the draft chapter encourages respecting the established character of the community but noted that the community has lost trust in the City. He suggested that the draft document should provide detail on how the 17 standards used by the Historic Preservation Commission will be implemented and how development will be controlled. He stated that in the past, he thought that the 17 standards and the Historic Preservation Commission would protect the Historic District, but in his opinion, they have not. He stated that the chapter should be expanded to explain how the community will be engaged in development discussions to assure that what is loved about the Central Business District will be protected.

Rommy Lopat, 410 Woodland Road, stated that she submitted a lengthy letter and offered highlights has questions about the process, the readability of the plan, and missing data. She stated that she rewrote the Vision Statement and prepared an abbreviated list of goals and recommended actions. She stated that in her opinion, there should be a concurrent review of the Zoning Code to ensure that the Vision will be achieved. She questioned for instance whether the current permitted densities in the Code are appropriate. She questioned whether the goals in the 1998 Comprehensive

Plan have been met and suggested that the goals may be the same. She stated that the language in the plan relating to the Post Office is unclear. She stated that overall, the chapter is far too long and wordy. She noted that incentives are mentioned but not defined and questioned what incentives the City would offer. She stated that the chapter does not contain any definitions or tables on demographics, business types, affordable housing, turnover rates for renters versus buyers, or traffic patterns. She noted that some areas receive much more attention in the chapter than other areas. She volunteered to edit the chapter.

Nate Kelly, 89 E. Deerpath, stated that he lives on the southwest corner of Deerpath and Green Bay Road and has served on the Caucus. He thanked the Commissioners for their work. He stated that his concerns echo those expressed by Ms. Luce. He stated that he was unaware of discussions about the Central Business District. He stated that in his opinion, the Commission should take additional time to consider the draft document to allow for more community involvement and buy in. He stated that without community buy in, the process will be difficult going forward.

Maureen Grinnell, 745 Camelot Court, stated that she is the Chairman of the City's Historic Preservation Commission but is speaking as a resident. She noted the importance of getting the chapter right. She questioned what the role of the Historic Preservation Commission is in the process and questioned where the Commission's 17 standards come into play. She acknowledged the considerable time and effort spent on the process to date but noted that there are serious trust issues in the community on a number of issues and stated that the lack of trust will spill over to the Comprehensive Plan. She stated that her hope is that the community will be excited about the document and not fearful of.

Jim Opsitnik, 971 Verda Lane, stated that he was a member of the Working Group. He agreed with the comments offered by the public. He stated that as a member of the Working Group, he wanted to go further into the areas raised by the other speakers. He noted that the concept of further developing Bank Lane as a walking corridor is a suggestion with the understanding that detailed plans for enhancements on Bank Lane will be subject to review by other appropriate groups. He acknowledged that the letter submitted by the Preservation Foundation suggests processes for developing detailed design parameters to build upon the English Village concept on which the Central Business District was based. He stated that any development should enhance the character of the community and not just be done for financial gain by the developer. He stated that the City can add to the tax base within the existing character of the community.

Tom Swarthout, 987 Maplewood Road, noted that a few years ago the College built a five story dormitory building which did not negatively impact the neighbors and benefited the College. He stated that he is a builder, developer, and owns several properties in the community. He stated that the City needs to encourage developers to come in and invest in the community. He stated that the community needs to work to not scare off developers. He stated that adding another layer of regulations would be

troublesome. He stated that many people in the community do not feel the way others do about the third condominium building in the McKinley development. He stated that 20 years ago, the allowable building square footages in the Central Business District were reduced significantly, negatively impacting the property owners. He suggested that the previous reduction should be reconsidered. He questioned how developers can be encouraged to revitalize buildings built in the 1970's and 1980's without the ability to add square footage. He noted that there is a shift in how much space banks need which will bring about change. He said that there is another perspective out in the community besides the comments offered to the Commission.

Richard Walther, 1296 Oak Knoll, stated that about five years ago he participated in a discussion about improvements to the Deerpath streetscape. He confirmed that details of how the Vision will be implemented will be determined by subsequent committees and studies.

Diane Casuto, 1200 Wild Rose Lane, pointed out that the draft chapter does not address the existing traffic congestion on Deerpath and Western Avenue. She cautioned that bringing in more businesses and residences will bring in more traffic. She stated that a traffic study should be conducted before additional development is permitted.

Jim Crawford, 550 N. Green Bay Road, stated that he has been a resident of Lake Forest for 40 years. He commended the Working Group and agreed with the Vision and the importance of preserving the character of the Central Business District and its distinctive architecture. He noted however that the draft document does not place enough emphasis on the Inner Ring. He stated that everyone agrees that Market Square must remain but noted that what happens in the Inner Ring will determine what the community looks like in the future. He agreed that many of the banks are or will be empty in the future. He stated that the decision about how much control the City will take over development in the Inner Ring is important. He stated that what happens in the Inner Ring could make the Central Business District look different. He noted that anything that is built needs to be consistent with the existing character. He suggested that the community should move toward having more control over what is built. He stated that because of the third condominium building, which he described as a box with windows, the community does not have much confidence that the character will be maintained. He stated that assuring more control over development will be a gift to the community.

