

# Planning Commission

City of Rock Hill, South Carolina

March 5, 2019

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission was held Tuesday, March 5, 2019, at 6:00 PM in City Council Chambers, City Hall, 155 Johnston Street, Rock Hill, South Carolina.

**MEMBERS PRESENT** Randy Graham, Duane Christopher, Justin Smith, Shelly Goodner, Gladys Robinson, Keith Martens Nathan Mallard

**MEMBERS ABSENT** None

**STAFF PRESENT** Bill Meyer, Dennis Fields, Eric Hawkins, Janice Miller

## **1. Approval of minutes of the February 5, 2019, meeting.**

Mr. Christopher made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 5, 2019, meeting. Mr. Smith seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by a vote of 7-0.

## **PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS**

### **2. Hold public hearing and consider a recommendation to City Council on petition T-2019-01 by Rock Hill City Council to amend Chapter 4: Land Use: Primary Uses of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Rock Hill pertaining to self-storage and outdoor storage uses.**

Planning & Development Director Bill Meyer presented the staff report.

Mr. Graham asked if boat and RV storage was previously a separate use category. Mr. Meyer stated that boat and RV storage was previously under the general category of outdoor storage and they were considered more like the storage yard of a contractor's yard. Mr. Smith asked if any of these types of outdoor storage facilities exist within the City limits. Mr. Meyer replied that there are some storage operations offering both indoor and outdoor storage areas and there have been inquiries regarding facilities with outdoor storage only.

Mr. Mallard noted the special exception requirement and requested an explanation as to what constituted a highly visible location. Mr. Meyer noted examples provided in the staff report, noting it was not uncommon for the Zoning Board of Appeals to consider many aspects of a particular application. Specifically, he noted an instance where the ZBA may find that while an application may not meet all the specific requirements, they could approve the special exception based on the design proposed.

Mr. Christopher asked if there were objections or complaints from current storage facility owners regarding the amendments. Mr. Meyer stated he had spoken with several but believed that they did not have any concerns over the amendments, and that they understood the City's concerns in protecting areas of the City.

Mr. Smith referred specifically to the Vault storage facility located on Heckle Boulevard and the inclusion of an outparcel for additional development, asking if a special exception would have been approved as presented. Mr. Meyer stated while the area was highly visible, it was not a redevelopment or walkable area and the area to the east includes a salvage yard and industrial zoning.

Mr. Smith asked if the U-Haul proposal would've been acceptable. Mr. Meyer stated

the U-Haul facility would've had a little bit harder argument to make but they went out of their way to point out that they are more of a retail-oriented facility than just a storage place. He added that U-Haul was considered an outlier in the industry because they have a different business model than other storage facilities due to the other aspects of their business such as truck rental.

Mr. Graham asked if the concern was over the use itself, the design, or a combination of both, noting that he had seen newer facilities blending into the surroundings in resembling office buildings. Mr. Meyer stated it was the combination of the use and design, depending upon the area proposed. He noted that in looking at the examples in the Rawlinson Road area, there is a major commercial corridor a quarter-mile away at Wal-Mart and likely to expand along 161 as opposed to Heckle, which isn't attracting retail. The retail wants to be where the two roads merge and the traffic counts go up. In that sense, taking that property out of commercial use isn't much of a concern versus a corner where you already have a lot of retail commercial where property can be redeveloped to create a commercial hub.

Mr. Smith asked if the amendments were making the process harder where every site has to be considered individually. Mr. Meyer stated staff was working to direct applicants to areas more suitable for storage facilities. For example, he indicated the North Anderson Road corridor has never been a consumer retail oriented area. This area has had contractors, automotive uses, modular housing sales, and other highway commercial uses. Self-storage may be perfectly fine in this area because it is more compatible with the existing uses and we wouldn't have the same concerns that we would along Cherry Road where we're trying to reinforce more consumer and walkable commercial. He added that staff would look at the language regarding high-visibility locations.

