

**RAVENNA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
FEBRUARY 27, 2024
6:00PM
RAVENNA CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Frank Seman called meeting to order at 6:05PM

ROLL CALL:	Bill Barber	Present
	Tim Contant	Present
	Mark Hairston	Present
	Carmen Laudato	Present
	Frank Seman	Present
	Jonathan Jennings	Present
	Josh Smith	Excused
	Bob Finney	Present

Also in attendance: Rebecca Yakovic of TC Architects 430 Grant Street Akron, Larry Silenius 123 N. Walnut Street, Clifford Soudil 464 Woodland Street and Lydia Jennings 222 Grant Street, Matt Ferrell of Buckeye Residential Solutions 320 E Main Street Suite 301.

Frank Seman entertained a motion to excuse Josh Smith; Mark Hairston made the motion and Jonathan Jennings seconded.

ALL AYES: Josh Smith excused.

MINUTES: Approval of minutes January 30, 2024.

Frank Seman entertained a motion to approve minutes; Bill Barber made a motion that the minutes should be amended to have the items discussed after Reed Memorial Library be listed under "Other New Business" as to not be considered part of the information related to the library, Tim Contant seconded.

ALL AYES: MINUTES AMENDED

NEW BUSINESS: Rebecca Yakovic of TC Architects and new tenants of 228 S. Sycamore Street presenting for owner Morgan228 LLC and The A. Morgan Building Group
-Requesting site plan approval for 228 S. Sycamore Street
Parcel #31-361-13-00-014-001 Zoning: C-1

Rebecca Yakovic: I am from TC Architects, presenting for the South Sycamore Street property. I am working with the A. Morgan Building Group and tenants of the property to propose new office spaces and a small retail area. We have provided 55 parking spaces within the existing lot.

Frank Seman: This property has been under development and has been refurbished. Where is the ownership in this?

Rebecca Yakovic: Currently, Jeff Buck of the A. Morgan Building Group owns it and is in the process of selling once we get permitted and the construction is complete.

Bob Finney: There are two stories, the plans that you have submitted are they for Sycamore side or the bottom end?

Rebecca Yakovic: The bottom end, the lowest level of the building. The Sycamore side will remain unoccupied at this time, but we are proposing to put a full sprinkler system in, because it is unoccupied. There is future development planned for the other level.

Bob Finney: Could you tell us intended use of the property?

Rebecca Yakovic: The majority of the lowest level is office space for the future tenant, there is a small retail area, if you are looking at the back of the building, it is the far-left hand side, that suite will have some small retail component to it, but the majority will be staff use of offices.

Bob Finney: How many employees will occupy the space?

Matt Ferrell: I own Buckeye Residential Solutions, so our office space there should occupy 25-30 people, working on a daily basis, but we have close to 200 employees that work in the field.

Mark Hairston: What type of retail are you envisioning for the small section?

Matt Ferrell: One of my other businesses is called Battle Ground Game Center, we do board games, card games, role playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons. We are going to move that into the new building.

Tim Contant: How many parking spaces will you have for that?

Matt Ferrell: 55 parking spaces.

Tim Contant: Will it be a paved lot?

Matt Ferrell: Eventually.

Rebecca Yakovic: Currently, we have paved with concrete or proposed paving with concrete for the dumpster pad and well as the ADA accessible spaces, the rest will be striped gravel, until they can raise the funds to pave the entire lot.

Carmen Laudato: So, you are the person that is interested in buying this once it is done?

Matt Ferrell: Yes, we are going through the financing process, we are going to buy this.

Carmen Laudato: Once Battle Ground and Buckeye moves in will there be additional office space available, or will you be using all of it?

Matt Ferrell: All the office space we are putting in is for our use. We have plans to eventually develop the rest of the building and office space is something we have been kicking around but we haven't made any decisions yet.

Jonathan Jennings: There is access to the lot from Main Street, do you anticipate using that right of way or all traffic from Spruce?

