

**MINUTES
CITY OF DARIEN
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
December 17, 2014**

PRESENT: Chairperson Meyer, Ron Kiefer, John Laratta, John Lind, Lou Mallers, Ray Mielkus, Pauline Oberland, Ken Ritzert, Susan Vonder Heide, Michael Griffith – Senior Planner, Elizabeth Lahey – Secretary

ABSENT: None

Chairperson Meyer called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. at the City Hall – City Council Chambers, Darien, Illinois and declared a quorum present and swore in the audience members wishing to present public testimony.

A. Concept Plan Review: 951 N. Frontage Road - Concept plan review for a proposed 4-story, 124 room extended stay hotel, Value Place.

Mr. Drew Mitchell, Holladay Properties, reported that he is proposing to construct a 4-story, 124 room extended stay hotel on the property. He reported that Value Place was founded by a serial hotel entrepreneur and designed with a niche in the market focusing on value, safety, availability and cleanliness. Mr. Mitchell stated that the type of guest is a businessman who is looking for no frills but needing to do business. He further stated that the typical guest is a weekly resident.

Mr. Mitchell stated that he is seeking a height and sign variation. He stated that the height variation is for visibility on I-55. Mr. Mitchell also stated that they intend to scale up their typical building product and add more brick for Darien. He stated that he is eager for feedback.

Chairperson Meyer questioned if they will require direction signs on I-55 and if they would be serving food.

Mr. Mitchell stated that direction signs on I-55 were not needed and that they would not be serving food. He did state however that every room would have a kitchenette for cooking.

Commissioner Laratta questioned if they would be seeking a liquor license.

Mr. Mitchell stated that they will not be seeking a liquor license.

Commissioner Mallers stated that he is familiar with the nearby Extended Stay America. He questioned if there is need for another extended stay hotel.

Mr. Mitchell stated that Value Place is a direct competitor with Extended Stay America and that it is good to keep prices competitive. He stated that they are not terribly concerned about Extended Stay America.

Commissioner Oberland questioned what the price point would be.

Mr. Mitchell stated that the price point is \$349 per week and lower than Extended Stay America around \$75 to \$80 less. He compared their product to Southwest Airlines versus American Airlines and that with American Airlines you pay for a bag, etc. He stated that they charge for wireless and Extended Stay America does not.

Commissioner Ritzert questioned plans for water drainage.

Mr. Mitchell reported that they still need to come up with a plan. He stated that they are familiar with the wetlands on the site and that they have already met with DuPage County. Mr. Mitchell stated that there is more land than needed and that there is land available that can be utilized for storm water.

Chairperson Meyer questioned the wetlands south of I-55.

Mr. Michael Griffith, Senior Planner reported that there is a large floodplain and wetlands south of I-55 and that he did not believe the property is impacted. He reported that the County-wide stormwater management is very strict and that the City cannot deviate from it.

Commissioner Vonder Heide questioned if there was room enough for two extended stay hotels in Darien

Mr. Mitchell stated that extended stay hotels are poorly underserved and that their goal is to compete. He stated that one of the Commissioners expressed concern for "going dark" and that they do not see that happening. He further stated that they anticipate 85-88% occupancy. Mr. Mitchell also stated that there is a lot of traffic and a good location for the traveling salesman.

Commissioner Mallers questioned the average stay for a customer and stated that a week-long stay was questionable.

Commissioner Vonder Heide questioned if there have been studies done on the usage. She stated that Mr. Mitchell mentioned that the hotel is also geared toward family members visiting someone in the hospital. Commissioner Vonder Heide stated that Darien is not in close proximity to any hospital.

Mr. Mitchell stated that it is most attractive for business and that they have done studies and Darien scored a B+. He stated that there are no locations that have ever scored an A.

Chairperson Meyer questioned the transients and/or truckers staying at the hotel.

