

MINUTES OF MEETING  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
OCTOBER 15, 2019

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Members Present: Allen, Murphy, Long, DeMarco, Bishop

Presence Noted: Ray Reich, Building Commissioner  
Andrew Bemer, Law Director

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Chairman Bishop called to order the October 15, 2019 meeting of the Planning Commission at 7:00 P.M. in Council Chambers of Rocky River City Hall.

Mr. Bishop asked if there are any comments or changes to the September 17, 2019 Planning Commission meeting minutes. Mr. Long moved to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2019 Planning Commission meeting, as presented. Mr. Allen seconded.

5 Ayes – 0 Nays  
Passed

**1. ROCKY RIVER PRESERVATION PARTNERS (700 Lake Project) – 22732 Lake Rd., et al., Pre-Preliminary Review – Multi-Family and Townhouse Development.** Alexandra Yonkov, Project Manager with Rocky River Preservation Partners came forward. Also present is Vince Monachino, Construction Manager.

Ms. Yonkov began by explaining that they discussed the option of lowering the square footage of the parking and trying to fit the covered parking entirely beneath the building. This resulted in moving level one 10' to the north. They have done that and have refined everything, which is being presented to the Commission. The advantages of doing this is to decrease the necessary maintenance of the parking deck when it is located under the building prevent leakage. It will not impact the neighbors or the grading. The massing area of the building was reduced by approximately 4,500 sq. ft. There were 3 residences on the first level which were reduced to 2 residences, which are slightly more shallow because they moved the parking more north. The overall number of units remains at 25 because they made a very large unit upstairs that was divided into 2 residences. The entry and surface parking area have not changed. On level 2, which is the entry level, there are no major changes and level 3 is much the same except for the unit on the south, which became a little larger to compensate for the lost square footage on the first level. The penthouse level has not changed.

Ms. Yonkov said that they have included sections and elevations of the condo building and they have further developed the architecture of the townhomes. In order to reduce the height of townhomes along Lake Rd., they have lowered the building and the first front entry and front patios are sunken approximately 2.5'. All of the townhomes are at 35' tall, measured from the average grade of the front elevation to the parapet wall of the rooftop deck. The farthest west townhome is 31' tall. She explained that they have refined the parking due to questions that came up the last time they met. She included the floor plans so that they can see how the parking works. They have 49 spaces and they have accounted for all of the utilities and mechanical

rooms that they need. They have submitted a lighting plan and landscaping plan, along with the grading and utility plans.

Ms. Yonkov explained that they have met with the Design Board many times during the last few months. They still need to work through some minor details, such as the stairs on the Breezevale Cove townhomes and the rear elevation of the townhomes. They will continue to work with the Design Board as they continue the design stage of those things. Mr. DeMarco asked what materials will be used for the project. Ms. Yonkov responded that the front elevations will be a white stone color palette and the grey material will be fiber cement panels of a high quality. Some of the townhomes will be brick material. They will use fiber cement panels on the rear elevations to mimic the front elevation and the condo building will be stone, as well.

Mr. Bishop suggested that they start with discussing the condo building and then move to the townhomes. As for Code related issues, the bank of 4 balconies are projecting into the 30' setback and he knows this has come up before. The bank of 3 balconies next to them are fine because they are adjacent to an R-3 zoning district. For him, the only issue left on the building is the architectural design of the front entrance of the condo building and there was a lot of discussion about that at the Design Board, as well. Mr. Allen asked about the southwest unit of the condo building that appears to exit out onto grass rather than a patio of some sort. Ms. Yonkov said that they still need to discuss that. Mr. Bishop said that they have about 10' to work with there and he would like to see the detail of that, whether it will be a patio with a low brick wall or whatever they decide.

Regarding the amenity deck, Ms. Yonkov said that they don't have detail of the amenity deck at this point. They are at the end of schematic design phase and the amenity deck will be further developed in the middle of the design development stage. It is difficult to move forward to design development stage until they have approval. Mr. Allen said that the "dog run" is still called out and Ms. Yonkov said that she meant to change that and will do so for the next meeting.