Hearing no further requests to speak, Chairman Dixon noted that the public hearing will remain open. He invited final questions from the Commission. Hearing none, he asked for comments from staff and the City's consultant.

Ms. Czerniak commented that many of the comments and suggestions offered by members of the public will be addressed through the implementation of specific recommendations in the chapter. She stated that implementation will follow approval of the update to the Comprehensive Plan. She stated that her expectation is that the

City Council will identify priorities for implementation and suggested that the Plan Commission may want to forward recommendations on priorities to the City Council. She noted that as highlighted by some of the speakers, the Working Group recognized that there is the most potential for change in the Inner Ring and stated that the draft document reflects the Working Group's consensus that the City should try to get ahead of future development or redevelopment by establishing a Vision and taking action in the form of investments in infrastructure and forward thinking perhaps through the development of parameters that focus on certain areas. She stated that the Comprehensive Plan sets the stage for future studies and planning.

Mr. Lee noted that the Working Group identified Bank Lane as a unique opportunity for enhancement, to make the street more walkable and inviting. He noted that Bank Lane is imbedded in the Central Business District, not immediately adjacent to single family homes, and wedged between the Core and the Inner Ring. He noted that today, Bank Lane in some areas has the feel of a glorified alley. He stated that Bank Lane presents an opportunity to improve the connection visually and physically from Illinois Road to Wisconsin Avenue.

Chairman Dixon suggested that the language pertaining to the Inner Ring be reviewed to clearly articulate the need to assure a proper balance between preservation and development.

Commissioner Davie noted that a past president of the Preservation Foundation was on the Working Group and contributed to the document as presented. He acknowledged that there are limitations on how far the City should go in mandating how development should proceed. He noted that adoption of this updated chapter of the will not take the place of the standard City review processes. He asked about how detailed the Comprehensive Plan chapters and discussions have been in the past.

Chairman Dixon commented that the process to date has provided opportunities for input, and he encouraged all interested parties who are not yet receiving direct emails to sign up. He noted that the draft now before the Commission has been the subject of community discussion for almost a year. He invited a motion to continue consideration of the proposed update to the City's Comprehensive Plan at a future meeting.

Commissioner Pasquesi made a motion to continue consideration of the updated chapter of the Comprehensive Plan that relates to the Central Business District.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Davie and was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

4. Public Hearing and Action: Consideration of a Request for a Special Use Permit for a New Takeout Restaurant, *Pizza by Sal*, at 177 E. Laurel Avenue, in Existing Tenant Space.

Property Owner: Gershman Properties

Business Owners: Ryan O'Donnell 40%, Glenn Keefer 40%, and Jon Farrer 30%

Representative: Brianne Carden, Vice President, Ballyhoo Hospitality

Chairman Dixon asked the Commission for any conflicts of interest or Ex Parte contacts, hearing none, he swore in all those intending to speak on the petition.

Ms. Carden stated that Ballyhoo Hospitality, the owners of the recently opened Sophia Steak, would like to open a takeout restaurant in the space adjacent to Sophia Steak to the west, at 171 E. Laurel Avenue. She presented an image of the proposed sign for the takeout restaurant, "Pizza by Sal" noting that the signage will be minimal. She stated that the takeout restaurant is intended to serve those in the neighborhood and will not have space for sit down dining. She stated that a stand-up counter is planned. She stated that to accommodate the new restaurant, the Sophia Steak kitchen will be expanded and will serve both restaurants by opening a portion of the wall to connect what will essentially be two kitchens. She noted that the expanded kitchen will help be beneficial to Sophia Steak. She stated that changes to the space will be minimal adding that the planned sharing of the kitchen minimizes the need to duplicate equipment. She stated that they have worked closely with the building owner on parking and stated that all employees will be required to park across the railroad tracks in the public parking lots. She stated that Ballyhoo Hospitality works with the management team of its restaurants to ensure that employees park in only designated areas. She stated that employees of either Sophia Steak or Pizza by Sal will not be permitted to park on the street. She noted two parking spaces on the private property that the building owner has agreed to designate as pick up spaces for Pizza by Sal. She added that the diagonal spaces on the street in front of the proposed restaurant are often available in the evenings. She stated that deliveries will be coordinated with deliveries to Sophia Steak and are only accepted certain days of the week, at specified times. She noted that the new restaurant will be convenient, within walking distance for many residents in the area.

Ms. Czerniak noted that through the years, the City has frequently heard requests from residents for more restaurants. She noted that in recent years, new restaurants have opened in the City. She acknowledged that as a result of additional restaurants in the Central Business District, at times there is more traffic and more demand for parking. She commented that seeing a demand for increased parking in the Central Business District is a good problem to have. She noted that the increase in restaurants is an example of how the Central Business District continues to change over time. She stated that City staff has found the representatives of Ballyhoo Hospitality and the building owners to be very responsive. She acknowledged that when Sophia Steak opened, there were some wrinkles and, that there may be some in the future. She stated confidence that through the ongoing strong relationship with the business owners, issues will be discussed and worked through. She stated that in early discussions about the Pizza By Sal concept, parking and pickup logistics were discussed. She stated that Ballyhoo Hospitality representatives worked to address the concerns raised by staff. She stated that staff understands that Pizza By Sal will not have on staff delivery drivers so there will be no drivers staging on the site. She stated that because the kitchens will be merged, the existing ventilation system is expected to be sufficient. She noted that given the

proximity of Pizza By Sal, it is likely that many of the surrounding residents may walk to pick up their food. She stated that findings in support of the Special Use Permit to allow a new restaurant within 150 feet of residential zoning districts are detailed in the staff report.

