

June 24, 2008

Pine Bluff Board of Zoning Adjustment

Called to Order

Old Business: None

New Business:

1. Variance Request by Caradine Companies – Golden Age Apartments to reduce the outside setback from 25 feet to 18-20 feet and to reduce the parking requirements for senior housing

Wali Caradine, Caradine Architects represented project.

Chairman Taylor asked for dimensions of project site and the square footage of each unit. Applicant relies that each is approximately 570 square feet. Chair asked what the street address will be. Applicant replied it would be 800 Holly Street. Chair asked for an approximate completion date and the applicant replied approximately late August or early September.

Jerre George clarified that the zoning is RMF-18, not RMF-16. Therefore, the proposed 16 units are allowed on this site.

Mr. John Gilmour, 902 Rosswood Colony Drive, Chairman of the Board of First Trinity Church, spoke in favor of the request.

No one was present to speak against this request.

Staff recommended approval of the variance request.

Motion was made and seconded to approve staff recommendation.

The Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Meeting Adjourned

Planning Commission

Called to Order

Consideration of Minutes: None

Old Business: None

New Business:

1. Street Closing Request by Jefferson County to close Alabama Street between 2nd & 3rd Avenue

Tom Tidwell of Jefferson County stated the county needs the street closure to construct a new courtroom and breezeway connecting to the existing jail facility. The adjacent property owners favor the closure.

Sheriff Gerald Robinson of Jefferson County stated the closure would increase security and efficiency of prisoner transportation from jail to courtroom.

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No one spoke against the request.

Staff recommended approval contingent upon the receipt of utility company approval.

Motion is made and seconded to approve staff recommendation.

Commission unanimously approved motion.

2. Alley Closing Request by Christian Way Funeral Home between Bay Street and Bois d/Arc Street on Block 12 in the Oaklawn Addition

No one spoke in favor of this request.

Chairman asked if owner of the 14 feet of Lot 1 has signed off on the closure and staff replied they have not. Ms George stated the remainder of the alley can be closed until the owner signs off or the applicant buys the property.

Motion is made and seconded to close the entire alley contingent upon the applicant obtaining either the rights to or the signature of the owner of the 14'x 52' section of Lot 1.

Commission unanimously approved the motion.

3. UPOR Request by Regenerated M.B. Church to conduct church services at 1611 Brentwood

Commissioner Reese recused from the vote but not the discussion of the request.

Levell Bass, minister, speaks for the request. They have been in existence since June, 2006. Rev. Bass stated they have approximately 80 members. They have a long-range plan to purchase land to build.

Bill Ursery spoke in favor of this request and also to the general issue of UPOR requests for churches in unused, outdated commercial space. He mentioned the variety of commercial tenants in the adjacent buildings. He requested that the Planning Commission consider the backlog of vacant, out-of-date commercial buildings when considering UPOR requests for churches in vacant structures.

Mr. B. R. Bell, Bell's Soulfood Restaurant, 1605 Brentwood, spoke for the request and that it would benefit his business.

Staff recommended against the conversion of retail space to church use.

A Commissioner recommended that the UPOR be permitted only for this applicant.

Staff stated that a UPOR runs with the property unless specifically limited in some way by the Planning Commission.

A Commissioner stated that he felt this was a reasonable temporary use.

A Commissioner stated that he agrees with staff recommendation against conversion of commercial to residential use.

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A motion was made and seconded to approve the UPOR for this applicant only at 1611 Brentwood, with no right to sublet the space.

Commission voted five in favor, one opposed, with one abstention.

4. Rezoning of the Grider Field – Ladd Road from primarily R-1 residential to a mixture of R-1 residential and B-3 Highway Commercial and I-1 Industrial

Ms George presented a graphic of the existing use in the area.

Chairman Taylor mentioned the inter-modal facility in this area that has been submitted to the Delta Regional Authority for inclusion in their regional plan.

Ms. George stated the area was well-connected to regional transportation networks.

Chairman Taylor mentions the county's sales tax drive and that this action tonight, if approved, would provide the largest, cheapest industrial park in the state and that it would serve as the Alliance's land bank. He mentioned that a recent Little Rock Chamber of Commerce meeting stated that the Little Rock port was "built-out" and that the next closest port space was the Port of Pine Bluff.

Mr. Tucker stated that the Delta Regional Authority has never been fully funded by the current administration and encouraged the commissioners to speak to their representatives and senators to have the Authority's funding levels increased. He also mentioned that Pine Bluff is part of metro Little Rock, just as is Conway, and that one reason HP located in Conway was because it is in the metro Little Rock area.

Staff recommends approval of the rezoning of this corridor as indicated in the graphic presented to the Commission.

Motion is made and seconded to accept staff recommendation.

Commission unanimously approved staff recommendation.

5. Amending Chapter 29 of the City Code to declare that auto salvage yards not in compliance not in compliance with Zoning Ordinance to be and public nuisance and subject to increased penalties

No one present to speak for the applicant.

Staff recommended that discussions be held with the City Attorney and the Inspection & Zoning Department to refine the current zoning ordinance regarding auto salvage yards. She observed that some auto repair shops end up looking like salvage yards and that it would be advisable to confer with the already-mentioned agencies to strengthen existing laws and enforcement.

Ms. George stated zoning staff is insufficient to adequately enforce the zoning ordinance.

Mr. Tucker stated that hiring additional zoning staff to replace recent retirements has met with little success. He also stated that the Planning Commission could pass a resolution

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asking that the zoning ordinance be reviewed with an eye toward stiffening of the penalties for non-compliant auto salvage yards.

Chairman Taylor asked Mr. Tucker how many zoning staff he needed to improve enforcement.

Mr. Tucker replied three.

A motion is made and seconded to have Ms. George prepare a resolution requesting a review of current city codes regarding salvage yards and to increase zoning staff from the current two positions to three positions, to assist in enforcement of city codes.

Commission unanimously approved the motion.

Committee Report: There is no Fifth Avenue Historic District committee report. However, there was a discussion that there were some additional uses which could be added to those currently contained in the proposed historic district zoning regulation. A report is expected by the July meeting.

Discussion also covered the desirability of a landscape ordinance to improve the quality of life in Pine Bluff.

Administrative Matters: None

Open Discussion: A commissioner mentioned the attractiveness of the new Chenal Parkway Cinema in Little Rock.

Mr. Tucker stated that was partly due to a landscape ordinance in Little Rock which requires landscaping in new developments. He said that every corridor out of Little Rock was being developed or was already developed, except for I-530 south to Pine Bluff. He stated that now was the time to get ready for the inevitable development that would come here in the future.

Schools need to be improved as does the entry experience into Pine Bluff. Also the airport needs to be improved. The I-69 corridor is also mentioned as a future impact on the City.

Planning Director's Report: None

Meeting Adjourned