Mr. Mitchell stated that truckers do not stay at their hotel. He stated that truckers are only looking for a one night stay. He further stated that they anticipate a businessman to travel down I-55 and remember the hotel and stay there the next time they travel to the area.

Commissioner Laratta questioned the timeframe.

Mr. Tim Healy, Holladay Properties stated that they would like to break ground by July and to be up and running by the fall. He stated that they have 200 days to complete after breaking ground.

Commissioner Vonder Heide suggested speaking with Argonne because they have many people travelling to their offices.

Mr. Mitchell stated that they are familiar with Argonne and that they would be great for their product.

Chairperson Meyer questioned the ownership structure.

Mr. Mitchell stated that they will purchase the property.

Commissioner Ritzert questioned the materials they would be using.

Mr. Mitchell stated that they are using all the products from the same manufacturer.

Commissioner Kiefer questioned if they are set on building four stories.

Mr. Healy stated that they are 100% set on four stories and that they can only provide minor modifications. He stated that the plan is what you are buying into.

Commissioner Kiefer stated that the Commission is not receptive to buildings higher than the ordinance but that it is acceptable because of the area.

Commissioner Lind stated that he has an issue with the setback and that the business is low on scaling and that he does not believe that this is the best use for the area. He stated that he had an issue with the height of the building and that it is an eyesore for the gateway to Darien.

Mr. Mitchell stated that there is a 20 foot setback from the property line. He stated that there is a billboard on the site which blocks the building. Mr. Mitchell stated that they want people to see the building from the interstate. He stated that it will be an improvement to the area and that it will not feel like this massive structure hanging over the interstate.

Chairperson Meyer stated that she was still very concerned about truckers and parking in the lot.

Mr. Mitchell stated that they will not provide truck parking and that the minimum stay is one week. He stated that trucker's typically only stay for one night and that they are not renting by the night. He further stated that a one night stay is not the model.

Chairperson Meyer questioned what would happen if they changed to renting for one night.

Mr. Griffith stated it would be beyond the City's control and that the City cannot control how a business is run.

Commissioner Vonder Heide stated that if there were issues that it would be police enforcement issue.

Mr. Griffith reported that staff felt that the concept plan review was a valuable exercise for the petitioner. He stated that the height and sign variations will trigger a public hearing.

Commissioner Vonder Heide stated that she was concerned about occupancy.

Commissioner Lind stated that he was concerned that the area was ideal for drug related events at extended stay hotels. There was a lengthy discussion regarding this.

Commissioner Laratta stated that this was a good fit for Darien and will generate money for Darien.

Mr. Griffith reported that this property has been an eyesore to Darien and over his 12 years employed with the City of Darien that this is the second proposal. He stated that he has also received positive feedback from the residents and that it will clean up the area and provide more of a buffer.

Commissioner Oberland suggested maybe using more brick.

Commissioner Kiefer stated that it was a feasible use.

Commissioner Lind stated that he did not agree and did not like to defend the rule.

Mr. Griffith reported that there is not a piece of property in Darien that will not trigger a variation. He stated that there has to be a balance.

There was no one else wishing to present public comment.

CORRESPONDENCE

None.

OLD BUSINESS/PLANNER'S REPORT

None.

MINUTES

Commissioner Kiefer made a motion and it was seconded by Commissioner Vonder Heide to waive the reading of the November 19, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Upon voice vote, THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 9-0.

Commissioner Laratta made a motion and it was seconded by Commissioner Mallers to approve the November 19, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Upon roll call vote, **THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 9-0.**

CORRESPONDENCE

None.

OLD BUSINESS/PLANNER'S REPORT

None.

NEXT MEETING

Mr. Griffith announced that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 7, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Commission, Commissioner Mallers made a motion and it was seconded by Commissioner Laratta. Upon voice vote, THE MOTION CARRIED unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

APPROVED:

**Michael Griffith
Senior Planner**

**Beverly Meyer
Chairman**