Matt Ferrell: Yes, we anticipate using access from Main Street.

Bob Finney: Will your parking lot be lit up, with site lighting?

Rebecca Yakovic: Currently the drawings we proposed the site lighting is from the building, there will be lights on the face of the building in order to illuminate the parking lot area.

Bob Finney: What will the hours of operation be?

Matt Ferrell: For Buckeye Residential we probably will be 8AM to 5PM Monday through Friday and the retail space will be evenings and weekends.

Bob Finney: Are you able to tell us what the retail space will be?

Matt Ferrell: Yes, the other business I own is Battle Ground Game Center and that will be in the retail space.

Carmen Laudato: How much will he be occupying versus the retail space you mentioned?

Matt Ferrell: We will be occupying everything we are developing, between my businesses.

Jonathan Jennings: Everything on the lower level?

Matt Ferrell: Yes, there will be a couple of spots on the lower level that we can develop into something, if we find tenants, that is the plan.

Rebecca Yakovic: The two unoccupied spaces on the lower level that are closest to Spruce, those 2 bays that are there, those are unoccupied and have some storage space along Spruce and Sycamore. Currently they are storage spaces, that is where the water mains come in, there are two store front corners that are proposed to be unoccupied until they have tenants for them.

Carmen Laudato: Buckeye Residential, is that the one with the vans that take people around?

Matt Ferrell: We own another building at 126 East Main Street and that is our adult daycare program, we take care of adults with special needs.

Carmen Laudato: Are you going to be using any of the spaces for the vans?

Matt Ferrell: Probably not, because we park most of our vans at our day program, so maybe one or two occasionally, but not on a permanent basis.

Carmen Laudato: So, by the time people come for the Dungeons and Dragons, the Buckeye people will have gone for the day.

Bill Barber: When you say Buckeye people, you mean your staff that does all the coordinating with picking up and dropping off?

Matt Ferrell: It will be all of my administrators, my aides that work in the field don't come to the office daily, just once a quarter for training. Then we break up the training into manageable chunks because we don't have the space for two hundred people.

Frank Seman: I applaud your courage; I was glad to hear you were interested in that. Mr. Buck from A. Morgan Group fixed up the building that Children's Advantage is in now, that building was about to collapse and fall in and now it is very nice. I think he has done the same thing here, but now it is a work in progress for the use. What we are considering tonight is what you presented is the bottom level and parking area.

Bob Finney: The code states that the parking lot should be hard surfaced, be it concrete or asphalt. In the past Planning Commission had approved 12 months later, hard surfaced or some other provisions, such as next phase would be required to do so.

Matt Ferrell: 12 months would not be attainable for us, probably looking at the next three years before we could completely hard surface, because quotes from asphalt companies have been around \$400,000.00 dollars. That is not something we are going to have in our budget for the next couple of years, and if that is going to be a requirement then that will kill the deal.

Bill Barber: But in the meantime, you will maintain the parking lot, so it doesn't become a dust bowl or eye sore.

Matt Ferrell: Yes, we will be preparing it for hard surface, we will be putting in drainage in it and rocks and the handicap spots and make it look nice. We will hard surface it eventually, we are projecting three years.

Bill Barber: What kind of signage will you be using there?

Rebecca Yakovic: We haven't designed the signage, I understand we will have to submit proposed signage for the exterior of the building, we just haven't gotten to that process yet.

Frank Seman: They are projecting a seven-month period to get this ready for use. Will A. Morgan Building Group be the contractor on this?

Rebecca Yakovic: Yes.

Frank Seman: I don't have a problem with this game plan, and it doesn't hurt that I know you professionally and you are a man of your word. It doesn't behoove the city to have that sitting there empty. I was glad to hear that you were interested in it because you are clever and successful and always do the right thing. This will be interesting to watch this evolve and may have some influence around the city.

Carmen Laudato: Does Ravenna have an RLF program to help businesses make these types of improvements?

Frank Seman: We do have RLF funds, those come available, and a lot has been committed to the past year to the project that is over here where we took the judge's building down.