Ms. Yonkov asked the Commission to what extent do they need to have the scope completed. Some things take more time designing and that happens at the later design stages on a typical project. At this stage they are typically at the end of schematic design phase. Mr. DeMarco said that the amenity deck affects the site plan and it is part of the site layout so he thinks they need to see it. He said that consistency across the plans would be helpful because, for instance, the landscaping plan is still showing an older version of the amenity deck. He thinks that some sort of enlargement that details what is happening on the amenity deck would be extremely helpful. Ms. Yonkov said that they did not change the design of the amenity deck since the Planning Commission last saw it and she believes that her architects have modeled and designed it in Revit.

Mr. Bishop said that they want this project to be at 100% by the time it gets to preliminary so that when they open it up for comment, there is really nothing left to address other than if there is public comment that needs to be addressed. Mr. Bishop said that it still feels like a moving target with regard to the project and before they can vote, the target has to stop.

Ms. Yonkov asked what the outstanding items are that they will need before they can move to Preliminary Review. Mr. Bishop said that the balconies in the setback on the west side need to be addressed, as well as the front entrance and the Design Board needs to be on board with it. The patio on the southwest side needs to be detailed along with the amenity deck. They want to see the floor plans because they are helpful as they look at the exterior. Ms. Yonkov said that the front entry is something that will also be further detailed at the design development stage. Her architects are jumping ahead of their ordinary process in order for her to be able to present the information the Planning Commission is asking for. She said that they have the architectural vision of what the front entry will look like, but the detail of the metal columns, etc., comes at the end of the design development stage. Mrs. Murphy said that she feels that they are actually at the end of the design development stage. Mr. Bishop agreed and said that once the final design is approved, changes cannot be made without coming back to the Planning Commission. He said that at some point the applicant has to get to the end and present exactly what they want to build. He thinks that they are making it a little more difficult than it really is and they are almost there. Ms. Yonkov said that the way the process works with their architects is not really in line with this process and she may not have been clear from the beginning as to what level of detail is expected from the Planning Commission for approval.

Mr. DeMarco said that the amenity deck, which is a key component of the exterior of the building that this Planning Commission needs to see and approve, but it presently is in the pre-design phase to him. Mr. Bishop said that when they vote to approve the project then there can be no surprises later that they have not already seen and approved.

Regarding the building on Lake Rd., located farthest to the west, Mr. Bishop asked that they add approximately a 10' extension to the drive so that when they back out of their garage they can head out. He asked where they are on the architectural aspect of the 3-unit townhome building to the west along Lake Rd. Ms. Yonkov said that the Design Board felt pretty good about the townhomes and then they moved to the condo building and incorporated the townhome architecture into the building. The rear elevation of townhomes is still outstanding but they haven't yet seen what is in front of the Commission tonight. However, the rear elevation was updated based on their comments at the last meeting. They are still working through different versions of the rear elevation and will present it to the Design Board the next time they are before them. Mr. Bishop said that they won't talk about it then, but he still thinks it is lacking and it should be looked at as a front elevation because there is a tremendous amount of exposure of the rear elevations to the condo building and the ingress and egress. He feels that the rear elevations are as important as the front elevations. Mrs. Murphy said that they look unfinished as it stands and she is glad that they are further designing them.

Discussion was had about the front doors of the townhomes and Mr. Bishop said that he thinks they look like the entrance to a small apartment building rather than to a townhome. Ms. Yonkov said that the entrances were driven by the Design Board and their initial submission was much different. They originally were designed with floor to third level glass in front because that is where the stairways are. She said that the Design Board requested that the entry piece be elevated so that they make a statement along Lake Rd. because the townhome entrances are

