

City of Alamosa
Planning Commission
December 8, 2010
6:00 p.m.
Minutes of the Meeting

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order on the above date at 6:00p.m. by Chair Mark Manzanares. Present were the following members: Debbie Clark, Dave Duncan, Robert McWhirter, Don Thompson and Shirley White. Excused: Don Martinez. A quorum was declared. Staff present: Don Koskelin, Jeff Rilling and Julie Scott.

Introduction: Dave Duncan, representative of Ward 1, was introduced and will serve on the Commission until 6/01/2015.

Agenda Approval: M/S/C. White, Thompson. Motion was made to approve agenda as presented. (Unanimous)

Approval of the Minutes: M/S/C. Thompson, Clark. Motion was made to approve the minutes of October 27, 2010 with the following correction: Mr. David Boyles should be David Broyles. (Unanimous)

Regular Business

Zoning Issues: No applications received.

Planning Issues:

The request of A & D Ventures, LLC for review of a preliminary plat. The property affected is Lots 61-69, Washington Addition, City of Alamosa, Alamosa County, located in the SW ¼, Section 9, Township 37 North, Range 10 East, N.M.P.M., also known as Salazar Addition, Phase II.

The public hearing opened at 6:02 p.m.

Manzanares: Who is here on behalf of the request? Please state your name and address.

Greeman: Dee Greeman, 11450 No Name Lane, Alamosa, managing member of A & D Ventures, LLC. This is the second replat of the existing subdivision. We are under contract with San Luis Valley Mental Health Corporation and I have with me the board president, Joe Martinez. We are hoping to close on the property by the end of this month. We are the subdivider, Mental Health would be doing the construction on the project after we transfer title on the property. I believe the dwellings we are looking at are duplexes similar to what was put in on Lots 7 through 12 by the same company just north of this replat on West 7th St.

These units would be located directly across from one of the two new elementary schools that are going in. The street improvements are in; the curb and gutter was not installed. I have talked to Mr. Rilling about the costs involved and we have escrowed funds through this sales transaction I guess to be held by the City until curb and gutter are placed in front of the property.

Koskelin: These are issues to be addressed by the subdivision improvement agreement at the time the final plat is presented.

Greeman: That's really all I've got. If you have any questions, I'd be happy to entertain them.

Manzanares: Thank you. We will do that shortly. At this time, is there anyone else that would like to speak for this request? Anyone against this request? We will close the public forum and allow the Planning Commission to discuss and ask any questions.

White: I don't see a problem. Those are nice apartments, I drove by them.

Duncan: Is electric available?

Greeman: There is an electrical easement right between 7th and 8th St. the overhead electrical service in place. They are set up and all Public Service will do is place drops in to the lots.

Manzanares: Don, this is the preliminary plat?

Koskelin: Yes, basically, you are looking at the layout of the lots, compatibility with the surrounding developments. On the final plat, you will look at a little more detail, in terms of what kind of utilities are there and this gives the developer some assurance that the concept is good and worth his time and effort to bring it forward to a final plat.

Manzanares: These lots are bigger than the lots on 7th St?

Greeman: The motivation behind that is that mental health wanted about the same square footage as the lots on 7th St. They are about ten ft. deeper from north to south than these lots and we added extra width to compensate that and he wanted to make as much room as possible for duplex units. They are a little bit bigger overall. They are about 12 ft. wider than the ones on 7th St..

Manzanares: Is that an alley between?

Koskelin: It is actually a utility easement. It is somewhat different; you can't build on it but it doesn't count against the setback. It allows them to move the building back a little bit. The only thing you can have in there are public utilities – sewer, water, electric, gas, those types of things.

Manzanares: You don't drive through there like an alley?

Koskelin: No.

Greeman: Don, as I understand, there is sewer and water in 8th Street.

Koskelin: There is up to the new street the school constructed to the west as part of their project. I don't see the actual layout of that street on the plat. We'll have to clarify that.

Greeman: It's about 30 ft. west of the western boundary of these proposed lots.

Koskelin: The sewer line goes as far as it was paved. If you have pavement in front of the lots you're good.

Greeman: It's all paved in front of the development.

Clark: So there are some empty lots then the buildings and more empty lots?

Greeman: Yes, the lots to the east of ours are owned by Martinez Farms except the last two lots.

Manzanares: At some point we're going to see another replat?