Carmen Laudato: Do you know how much room there is in that loan fund, how much space?

Frank Seman: We work with NDS, they manage those funds.

Matt Ferrell: I can help answer this, I have approached NDS, they can't lend enough. Their limits on lending for that are \$250,000.00, and they will only gap finance, so we would still have to get 80% from a bank.

Carmen Laudato: That is supposed be a tool for economic development, that sounds awfully restrictive.

Frank Seman: The RLF funds are required to be loans, they cannot be grants. We can certainly look around to see what we can do with that, there is not a ton of money in that account right now.

Carmen Laudato: When I was in Streetsboro, we had the same problem, we made a request to the state to increase it and they did.

Frank Seman: I will have to talk to Mike (NDS) but we can also write a grant that is based on economic development. There might be some other ways to look at this, Mr. West is pretty good at chasing stuff down. I will be glad to look into it and help if we can.

Jonathan Jennings: I assume it was the Morgan Group, but the paint job, the new gutters, and the new fence are a vast improvement, even if it doesn't move any further it is definitely an improvement over what we had.

Bob Finney: When do you anticipate construction starting?

Matt Ferrell: We talked about April 1st; we are looking to finish and move in by October.

Bob Finney: I know we have a set of plans that have already been submitted.

Rebecca Yakovic: I submitted both at the same time, in hopes we can get through the process. The office space is pretty simple with HVAC, the biggest cost factor in the redevelopment of the building is the sprinkler system. This gets a little sticky because the upper level is unoccupied, so you still have to sprinkle that because it is unoccupied, at least at this time, so it makes the redevelopment and future phases a little easier, but a lot of upfront costs to cover that.

Frank Seman entertained a motion to approve the site plan, this doesn't have to have a public hearing, so we will vote on this tonight. Jonathan Jennings made a motion to approve the site plan with a temporary but indefinite waiver for the hard surface paving and Mark Hairston seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL:	Bill Barber	Yes
	Tim Contant	Yes
	Mark Hairston	Yes
	Carmen Laudato	Yes
	Frank Seman	Yes
	Jonathan Jennings	Yes

ALL AYES: MOTION APPROVED

OLD BUSINESS: BUSINESS LIGHTING

Carmen Laudato: I would like to know if there was any follow up about the wattage for certain lights for businesses. We were talking about those bright, white lights.

Bob Finney: Tiffany, did you speak with the owner of the car lot, and they turned the sign down?

Tiffany Holloway: Yes, I did, I spoke with Mr. Battaglia.

Carmen Laudato: That is not my main concern, my concern is these vape shops moving in, and using those bright white lights that are ultra distracting. I thought we could have some intentional and meaningful discussion about making a recommendation to council, coming from this commission, about putting a quantified limit on what the wattage can be. You had mentioned that 2K, was standard but these lights are 6K.

Bob Finney: Don from my office, looked into it, but was having a difficult time finding other communities that could quantify, or measure. We can measure noise in decibels, standing at a certain part of the property. From what Don told me, he hadn't found how to measure or quantify the lighting. But we can continue to look into it.

- Carmen Laudato:** We can't put a restriction on the wattage?
- Bob Finney:** Yes, we could, but if they are LEDs, then they are equivalent wattage, so possibly only allow a 3K versus a 6K. I'm sure we could do something like that.
- Carmen Laudato:** I think we need to do something, because this city more than any other place I've visited or lived in, in Portage County has really gone the extra mile trying to preserve a certain look and character, especially in the Historic District. I feel that Planning Commissions are in place to make these types of recommendations to further those efforts to protect that character.
- Frank Seman:** I have spoken to a couple of council members, and they are interested in that, I think they would like to put a moratorium on those types of businesses. (Vape Shops)
- Bill Barber:** I think that misses the point a little, just on the type of business. I suspect that Council would be interested in that. I go back to the QuickMed on Chestnut and Riddle, because that is another one, and the convenient stores, I will call it light pollution. I would think that we could find an engineering standard or find someone that can help us with that. I agree that we need to have it in the code.
- Carmen Laudato:** I feel we need to be proactive about this, because they are popping up everywhere and we need to get ahead of it. I feel Council will be more inspired to move to action if they have a recommendation from Planning Commission to consider this.
- Bill Barber:** Do we need to have the actual specifications in that, or do we need to have it as a recommendation to consider an ordinance, or do we have to develop the ordinance?
- Bob Finney:** If you want it to be enforceable, then you must have an ordinance.
- Carmen Laudato:** As a former council person, it makes your job a whole lot easier, when it comes prepackaged for you. I think it will make them feel more

