

APPROVED MINUTES

**VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE  
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING**

**MINUTES FOR DECEMBER 4, 2017**

Chairman Rickard called the December 4, 2017 meeting of the Plan Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. and led in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL:**

**PRESENT:** Chairman Rickard, Ms. Gassen, Ms. Johnson, Mr. Kulovany, Mr. Quirk, Ms. Rollins

**ABSENT:** Mr. Boyle, Mr. Maurer, Ex. Officio members Miller, Livorsi & Menninga

**STAFF:** Village Sr. Planner Rebecca Leitschuh  
Village Planner, Scott Williams

**VISITORS:** Bill Sturm, Serena Sturm Architects of Chicago, 930 W. Huron Street, Chicago; Beth Harbauer, St. Joseph Parish Business Manager, 4730 Highland Avenue

Ch. Rickard requested that all cell phones be silenced during the meeting, and informed the public that copies of the Agenda were available at either side of the Council Chambers.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES: November 6, 2017 meeting**

**Ms. Gassen moved, seconded by Mr. Kulovany to approve the minutes for the November 6, 2017 meeting.**

Ch. Rickard noted a misspelling of his name on page 5 of the minutes.

**The Motion to approve the minutes as corrected passed by voice vote with Ms. Johnson abstaining.**

Chairman Rickard reviewed the procedures to be followed for the meeting, explaining that the Plan Commission is a recommending body for the petition on the Agenda. Once the Public Hearing portion of the meeting is closed, the Plan Commission members will deliberate to recommend approval, recommend approval with conditions, or recommend denial of the petition. That recommendation will be forwarded to the Village Council together with all supporting documentation on the petition. The Village Council will make final decisions at a future date. He reviewed the subject matter of the petition on the Agenda, and then asked all individuals intending to speak during the public hearing to rise and be sworn in.

## APPROVED MINUTES

**17-PLC-0031: A petition seeking approval of a Special Use and setback Variation to allow a school addition. The property is zoned INP-1, Neighborhood-Scale Institutional and Public. The property is located at the northeast corner of Main Street and Franklin Avenue, commonly known as 4832 Highland Avenue, Downers Grove, IL (PIN 09-08-110-017). Diocese of Joliet, Petitioner; Roman Catholic Diocese of Joliet Trust, Owner.**

Mr. Scott Williams, Planner for the Village of Downers Grove, stated that the subject property is located at Franklin Street and Main Street. The applicant appeared before the Plan Commission in May to expand an existing parking lot on the west side of Main Street, and to change their zoning to INP-1. The Village Council approved the request and the parking lot was completed by October of 2017. Mr. Williams pointed out where the proposed addition would be built, noting that there is no particular bulk requirement for that district as it adopts the adjacent most restrictive residential zoning, which is the R-4 zoning surrounding the subject site. He explained drawings depicting the proposed addition along Franklin Street. In terms of parking, he said this proposal would result in a loss of eight parking spaces, leaving a total of 132 spaces. There is still an increase of 18 parking spaces available compared to before the parking lot expansion, which is well above the required parking. He noted that the applicant also provided information regarding building coverage, which is at 33%.

Mr. Williams displayed the landscape plan featuring a retaining wall, gardens and parking lot landscaping. There will be a 477 square foot decrease in total impervious area. In addition, foundation landscaping is proposed and is not required. He displayed elevation drawings depicting the existing walls facing Franklin Street and Main Street. Building height maximum is 28.94 feet. The petitioner is proposing modernized classroom space with enhanced accessibility and additional administrative space. The addition will be fully sprinkled and there is no increase in enrollment motivating this request for additional square footage.

With regard to the Comprehensive Plan, Mr. Williams explained that the goal of the Village is to support the operation and improvement of both public and private schools while insuring no negative impact to residential neighborhoods. On site parking, landscaping and screening are beyond what is required by Code. Staff believes this meets the requirements of the Village's Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Williams then addressed the Standards of Approval for the Special Use, stating the addition is modernized and Building Code compliant and will have no detrimental impact to adjacent properties.

Regarding Standards of Approval for the Variation request, the applicant is essentially proposing to extend the existing building setbacks to accommodate a unique mixture of uses including a school, church and administrative office uses. If the addition meet the Franklin Street setback and was placed further west towards Main Street, the impact would more dramatically impact the parking lot, site circulation and would further reduce parking spaces. Staff supports this request as it allows the applicant to more effectively use the site.

## APPROVED MINUTES

Mr. Williams stated that Staff recommends approval of the petition with the two conditions listed on page 6 of Staff's report dated December 4, 2017.

Mr. Quirk asked why a Special Use is being required, and Mr. Williams replied that it is required because they are increasing building coverage and reducing the number of parking spaces. That is a general requirement for Special Uses.

Ms. Leitschuh added that a school or church is a Special Use. By modifying the site configuration, they are required to come in for Special Use approval. They are expanding the Special Use of the facility.

