

**CITY OF BIG RAPIDS
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
July 20, 2016**

Acting Chairperson Vogel called the July 20, 2016, regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 6:33 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENT Sue Bean, Jennifer Cochran, Paul Jackson, Chris Jane, Tim Vogel,

EXCUSED Renato Cerdena, John Schmidt

ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT Mark Sweppenheiser, Neighborhood Services Director
Cindy Plautz, Neighborhood Services

There was 1 person in the audience.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Jennifer Cochran, seconded by Paul Jackson, to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2016, Special Meeting of the Planning Commission as presented.

Motion passed unanimously with all in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT NOT RELATED TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Bean wondered how the July 6, 2016, Special Meeting was scheduled and if there were any regulations to follow in calling the Special Meeting. She wondered if those that were present at the previous meeting should have been notified. Sweppenheiser said that there are no special regulations. The public hearing was already conducted and concluded. The Planning Commission started the meeting with further Fact Finding.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Planning Commission agreed to review both requests simultaneously.

Recommendation to Rezone 745 Water Tower Road from R-2 to C-1

Recommendation on a Text Change to the Big Rapids Zoning Ordinance to Include Small Animal (Non-Agricultural, Large, Livestock) Veterinary Hospital with Indoor Boarding as a Principal Use in the C-1 Zoning District.

Sweppenheiser introduced the request per his Staff Report. Dr. James Scott is requesting the ability to open a Veterinary Hospital at 745 Water Tower Road. To be able to do this, the City would need to rezone the parcel from R-2 to C-1 and make a text change to the C-1 language to include a small animal Veterinary Hospital as a principal use. If the Veterinary Hospital was closed and the property sold, any business allowed in the C-1 could locate there. The property to the south is zoned C-1. Sweppenheiser said that the only communication he received was from Big Rapids Housing Director Mark Sochocki who manages the residential component of the Hope Network property immediately to the north. He considers the proposed property use (Veterinary Hospital) compatible with the property he manages.

The alternative action to allowing this use would be to change the zoning to C-3 where veterinary hospitals are allowed as a principal use, but this would be considered spot-zoning and it would be best to go to C-1 to be consistent with the neighborhood to the south.

Applicant Statement

Dr. James Scott, Riversbend Veterinary Hospital, 10565 Northland Drive, Big Rapids, said that he has been here since 1980 and opened a small veterinary business in Rogers Heights. His business grew and they added onto the building. Business has been growing ever since and there is a need to relocate to a larger building as they are unable to add another addition to the building. He plans to keep the Rogers Heights location for grooming and boarding and the Big Rapids location would be for veterinary purposes. He intends to see only small animals at the Big Rapids location. The property would be fenced so no animals could run away during a walk and they do not intend to have permanent dog runs. Dogs are individually walked. Currently, he does not intend to board animals at the Big Rapids site except for those recovering from medical procedures. They have never had any noise complaints at their Rogers Heights business.

Acting Chairperson Vogel opened the comment portion of the Public Hearing at 6:52 p.m.

Those Who Spoke in Favor: None

Those Who Spoke in Opposition: None

Written or Telephonic Communication Received by Staff: A comment from Housing Director Mark Sochocki who manages the residential component of the Hope Network property immediately to the north. He considers the proposed property use (Veterinary Hospital) compatible with the property he manages.

Acting Chairperson Vogel closed the comment portion of the Public Hearing at 6:53 p.m. and the Commission entered into Fact Finding.

The Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the City Commission on both requests.

When asked about noise or smell that could be expected, Dr. Scott said that presently there is no smell or noise coming from the current business. Staff picks up the messes left by dogs and discards in garbage bags. They currently have 60 “patients” at their business and they regularly employ 20 people. His son is the office manager.

Dr. Scott again said that he plans on separating the veterinary clinic and the grooming/boarding business as it is better to keep them separate. Grooming and boarding would stay in Roger s Heights.

Hours for the Clinic would be 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Saturday. He may stay open to 2:00 p.m. on Saturdays in the future. They have two doctors and one surgeon and have appointments every 15 minutes. They would expect 8 visits per hour. The property currently has 35 to 40 parking spaces.

Jane said that he grew up near Dr. David’s Veterinary Clinic and noise or smell was never an issue.

When asked about after-hour emergency service, Dr. Scott said that he would eventually like to provide this service. He would only expect about 2 or three visits per night.

The Commission reviewed and commented on the Standards for Zoning Amendments (Section 14.2:4 of the Big Rapids Zoning Ordinance):

1. The use requested shall be consistent with and promote the intent and purpose of this Ordinance.

The Commission agreed that the use meets the intent and purpose of the Ordinance.

2. The proposed use will ensure that the land use or activity authorized shall be compatible with adjacent land uses, the natural environment, and the capabilities of public services affected by the proposed land use.

The Commission agreed that the use is consistent with the adjacent land uses and environment and public services already present.

3. The land use sought is consistent with the public health, safety, and welfare of the City of Big Rapids.

The Commission agreed that there are no apparent conflicts.

4. The proposed use is consistent with the City Master Plan or a determination that the plan is not applicable due to a mistake in the plan, changes in relevant conditions or changes in relevant plan policies.

The Commission agreed that there are no issues and the use appears consistent with the Master Plan.

The Commission discussed how the language should read for the C-1 and agreed that only small animals should be permitted at the Veterinary Hospital and should specifically exclude agricultural animals and large livestock.

Motion was made by Paul Jackson, seconded by Chris Jane, to recommend to the City Commission the rezoning of 745 Water Tower Road from R-2 to C-1, and to recommend a text change to the Big Rapids Zoning Ordinance to include a small animal (non-agricultural and non-large livestock) Veterinary Hospital with indoor boarding as principal use in the C-1 Zoning district.

Motion passed with Sue Bean, Jennifer Cochran, Paul Jackson, Chris Jane and Tim Vogel in favor.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Next month, Sweppenheiser would like to review the Focus Areas of the Master Plan. He asked the Commission to review them and select an area strategic to City Goals to discuss.

Cochran commented on the FSU Bulldog Sustainability Group. They are focusing on the alleys of the student corridor and trying to address the wishes of the Mayor to clean them up and come up with a better plan for garbage pick-up. There will be an open meeting on July 27, 2016 at 11:00 a.m. to discuss renter/landlord education, recycling, and garbage disposal.

The Adopt-an-Alley program will be organized for fall implementation. Currently, an alley will be getting paved which will help in overall appearance and drivability. The City is working on a special assessment for the paving.

Bean inquired about the landscaping at the new State Farm building on State Street.
Sweppenheiser will look at the site plan and see what was approved for landscaping.

There being no further business, Acting Chairperson Vogel closed the July 20, 2016 Planning Commission meeting at 7:30 p.m. with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia J. Plautz
Planning Commission Secretary