



## MINUTES

### MEETING OF VILLAGE OF FRANKFORT PLAN COMMISSION / ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

February 8, 2024 –VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

432 W. NEBRASKA STREET

- Call to Order:** Chair Schaeffer called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM
- Commissioners Present:** Nichole Schaeffer (Chair), Brian James, Johnny Morris, Will Markunas, David Hogan, Dan Knieriem
- Commissioners Absent:** Jessica Jakubowski
- Staff Present:** Community & Economic Development Director Mike Schwarz,  
Senior Planner Christopher Gruba
- Elected Officials Present:** None

#### A. Approval of the Minutes from January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Chair Schaeffer asked for questions or comments regarding the minutes. There were none.

**Motion (#1):** To approve the minutes from January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024, as presented.

Motion by: Markunas

Seconded by: Morris

Approved: (6-0)

#### B. 1.5 Mile Review: Will County Zoning Case #ZC-23-110 / S-23-064 (Dralle Sun, LLC)

Mike Schwarz presented the staff report.

The applicant, Alex Farkes, and his engineer from Kimley-Horn, Emily Kahanic, approached the podium.

Chair Schaeffer asked the Commission for comments. Commissioner Knieriem asked Mr. Farkas if he would be the developer. He responded yes. He said that he's based in northern Chicago and has been doing this work for 10 years. He said that he mailed all nearby property owners to notify them of his intent to construct a solar farm. He said that he has two main goals: to accelerate renewable energy in Illinois and to work with the Chicago

Public School system and students through the Climate & Equitable Jobs Act. He said that there would be no barbed wire fencing around the property and some natural screening (vegetation) is proposed. He said that the solar panels would be a temporary use on the land and that they would use pollinator mix beneath the panels; there would not be gravel. The pollinator mix is intended to grow plants that attract pollinating insects. He said that the panels have a warranty life of 25 years, but that they can last up to 40 years. He said that a small power facility such as this requires approval from ComEd. He said that there is a ComEd high-tension powerline that runs through the property and they would not place any panels within this powerline easement.

Mike Schwarz noted that this property is located in the Monee Fire District and that the project would require Will County building permits. He said that there is no water or sewer service near the property. He said that the property abuts the Village, but that the Village could not force the owner of the property to annex into the Village.

Mr. Farkes said that the facility would generate 7 megawatts. He said that he has a Will County public hearing scheduled for February 20<sup>th</sup>.

Chair Schaeffer said that she thought that the proposed locations were appropriate for solar farms.

Commissioner Knieriem asked if it would be a 25-year lease. Mr. Farkes responded that the initial term would be 25 years and may be renewed. Commissioner Knieriem asked if the panels would have to be dismantled and removed after 25 years. Mr. Farkas said yes, and that they have a bond in place to ensure that they would be removed, which is required per law. Commissioner Knieriem asked Mike Schwarz if there were any potential downsides to a solar farm at this location. Mike Schwarz said that the Monee Fire District may have concerns but he did not want to speak on their behalf. He also said that the use of the property for a solar farm now could prohibit the use of the property for a future industrial building, at least temporarily. He said that the land is listed in the 2019 Comprehensive Plan as industrial, not residential.

Commissioner Markunas asked where the generated power would connect to the grid. Mr. Farkes said that they would tie in directly to one of the existing power poles along Dralle Road. Commissioner Markunas asked if there would be any building. Mr. Farkes said no. Commissioner Markunas asked the applicant if he would not object to annexation into the Village in the future. Mr. Farkes replied that they are planning to remain in the County for now, but that future annexation into Frankfort would require a conversation with the property owner.

Commissioner James asked the applicant that of the 70 other projects that he's worked on, if any had been annexed by a Village. Mr. Farkes said yes, and noted Lisbon, IL, as an example. Commissioner James expressed approval of the proposed project.

Chair Schaeffer asked the applicant what happens to the solar panels after the end of their lifespan. Mr. Farkes said that they are either decommissioned and the solar panels are removed, or new updated solar panels are installed using the existing infrastructure. Chair Schaeffer asked about the house located on the north end of the south parcel. Mr. Farkes said that this structure is actually a large shed and not a residence. Chair Schaeffer asked for clarification on the pollinator seed mix. Mr. Farkes said that they intend to spread the seed mix below the solar panels for sure and that this land might also possibly be used for grazing animals, which Chair Schaeffer expressed approval of. Mr. Farkes said they hope to begin construction in April 2025.