Mr. Ben Johnson, Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson PA, attorney for Madison Capital Group LLC, owners of the former Kmart building on Cherry Road, spoke regarding the history of the purchase of the Kmart site and application submission. He asked that his clients not be subjected to the requirements under these new amendments, citing their application for redevelopment of the site was submitted prior to the moratorium.

Mr. Graham asked if he was in opposition to the amendments for this applicant or for the amendments in general. Mr. Johnson stated he did not want to see the amendments applied in this application and noted the intent of the amendments seemed to be modelled after discussions they had had with the City. He added the requirement in this case for a special exception would create further delays for his client.

There was general discussion as to whether the application submitted by Mr. Johnson's client had any bearing on the Commission's recommendation to City Council. Mr. Meyer, when consulted, stated there were legal questions being resolved regarding that application.

Mr. Martens asked what would occur if the amendments did not pass. Mr. Meyer stated that storage facilities would only be allowed in the industrial zoning districts: Industry General and Industry Heavy.

Mr. Christopher stated his concerns over the minimum 3-acre lot area, noting facilities could be built as an infill use in such a manner that would not require a

large site. Mr. Fields noted this type of infill development existed in the Zoning Ordinance as an accessory use. Mr. Meyer added that smaller facilities did not seem to have the same level of professional management as the larger ones.

Mr. Mallard asked how the requirement that vehicles be operational and in good repair will be enforced. Mr. Meyer stated it would be determined by zoning inspections to prevent people from storing junk vehicles in self-storage yards.

Mr. Smith asked why the paving requirement was added for outdoor storage areas. Mr. Meyer stated that gravel is appropriate for outdoor equipment but it doesn't hold up well with vehicles, especially heavy vehicles. He added that most facilities want the paved storage areas.

Mr. Mallard asked if self-storage would only be allowed in the IG and IH districts if the amendments are not approved. Mr. Meyer stated this was correct.

There were no further questions.

Mr. Christopher presented the motion to recommend to City Council approval of the amendments as presented by staff. Mr. Smith seconded.

Mr. Graham commented that he understood the special exception requirement but expressed concern that approvals may be subjective.

Mr. Christopher commented he agreed with most of the changes but objected to the 3-acre minimum requirement.

Mr. Mallard commented he felt the amendments were too open-ended, and stated concern that the ZBA could reject an application based on personal opinions.

Mr. Smith commented that the ZBA needed to have language in order to justify its decisions.

Mr. Martens commented there were two zoning districts where there were no impediments to storage facility development but there would be a process for development outside those districts, noting that the special exception process would require the facility to blend in with the surrounding area.

There were no further comments.

Mr. Graham called for a vote, and the motion passed by a vote of 5-2, with Mr. Christopher and Mr. Mallard voting in opposition (Graham, Robinson, Smith, Martens, and Goodner in favor; Christopher and Mallard against).

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **3. Consideration of a request by ESP Associates, Inc., for Major Site Plan approval for Cambria Hotel-University Center at Knowledge Park. (Plan #20180202).**

Mr. Fields presented the staff report.

Mr. Smith asked if this site and the adjacent site to the east were in conjunction with each other. Mr. Fields stated these would be connected but a different hotel would be occupying the site.

Mr. Smith asked the width of the alley. Mr. Fields stated approximately 10', adding it was not meant to be used for vehicular traffic. He noted the locations for deliveries and trash pickup to the rear of the site.

Mr. Christopher asked if the rooftop garden was part of this facility. Mr. Fields stated there will be a rooftop bar, not a rooftop garden. Mr. Tristan McMannis, ESP Associates, Inc., noted there would be a bar and meeting rooms, with a glass wall that could be opened to access the rooftop patio area.

There were no further questions or comments.

Mr. Smith provided the motion to approve the Major Site Plan as submitted, subject to staff comments. Mrs. Goodner seconded, and the motion carried unanimously by a vote of 7-0.

**4. Other Business.**

There was no other business for discussion.

**5. Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:01 pm.