comfortable if it goes through Planning Commission and was already debated.

Mark Hairston: We have an ordinance pertaining to signs, would this be something that would be incorporated into the same ordinance? Some of the things you are talking about are not just lights, some of them are signs that are too bright.

Bob Finney: In the Historic District, there are wattages listed, specifically in 1458.14 I think is Historic. That is primarily lights that are up lit signs, flood lights as we used to call them, things have changed since. That is easy to look at the bulb and see the wattage, but the LEDs have a different halo than the up light. There was a time that we asked Dairy Queen to turn their sign down, but I don't think it was quantified, I think they felt it was too bright. We will look into this, there has to be other communities that are dealing with the same issue.

Carmen Laudato: Maybe we will set a precedent, I feel like this is a fairly new thing. I know that these are something I never saw anywhere until a year ago, and maybe they are not on the books yet is because this is relatively new phenomenon, and I don't support neon pot leaves being lit up in the city I live in, do we have things in our code that prohibit those things on signs or are we just asking for people to be accommodating?

Bob Finney: There is reference to dancing girls, so to speak and other illegal things. Currently it is not legal to sell recreational marijuana in Ravenna because it is not anywhere in our code, so Council has been discussing this. My recommendation is wherever it goes should be conditionally permitted so Planning Commission can vet out the business, location, hours of operation, signage, lighting, and parking.

Carmen Laudato: It doesn't need to be marijuana to have a pot leaf, what they are trying to advertise at the vape shops is the Delta 8, like derivatives, but they are putting it up there. I feel like it is better for the city overall that you have something in writing, an enforceable ordinance, because these things are coming, and it is better to be proactive than reactive.

Carmen Laudato: Could we put this on the agenda for next month, and do you think by then you could have an ordinance recommendation for us to consider?

Bob Finney: I will certainly try.

Mark Hairston: Would there be a need to talk to Mr. Cimino before we write an ordinance restricting what they can do within their business? We need to make sure we are not crossing the line ourselves.

Frank Seman: Yes, we would need to consult with him, he is part of the process. If we want this to work, this isn't something we should sit on for a period of time.

Carmen Laudato: I feel like next month is plenty of time because we talked about it last month so that would be full 60 days of researching and coming up with something and knowing that whatever is presented may still have to be fine-tuned. I don't want to come back in 30 days, and we are still having the same conversation we are having now.

Jonathan Jennings: But if there is no way to measure it, you can't have an enforceable provision.

Frank Seman: At the committee meetings we can present that to Council, to get it on their mind, and it is probably on their mind already, so that shouldn't be a problem.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Bob Finney: City Council hired Portage Regional Planning to put a comprehensive plan together, and the part of the plan is a survey, so you will all be sent the survey and asked to complete it and return it.

Carmen Laudato: I felt like I got a survey, did anyone else receive it? I filled out a survey was that it?

Tiffany Holloway: There was a link that Julie sent to everyone, and I just forwarded it to you.

Carmen Laudato: Just to clarify, I think that is great that we have the survey, but I don't want to wait until it is part of the comprehensive plan conversation.

Frank Seman entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting; Carmen Laudato made a motion and Bill Barber seconded.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Next meeting: March 26, 2024 @ 6:00PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Tiffany Holloway, Planning Commission Secretary