Greeman: Our ultimate plan is to replat the other lots much the same in the future.

Manzanares: My question is in terms of the math, what's it going to look like in the future.

Koskelin: The existing lots as configured right now are probably not salable so we know they will be replatted in the future. It would be in the owner's best interest to plat it so as to not have bits and pieces left over. In terms of usability I don't consider that to be an issue. I would like to ask a question but it does not directly impact the replat itself. I assume the potential buyers are aware there is an elementary school across the street and that the clients they will have in there won't have any compatibility issues.

Mr. Martinez spoke from the audience and assured the commission that would not be an issue.

M/S/C. White, Duncan. Motion made to approve the preliminary plat as presented. The property affected is Lots 61-69, Washington Addition, City of Alamosa, Alamosa County, located in the SW ¼, Section 9, Township 37 North, Range 10 East, N.M.P.M., also known as Salazar Addition, Phase II. (Unanimous)

Next item:

The request of Steve and Leesa Lawton for a permitted use by special review to allow multi-family dwellings (Use Group R-4) in a commercial business zone. The property affected is Lots 11 & 12, Block 50, Alamosa also known as 610 Main Street.

The public hearing opened at 6:12 p.m.

Manzanares: Please state your name and address for the record.

Lawton: Steve Lawton, 157 Dennis St, Monte Vista, CO. I guess what I am requesting today is to change use. I have about 5,000 sq. ft. in the second floor at the south end of the building, the alley side. I had it set up as offices for 10-12 years. We had very active use in it when I first did it and the tenant was Brian Sims and he was sent to prison. I lost my renter. I had a few individual offices but have struggled to find more tenants. I don't have an elevator so access is somewhat limited. We have gutted the downstairs, the public defender is taking 6,000 ft. of the roughly 7,500 ft. While I was in the process my property manager and the appraiser both said apartments might be a better use, there seems to be a demand for that. I am proposing a change from commercial to residential; two apartments; 1 one bedroom and 1 two bedroom.

Manzanares: Thank you. Anyone else that would like to speak on behalf? Anyone against? Hearing none, we will close the public hearing and the Commission will ask questions of the applicant and discuss this.

Don, I have a question for you. It looks like the first floor has shower and bathroom. Can they in the future years put an apartment downstairs because of this proposal? Can we approve only the second floor for apartments?

Koskelin: You can condition the permitted use to not more than two units and not first floor, only second floor. You can do that.

The public hearing closed at 6:15 p.m.

It was clarified that Mr. Lawton's request is a permitted use to allow apartments in a commercial business zone, not a change in the zoning.

Lawton also stated that downstairs had bathrooms only no shower. Additional office space would eventually be available in the future.

White: The laundry area would be accessible?

Lawton: The area would be accessible to the tenants, yes. It would be a coin-op laundry and there would be a small area on the first floor for storage.

Manzanares: And now let's get to the parking issue.

Lawton: Can I address this first. From my perspective when I originally rented to Sims for office space he had 20- 22 people in there for daytime use and all using the parking back then there wasn't much of a problem. Now with Nino's and May-Wa, it's definitely an issue. My thought in changing this to residential my vision is they will occupy a couple spaces at night and be gone during the daytime. I'm hoping this will be the best use for that parking.

Manzanares: Don, your thoughts?

Koskelin: Mr. Lawton makes an excellent point that in renting for office, we would definitely have people using the parking at peak times. Residential use they would be more likely to be gone during the day. Again as long as the renters understand they don't have a reserved space. As long as that's made clear to the renters when they sign the lease. I don't think it will be any worse than what it was; I just wanted everyone to be thinking about it.

Manzanares: There are other apartments in that block?

Koskelin: Yes.

Lawton: There is another interesting issue with that parking lot. Don, are you aware of this? Half of that parking lot was part of the Walsh Hotel/ Ninos. When that parking lot was developed 15 years back Lonnie Brownlow sold the lot to the city and they licensed 17 spaces back to him for 50 years. It doesn't really define them to any specific spot.

Koskelin: He has the use of up to seventeen spaces and it is not exclusive use.

Lawton: My comment is if it became restricted parking for the people downstairs who would be there all day except for the lunch hour perhaps it could be hard— if that lot becomes a two hour restriction which I think a lot of the parking lots are.