Mr. Quirk referred to Item (1) on page 4 of Staff's report which states: "Under Section 5.010 of the Zoning Ordinance, the expansion of a private, religious school and reconfiguration of ancillary parking is listed as an allowable Special Use in the INP-1 zoning district." He said that all school districts have massive building plans and the Village has encouraged a transition to the institutional zoning. He asked if they have to come in for a Special Use every time they get a building permit. Both Mr. Williams and Ms. Leitschuh replied they would all have to come in for an addition. Ms. Leitschuh explained that the schools are within residential neighborhoods and in order to provide an additional level of review for the compatibility with the surrounding residential use, they would be required to come before the Plan Commission to protect the adjacent residential properties.

Ch. Rickard said that a Special Use is similar to a conditional use and when the conditions change, this is a means to allow the Village to have a closer view of what is being proposed.

Ms. Leitschuh said that the public schools are their own quasi-governmental institution and don't apply to the Village for building code review in general. It is only when they are physically changing or encroaching the campus area that the zoning has some additional regulations.

Mr. Quirk said he finds this highly restrictive and he thinks this could have been addressed back in May as a variation to a setback. This plan has been known a long time in the community, and he thinks it's interesting to see how and why they are here again.

Ch. Rickard called upon the Petitioner to make their presentation.

Bill Sturm of Serena Sturm Architects said he represents St. Joseph Church for this project. The project knits together two existing buildings, the elementary school on Franklin Avenue with the Junior High school on Franklin and Main. He provided an overall view of the campus depicting the current schools and offices. This stage links about six different levels of the schools that currently are not accessible including an elevator, ramps, handicapped accessible restrooms, etc. The parking lot has never had a ramp connected to the building. That ramp and outdoor classroom are an added benefit to the campus. In addition, the outdoor classroom can accommodate receiving and pickup under a covered entry, as well as teaching outdoors in good weather. They

## APPROVED MINUTES

also removed a section of the parking lot walkway to set up a student garden for both academic and aesthetic purposes. The aesthetic of the building includes some demanding issues such as the age of the building. The proposal sets up an energy efficient building. They have applied for grants for that purpose. He explained that the western side of the building is the worst side for glass due to extreme heat. The building has therefore been set up for cross-ventilation to avoid overheating the space. Most schools do not have the budget to build lobby spaces often seen in public institutions; however, they are attempting to create a type of seating area for the students. The campus is somewhat void of green space and they plan to introduce that as you enter the building with a green wall, amphitheater area, etc. Mr. Sturm said by providing a ramp into the gymnasium, this might also serve as a parish entry rather than just for the school. He noted that the materials used for the proposed building are masonry to match the existing dark masonry of the existing building. There is a lower level basement for storage and mechanicals with an elevator. There will be isolated entry onto the main level via a reception area. He also noted the roofs that would include skylights as well as roof mechanicals that will be shielded. The goal is to begin construction this summer with completion by August of 2019.

Ms. Gassen asked about the new building lining up with the existing building and she asked about the dimensions of the shading devices. Mr. Sturm said it is set at 2.5 feet, which is within the Code, but they are not sure whether it might go a bit further than that. Mr. Sturm said that you want buildings to look beautiful; however, there should be reasons that they are doing specific things. They are bringing the base of the existing building to tie the new buildings together. There are reasons that they have put windows at the stairwells to bring light into the structure.

There being no further questions from the Commissioners, Ch. Rickard called upon the public for questions or comments. There were none.

Ms. Johnson asked about the existing retaining walls located near the southeast corner of the campus, the condition of which was previously brought up during the hearing for the parking lot expansion. Chairman Rickard called upon Beth Harbauer, St. Joseph Parish, who presented the church's plans that addresses property maintenance items separate from the construction of the addition.

There being no further questions or comments, Ch. Rickard called for a motion.

**Ms. Gassen moved with regard to File 17-PLC-0031 that the Plan Commission forward a positive recommendation to the Village Council to approve this request for a Special Use and Setback Variation, subject to the two conditions listed on page 6 of Staff's report dated December 4, 2017. Mr. Quirk seconded the Motion.**

**AYES: Ms. Gassen, Mr. Quirk, Ms. Johnson, Mr. Kulovany, Ms. Rollins,  
Ch. Rickard**

**NAYS: None**

**The Motion passed unanimously.**

In response to Ch. Rickard, Ms. Leitschuh said this would be forwarded to the Village Council for their review in January.

## APPROVED MINUTES



Ms. Leitschuh stated that the next Plan Commission meeting will be held on January 8, 2018 in the Committee Room. She said there is one definite item, with the possibility of a second item.

Ms. Leitschuh then congratulated Scott Williams for passing the AICP exam for Certified Planners. She said it is a challenging exam, and he did an excellent job. The Commissioners all extended their congratulations to Mr. Williams on his achievement.

**Mr. Kulovany moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Quirk.  
The Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.**

Chairman Rickard adjourned the meeting at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Tonie Harrington,  
Recording Secretary  
(transcribed from mp3 recording)