dropped slightly. Mr. DeMarco said that he is not in favor of the wide sidewalk coming off of the Lake Rd. sidewalk because it looks more like a driveway. He is not sure if there is a way to shrink it down to a “single” sidewalk like the other one because he does not think there is a need for it to be that wide. Ms. Yonkov said that the courtyards will be tile, the steps are poured concrete material and they are a little wider so that is why the sidewalk is wider, but they can make the steps narrower to accommodate a single width sidewalk. Mr. DeMarco said that he agrees that if the double wide sidewalk makes it look like the entry to an apartment building. He is surprised that the Design Board didn’t pick up on that. He likes the more modern element and he thinks that the Design Board echoed that and wanted a little different presence there than the traditional style of architecture. He said that there may be a better way to define the entrance a little more to distinguish the two units on the double wide entry. Mr. Bishop said that it looks like the entrance to the lobby of a building. Ms. Yonkov said that she cannot make revisions this front elevation because Design Board guided her on it. Mrs. Murphy said that she feels that this Planning Commission defers to the Design Board. She said that the landscaping may soften it, and Mr. DeMarco agreed. He said that it may be able to be remedied by a change in material around the doors because it is dark. Mr. Bishop said that he is not a fan of poured concrete stairs and wonders about sandstone treads.

Regarding the rooftop terraces, Building Commissioner Reich said that the bulkheads that provide stairway access to the rooftop terraces are not included in the height calculation for the building because they do not make up more than 35% of the roof area. The bulkheads are about 8’ from the roof, and about 5’ from the top of the parapet. Building Commissioner Reich asked for a calculation of the percentage of the rooftops that the stairwell bulkheads occupy. Mr. DeMarco said he would like to see the architectural detail of the bulkheads in terms of materials. Mr. Monachino said that the exterior fiber cement boards on the bulkheads will mimic the course and texture and dimensions of the cast stone like they do everywhere else on the townhomes. Mr. Allen agreed with the need to see the exterior detail of the bulkheads because of the need to not make them look like a utility screen. Mr. Allen said that it appears that you can walk across the rooftop patios across the whole group of townhomes and Mr. Monachino said that each rooftop patio will be divided by a parapet wall running north to south, so you cannot traverse the rooftop across someone else’s patio. Mrs. Murphy said that she feels the bulkheads take away from the design and wondered about the use of a faux window on them to add interest. Mr. Monachino asked about where the dividing line is between Design Board and Planning Commission regarding comments such as Mrs. Murphy’s and regarding other architectural details they have discussed. Mr. Bishop said that they will probably invite the Design Board for preliminary review, and even the next pre-preliminary review, so there can be a discussion and an understanding among Board members about why something should look the way it should look. Mr. DeMarco said that this discussion should be forwarded to the Design Board so that they can work with the applicant on these things. Ms. Yonkov said that there was a discussion with Design Board that because of the parapet wall and where the bulkheads sit in relation to it, they won’t really be visible while walking on the street. They are only 4’ above and 5’ behind the parapet wall for the townhomes. Mr. Bishop said that they will be seen from the building across the street and from the Beach House and they want to be sure it doesn’t look like the top of an elevator shaft. There are clever ways of improving the appearance without extreme cost.

Mr. Bishop asked about lighting on the townhomes and Mr. Monachino responded that they briefly discussed that with Design Board but they did not conclude that conversation. Regarding signage, Ms. Yonkov said that they are not planning to have a sign in front because the building is on the back of the site and it is well defined between the stone townhomes. They may just define it with landscaping and entrance lighting so people know that it is the entrance. Mr. Allen said that he thought it was discussed to have a brick roadway at the entrance and Ms. Yonkov said that she thought the decision was that it would be better to be plain, but she will look at her notes again. Mr. Bishop said that there should be something there to call attention to the driveway at night. Ms. Yonkov said that they will define the entrance later, at the design development stage. Mr. DeMarco said that the site plan still shows a mirrored entry at the crossing of the main driveway and cross access drive. He said he realizes that was changed but urged Ms. Yonkov to be sure that all of the site plans and architectural plans match because what they have in their packets, are not harmonized.

Regarding mailboxes, Mr. Monachino said that the condo building will have inside mailboxes but the townhomes will have a central CBU outside. Mr. Bishop said that the CBU will need to be shown on the site plan for them to review.