In response to questions from Commissioner Davie, Ms. Czerniak stated that staff has been in contact with an acoustical engineer and will bring forward proposed amendments to the Code to allow outdoor speakers in dining areas at restaurants with some limitations at a future meeting.

Chairman Dixon asked that the discussion of outdoor speakers should be moved forward quickly.

In response to questions from Commissioner Pickus, Ms. Carden stated that Sophia Steak only works with Door Dash and maintains a good working relationship with the drivers and sets out clear expectations. She noted that they set limits on the number of takeout orders to assure that the restaurant is not overburdened.

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

Maureen Grinnell, 745 Camelot Court, asked how Sophia Steak will deal with patrons of Pizza By Sal who want to use the Sophia Steak patio.

Glenn Keefer, a partner at Sophia Steak, stated that although they would rather reserve tables on the patio for Sophia Steak customers, they are in the service business and will likely not turn someone down. He stated that the incidence of this happening is likely to be small.

In response to questions from Commissioner Moorhead, Ms. Czerniak stated that the developer who originally converted the building to a multi-tenant building was required to provide on site parking spaces, in the garage, and was required to convert the parallel parking spaces on the east side of Western Avenue to diagonal spaces increasing the overall number of parking spaces in the area. She stated that because the tenant spaces are existing, new businesses like Pizza By Sal, are not required to provide additional parking. She noted that public parking lots owned by the City provide parking for employees throughout the Central Business District.

In response to questions from Commissioner Moorhead, Ms. Carden stated that with respect to traffic, weekend evenings tend to be busier than weekdays. She noted that because Pizza By Sal will offer takeout only, the trips will be quick with people parking only for a few minutes. She stated that the other businesses in the building close late afternoon freeing up parking in the vicinity for customers. She stated that they will work with the valet service for Sophia Steak to ensure that the parking spaces on Laurel Avenue are not used for parking cars. She confirmed that the intent is to offer wine, beer, and a spritz for takeout.

In response to questions from Commissioner Moorhead, Ms. Czerniak stated that the City Clerk confirmed that a single liquor license may cover both businesses since they are in the same ownership. She stated that the business representatives will need to work with the City Clerk to confirm what is needed.

Hearing no further comments from the Commission, Chairman Dixon closed the public hearing. He invited final comments and a motion from the Commission.

Commissioner Pasquesi stated support for the petition. He commented that Sophia Steak has been a huge success and noted that the business owners have a good relationship with the landlord and the City. He stated that Pizza By Sal will be a nice new offering in the community adding that it has a proven track record of success in Wilmette.

Commissioner Moorhead agreed with Commissioner Pasquesi's comments. He noted that there may be some issues with traffic congestion and pickups and encouraged staff to continue to work with the business owners.

Chairman Dixon agreed with the comments made by Commissioners Pasquesi and Moorhead. He noted that the original petition for Sophia Steak did not include valet parking, but the business owners saw a need and instituted that service for customers. He noted the good reputation of Ballyhoo Hospitality and stated confidence that any issues that arise will be resolved professionally between the business owners and the City.

Commissioners Pickus and Davie agreed with the comments made by the other Commissioners.

Chairman Dixon invited a motion.

Commissioner Moorhead made a motion recommending approval of a Special Use Permit for a new takeout restaurant, Pizza By Sal, at 171 E. Laurel Avenue. He stated that the recommendation is based on the findings as detailed in the staff report and incorporating the Commission's deliberations as additional findings. He stated that the recommendation is subject to the following conditions.

1. No employee parking is permitted on public streets. Employees must park off site in remote parking lots intended for Central Business District employees.
2. No parking or standing (waiting for food pick up) is permitted off site, on private driveways or private property without prior written permission from the property owner(s).

3. No customer or delivery service parking, staging or standing is permitted on Laurel Avenue, west of the commercial building or in the travel lanes anywhere along Laurel Avenue. The public street must remain unobstructed.
4. Exterior lighting, signage and awnings proposed for the site shall be subject to City review and if not in full compliance with Code requirements and City guidelines, will be referred to the Building Review Board. The light source for all exterior lighting shall be shielded from view from off the property to respect the nearby residential development, and only essential security lighting is permitted to remain on after operating hours.
5. No outdoor speakers are permitted so long as outdoor speakers are located on the Sopha Steak patio.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pasquesi and approved by the Commission in a 5 to 0 vote.

5. Additional public comment on non-agenda items

There was no public comment on non-agenda items.

6. Additional information from staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Czerniak
Director of Community Development