Koskelin: That particular lot the row on the east side facing State Ave. is two hour restricted parking; the rest is not. We recognize people who work downtown need a place to park. We do want the higher turnover on the street frontage; that was done intentionally. Partially because of the agreement with the owners at that time the lot was transferred, we really can't restrict the rest of the lot because we would be placing an additional restriction that's not included in the agreement. It's not atypical, to have some portion for higher turnover and the remainder to be unrestricted. I would expect it to stay that way.

Clark: In parking lots, can a person park there for a week?

Koskelin: Those are the restrictions we are talking about. If it's over 72 hrs it can be ticketed and towed, although that doesn't happen usually right after 72 hrs, we try to

find out what is going on. There can be a presumption after 72 hrs. that it is abandoned. You can't abandon a car in a parking lot. We try to contact the owner, if a vehicle hasn't moved in three months, it will get towed. Unless it is signed two hour parking, the remainder of the lot is unrestricted.

Lawton: What about street parking?

Koskelin: That is signed two hour restrictive parking. It would not be attractive to the tenants that would have to walk all the way around the building for access.

Lawton: Would that apply even at night? The tenants would need to be aware of that if they couldn't find a place and they parked out there?

Koskelin: The way the signs read right now, the two hr. restriction is in affect from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. I will tell you there is a possibility that we will have a parking prohibition from 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 am. on Main St. for maintenance purposes, plowing in particular. I'm not going to try to predict if Council will approve or disapprove it.

Lawton: So as of right now..

Koskelin: You can make them aware; that yes they can park there. There is no prohibition on it.

Clark: I'd like to ask how are you going to change the front of the building ?

Lawton: We are actually going to change the front and the back of the building. Due to the late start on the project, we probably won't start until May we will be removing the wood and stuccoing the front. In the back we will be putting in additional lighting. The one issue I've always had with that building is the drinking population using it as their urinal back there. I think a lot of that will be eliminated with additional lighting. The backs of those buildings are actually starting to take on more of a front appearance. We brought this up to the City when we bought the building. I actually tried to buy that lot – the Victoria. We mapped out the alley and one of the reasons that alley is so wide we had wanted sidewalk along the sides of the buildings, Grey Goose and Mt. Munchkins and kind of wrap it around. That actually started progressing Xcel put in conduit and it was exciting and we were going to have a whole new nice look. It kind of went away- I would love to see the back of those buildings. With that parking lot, a lot of people cut through businesses to get to Main St. I don't know if that will be the case with the Public Defender's office, I know Grey Goose and some others encouraged it, they looked at the merchandise.

Clark: Are there special handicapped requirements?

Rilling: I can address that; the square footage with the two apartment and occupant load does not require it.

Clark: Okay.

Manzanares: The only thing I would like to require is that it only be the second floor.

McWhirter: Being that it's residential, you said additional lighting in the back, what is the plan on security?

Lawton: It will be a self locking door. We are required to have lighting specifically over the doorways and I plan on a couple additional lights at the corners of the building. I stayed there a couple of nights on the construction site and parking in that lot at noon especially is a nightmare. People park anywhere, I bet there are seven to ten additional cars beyond what is designated as parking. At night though, by 9:00 p.m. there are maybe ten cars.

Duncan: How many people are in the Public Defender's office?

Lawton: Good question. One of the reasons they liked this building is for future expansion. When I asked the office manager, she said four. I have 12 -15 offices set up in there. I saw their ten year projection and they are needing 4,000 sq. ft. today and expanding to 6,000 sq. ft. in ten years. I've asked several people, I've yet to get a definite answer. I know they are very cramped where they are now.

McWhirter: As far as the fire code, there is only one entrance.

Rilling: And that would be all that's required per square footage. The apartments would have to be separated by one hour fire wall and that's an issue during construction.

Lawton: We did put in a fire alarm system which I understand is a requirement with a change to residential.

Manzanares: Any other questions? Is there a motion?

M/S/C. Duncan, McWhirter. Motion made to recommend approval of the request of Steve and Leesa Lawton for a permitted use by special review to allow apartments in a commercial business zone (Use Group R-4) with the following condition: Residential use allowed only on the second floor and limited to two units. (Unanimous)

This recommendation will go to City Council on January 5th as a consent calendar item.

Other Business:

Koskelin introduced Pat Steenburg, as the new Engineering Supervisor for Public Works.

After no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Scott
Recording Secretary