Conversation moved to the townhomes on Breezevale Cove. They have full driveways at the back of the units, but now the terrace or patios of the townhomes project within a close distance to Breezevale. That side of Breezevale's existing grading plan is fairly flat and his question is whether they are changing the grade substantially there. Ms. Yonkov responded that they are balancing the site and elevating the grading by 7' at the garage level so they can accommodate the driveway to the garage. Discussion was had relating to where the height is measured from for those townhomes along Breezevale Cove. Mr. Bishop said that they are measuring the 35' from the finished floor of the entry level to the top of the parapet. The discrepancy is the extra 7' from the wall they have created. They will be putting the garage on the 7' fill. Mr. Monachino said that the finish floor and living space will step up 6" from the garage floor and as they get to Breezevale they are actually gaining fill. Mr. Monachino said that the worst case scenario is the 7' because he shot that grade at the Breezevale sidewalk. The fill gets less as they go back. Mr. Bishop said that the question is how they are measuring the height.

The side facing stairs of the Breezevale units were discussed next. Mr. Bishop said that he is not a fan of the side stairs that service two units. Ms. Yonkov said that there is not enough space between the entry doors to have the doors positioned out straight from the door. Mr. Bishop suggested they cut off the terrace where the stairs are and bring the stairs with a landing right into the entry. The only portion that would be removed would be the terrace where the stairs would be going straight up to the entry landing. Ms. Yonkov said she does not know if there is enough room to situate the stairs that way. Mr. Allen pointed out that the site plan and the renderings do not match when it comes to the fronts of the Breezevale townhomes. Mr. Monachino said that they will be adding landscaping in the right of way. Mr. Bishop asked how people will get to the front door of the townhomes on Breezevale Cove from the guest parking area in the back because there is no access to the front door except to walk all the way out to Lake Rd. and around to the front door on Breezevale Cove. Discussion was had regarding ways

to accommodate guests to be able to get to the front doors from the guest parking areas. It was determined that there needs to be access from the guest parking to the front doors.

Regarding the stairs in the front on Breezevale Cove, Mr. DeMarco said that he thinks that they will have to work with Design Board on the stairs and that he doesn't really mind what they are presenting. They are developing a modern entry with a modern stair component coming off of it, but he thinks that Design Board will push them toward some sort of integrated stair. Mr. Bishop said that it will really help the retaining wall and grade if they cut the stairs in and work against the retaining wall in front of it with landscaping. Based on the grades, he thinks they have the space to accomplish getting from the sidewalk to within 4' of the front doors. The interior floor plan of the space inside the front door of the condos was discussed. It will be a bonus room that can be used as an office or a workout area. Mr. Bishop said that he would not be in favor of having one terrace and one set of steps that serve all of the Breezevale townhomes because residents would not want other residents walking past their windows to get to their front door. He pointed out that the front terrace or courtyard area is not the primary space for the townhomes but the rooftop terrace will be. He said that he thinks they have to figure out how to get the grade to adjust a little bit in order to get the scale of the height reduced. He suggested they read the Code and think through what the development code says relating to how height is measured.

A brief discussion was had relating to possibly turning the townhomes so that the garage elevations front Breezevale Cove. The applicant responded that they are too far along to consider that option.

In summary, the Planning Commission said that the project is almost there, as far as being ready for the Preliminary Review/Public Hearing. The outstanding items include a detailed rendering of the amenity deck; detail of the patio for the southwest unit of the condo building; the encroachment of the bank of balconies on the east side of the condo building because they are adjacent to a single family zoning district; extension of the garage access driveway for the townhome at the far west side for ease of backing out of that garage; detail of the exterior of the rooftop terrace access bulkheads of the townhomes, lighting and the possibility of some sort of identification on the entrance driveway; the location of the townhome mailboxes on the site; reduction of the double sidewalk width to a single sidewalk for the Lake Rd. townhomes; and further revision to the rear/garage elevation of the townhomes, access from guest parking to the front door of the Breezevale Cove townhomes and the stairs to the Breezevale Cove townhomes.

The applicant thanked the Planning Commission for their feedback.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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William Bishop, Chairman

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Michael DeMarco, Member

Date: \_\_\_\_\_