Commissioner Knieriem asked about the proposed fencing. Emily Kahanic directed the Commission to the detail of the fence, which is depicted in the lower right corner of the Site Plan, which would be 7' tall. Mr. Farkes said that the solar panels would rotate to face the sun throughout the day. At peak tilt in the morning and evening, the panels would be 6-7' tall at the most.

The Commission asked Mr. Farkes if he would agree to two conditions: that he would be willing to dedicate right-of-way along both sides of Dralle Road if a bridge is ever proposed over I-57 and if he would request a Petition for Annexation to annex the two properties into the Village of Frankfort. Mr. Farkes said that both conditions sounded amenable to him, but that he'd also have to consult the property owner.

**Motion (#2):** Recommend the Village Board not object to the proposed Special-Use Permit for a commercial solar energy facility, Will County Case ZC-23-110 (S-23-064), on the unincorporated property located on the north side of Dralle Road immediately west of I-57 (PIN 21-14-08-300-008-0000), conditioned upon the property owner dedicating right-of-way along both sides of Dralle Road for a potential future bridge over I-57, if feasible, and, that the owner shall request a Petition for Annexation, subject to Village Board consideration.

Motion by: James

Seconded by: Knieriem

Approved: (6-0)

**C. 1.5 Mile Review: Will County Zoning Case #ZC-23-111 / S-23-065 (Dralle Sun 2, LLC)**

Mike Schwarz presented the staff report. Most of the topics were addressed during the earlier discussion for Will County Zonign Case #ZC-23-110, Dralle Sun, LLC, applicant.

**Motion (#3):** Recommend the Village Board not object to the proposed Special-Use Permit for a commercial solar energy facility, Will County Case ZC-23-111 (S-23-065), on the unincorporated property located on the south side of Dralle Road approximately 250

feet west of I-57 (21-14-17-100-003-0000), conditioned upon the property owner dedicating right-of-way along both sides of Dralle Road for a potential future bridge over I-57, if feasible, and, that the owner shall request a Petition for Annexation, subject to Village Board consideration.

Motion by: Morris

Seconded by: James

Approved: (6-0)

#### **D. Workshop: 219 Pacific Street – Lanigan Residence**

Chris Gruba presented the staff report and mentioned that the Village’s Public Works Department is requesting extension of the sidewalk along Pacific Street along the frontage of the property. He also summarized the seven Zoning Ordinance variation requests.

The Project Architect, Grant Currier, approached the podium and distributed a packet of information including color building renderings. He compared the previous house on the site to the proposed house. He also provided a response to each variation being requested. He estimates that the proposed house exceeds 50% masonry on the exterior. They are complimenting the brick with cement board siding and there is relief along the facades to break up the wall massing. He added that there seems to be a little bit of contradiction between the Downtown Design Guidelines and the Comprehensive Plan Residential Design Guidelines. Regarding the setback variation from Maple Street, he feels that closer a house is to the street, the house better relates to the street and is more pedestrian friendly. He illustrated that the entire neighborhood benefits from a variety of house setbacks rather than all of them aligning in a straight line. Only a portion of the covered porch encroaches the required setback along Maple Street. He also discovered that the street is not centered within the right-of-way. Along Pacific Street, the design attempts to align the south façade of the house with the neighboring garage to the east. For the request for a variation to exceed maximum lot coverage he stated that the property is uniquely- shaped and it is also a corner lot. In looking at previous variations that were granted for other properties, this particular variation is actually less than eight of nine others on the list that staff included in the staff report.

Chair Schaeffer stated that the Commission can discuss each request one by one.

*Variation #1 - 1st Floor Building Materials (masonry required, mostly non-masonry proposed)*

For exterior materials there was consensus among the members that there was a good mix of materials.

*Variation #2 – Reduced Front Yard Setback (Maple Street)*

For the request to reduce the required front yard setback along Maple Street, Chair Schaeffer asked Chris Gruba about the setback being measured to the porch. She thought that the setback measurement was to the front of the structure.

Chris Gruba clarified the methodology for measuring the minimum 30-foot requirement per the Zoning Ordinance.

Commissioner Markunas asked what the measurement would be from the front porch to the typical right-of-way.

Chris Gruba responded and added that also there is no restriction on the homeowner potentially enclosing the porch in the future.

The applicants stated that they have no intention of enclosing the proposed front porch.

*Variation #3 – Reduced Corner Side Yard Setback (Pacific Street Street)*

Chair Schaeffer stated that she appreciated the attempt to align the house with the neighboring garage.

Commissioner Markunas agreed with the Chair; There were no other comments from the other members.

*Variation #4 – Exceed Maximum Lot Coverage*

Chair Schaeffer stated that there is another house nearby that appears to be maxed out on lot coverage.

Commissioner Knieriem stated that he had no comment on this variation request.

Commissioner Markunas stated that this is the only variation that gives him pause. The applicants have a sufficiently sized lot and should be able to comply with the maximum 20% requirement.

Chair Schaeffer asked the applicants if they are aware of the lot coverage and impervious coverage requirements being two different things. Are they aware of the need for compliance if they ever wanted to build a gazebo, etc.? They would need to come back for any future variation request related to additional backyard improvements that exceed the maximum lot coverage and maximum impervious coverage.

The applicant William Lanigan replied that they are only seeking consideration of the seven variation requests that are listed in the staff report tonight.

*Variation #5, #6, #7 – Insufficient Lot Width and Lot Depth*

Chair Schaeffer stated that Variations #5, #6, and #7 are all related. She added that the proposed single-lot subdivision will clean this up.

Chris Gruba explained that variations are required from both the Zoning Ordinance and the Land Subdivision Regulations as it pertains to lot width and lot depth.

Chair Schaeffer asked if the sidewalk could jog to potentially save the tree which is to be removed.

Commissioner Knieriem asked how big the tree is.

The applicants stated that it is about 12 inches.

Grant Currier stated that he begs to differ with Chris Gruba as far as the cash-in-lieu not being supported by the Public Works Department. He stated that he spoke with Terry Kestel from the Public Works Department on January 5th and according to Terry he wouldn't be opposed to accepting cash-in-lieu of the sidewalk construction along Pacific Street for this property.

Commissioner Knieriem stated that common sense says to allow cash-in-lieu and see what happens with other potential future sidewalk construction to the east. The other members concurred with this recommendation to the Department of Public Works.

Chair Schaeffer asked about the lot coverage again.

Commissioner Markunas stated that he just can't see a hardship argument with that variation request.

Chair Schaeffer thanked the project architect and applicants and asked that they continue working with staff and the Department of Public Works.

## **E. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

## **F. Village Board & Committee Updates**

Mike Schwarz noted that the following projects were approved by the Village Board at its meeting on February 5, 2024:

- The building addition to the Olde Frankfort Mall was approved, including the Special Use Permit for the PUD, the Special Use Permit for a full-service restaurant with liquor sales for Tenant 01, a variation to waive all required off-street parking, a Preliminary/Final Plat of Resubdivision and Preliminary/Final Development Plan.

- A Special Use Permit for indoor entertainment was granted for the Frankfort Arts Association.
- The former Cactus Carrol's building at 116 & 118 Kansas street received a Special Use Permit for a full-service restaurant with liquor sales for Petite Patate, a Special Use Permit for a vacation rental on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor as well as multiple zoning variances for building setbacks.
- A Special Use Permit was granted for Frankfort Massage Therapy at 20500 S. La Grange Road, Unit 2S.

**G. Other Business**

There was no other business.

**H. Attendance Confirmation (February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024)**

Chair Schaeffer asked Commissioners to please let staff know if someone cannot attend the next meeting.

**Motion (#4):** Adjournment 8:35 P.M.

Motion by: Markunas

Seconded by: James

The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote (6-0).

Approved February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024

As Presented  As Amended

 /s/ Nichole Schaeffer, Chair

 /s/ Secretary