

MEETING MINUTES



Village of Homewood
Planning and Zoning Commission
Thursday, April 28, 2022
7:30 p.m.

Village Hall Board Room
2020 Chestnut Road
Homewood, IL 60430

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Sierzega called the meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission to order at 7:29 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Members attended: Alfonso, Cap, O'Brien, Planera, and Chairman Sierzega. Member Bransky and Johnson attended via Zoom; Present from the Village were Economic and Community Development Director Angela Mesaros, Building Department Secretary Darlene Leonard. There were seven people in the audience.

Chairman Sierzega read into the record a statement regarding Mario Planera stating "I would like to thank outgoing Member Mario Planera for his years of service to the Village of Homewood. Member Planera first served on the Plan Commission from 1997 to 2016, and then in 2016 the Plan Commission and Zone Board merged, he continued to serve on the Planning and Zoning Commission until March of this year. He will be moving later this year. Thank you again Mario for your years of service, you will be missed."

Chairman Sierzega welcomed the new Planning and Zoning Commission Member Elizabeth Castaneda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Sierzega asked if there were any corrections or changes to the minutes of March 24, 2022.

Chairman Sierzega stated on Page 7 about halfway down in the third line "Stop light" needs to be added after the word "proposed".

A motion was made by Member O'Brien to approve the minutes of March 24, 2022, as amended; seconded by Member Cap.

AYES: Members Bransky, Cap, Johnson, O'Brien, and Chairman Sierzega.

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: Member Castaneda

ABSENT: Member Alfonso

Case No. 22-13 – Special Use Permit for a salon and a variance from Section 11.1 (parking) at 18159 Dixie Highway:

Chairman Sierzega introduced the case and asked Staff Liaison Mesaros if any comments or questions were received.

Staff Liaison Mesaros stated that one resident called and was concerned about the traffic.

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Chairman Sierzega swore in the petitioners, Halston and Nakina Shanklin.

Chairman Sierzega asked if the property was recently furnished. Ms. Shanklin stated yes, he and his wife purchased the property. It is a skinny little building with three parking spaces, though the other two units in the building have more spaces.

Chairman Sierzega asked which lot. Mr. Shanklin stated the one directly behind the building.

Chairman Sierzega asked if the property had only one parking spot. Ms. Shanklin stated there is an easement on their property to give the other buildings access to their lots.

Chairman Sierzega asked if they have to go through the lot to the south to get to their lot. Mr. Shanklin stated it is a very unique set up and that is why they are asking for the parking variance. Mr. Shanklin stated the majority of businesses downtown have limited spaces and the Village has free public parking lots for residents etc. Mr. Shanklin stated they plan to use the Hickory & Dixie North lot for the seven spaces they need.

Ms. Shanklin stated they live in the community and see parking lots that are never filled to capacity, especially the lot they are proposing to use.

Ms. Shanklin stated the business would be a men's barbershop and it would be private with one barber per room and one customer at a time. Ms. Shanklin stated probably one parking space would be used at any time as they would use a booking app to notify the barber and the customer will then be notified where to park, either in the space in the rear or in the public lot if their space is taken.

Mr. Shanklin stated that the use is unique and new and is considered a barber suite. They want to give young boys and people of color a place to get their hair cut and keep it in the community. Mr. Shanklin stated it is for new barbers starting out to give small business owners a chance to start.

Chairman Sierzega asked if there would be three chairs. Mr. Shanklin stated two chairs.

Staff Liaison Mesaros stated the plan states three chairs. Ms. Shanklin stated they have room for three chairs.

Mr. Shanklin stated the State requirements allow for 60% capacity, but that is not an issue being one-on-one with no waiting area.

Ms. Shanklin stated they are asking for an exception that is the same as 5th Quarter and the former Draco's who have no parking.

Chairman Sierzega asked if it is barbers and not beauticians. Mr. & Ms. Shanklin both stated it is strictly barbers.

Member Cap stated this is the latest example of a conundrum that has been wrestled with for years and the potential inadequacy of the central business district is sometimes a shell game for parking. Member Cap stated there is a certain idea of what types of business are wanted in the downtown area and the village encourages businesses that generate sales tax. The concern is it falls into an area that makes it hard to review the application.

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Member Cap stated the proposed zoning ordinance makes this type of new use practically nonexistent in the downtown area in order to encourage retail. Member Cap stated this type of business is more than 1/3 of the businesses in the downtown area and the concern is access to parking and the encouragement of retail in the downtown area.

Member Cap asked what the applicant can offer to justify the approval of the application. Ms. Shanklin stated they came to Homewood because of its diversity and they have seen it grow they have seen boys go to Chicago Heights and Hazel Crest to get their hair cut. They want to give a safe place to go and possibly provide mentoring.

Ms. Shanklin stated since they bought the property the taxes have continually increased and they have gotten an offer to sell the building, but they want to stay in Homewood and add to the community. Ms. Shanklin stated they are willing to work with the Board.

Member Cap asked how long they have owned the building. Ms. Shanklin stated it is coming on to two years.

Member Cap asked if they own any other buildings. Mr. Shanklin stated they own the brownstone across from Dairy Queen.

Member O'Brien asked for clarification on the square footage of the location. Ms. Shanklin stated 300-400 square feet; there are three rooms with doors and a hallway, and added that each room is about 12 feet x 12 feet.

Member O'Brien asked if the Country Insurance in front of the building would be moving out. Ms. Shanklin stated he is looking to retire.

Member O'Brien asked if the plan is to take over that space. Mr. Shanklin stated the suites would be just in the back.

Member O'Brien stated Country Insurance is 400 square feet, the first room is 12 feet x 13 feet, there are no dimensions for the second room, the third room is 11 feet x 16 feet, and another room is 15 feet x 16 feet; together it is 572 square feet if the math is correct. Ms. Shanklin stated that sounds about right.

Member O'Brien asked how the space would be accessed without doors on the north or south. Mr. Shanklin stated there are east and west doors with a hallway.

Member O'Brien asked if the entry for Country Insurance has a hallway that leads to the back. Mr. Shanklin stated the hallway is on the north side of the building.

Member O'Brien asked what the room is without dimensions. Mr. Shanklin stated it is the furnace or utility closet.

Member O'Brien asked about the space would be accessed. Mr. Shanklin stated by going past the secretary's area and the office and behind the bathroom is an office then 2 rooms that lead to the back.

Member O'Brien asked if the hallway goes to the rear uninterrupted. Ms. Shanklin stated no.

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Chairman Sierzega asked about a bathroom. Ms. Shanklin stated it is in the middle.

Member O'Brien asked if they had only purchased the back half of the building. Mr. Shanklin stated no, the entire building including Country Insurance.

Member O'Brien asked what the open area is on the plat. Ms. Shanklin stated is the concrete parking lot.

Member O'Brien asked if the area behind the building to the north is not used. Ms. Shanklin stated it is not used.

Member O'Brien stated they are asking for a variance for parking when the lot next door sits empty, and asked if they had approached them at all. Mr. Shanklin stated the woman at the resale shop is hardly ever there and the number they had been provided is not working and they are unsure who owns the Delano's property.

Staff Liaison Mesaros stated the Village has contact information for the owners.

Mr. Shanklin stated they are trying to clean up the parking area.

Member O'Brien stated that you would think you could have a discussion with the owners. Mr. Shanklin stated they are very hard to contact.

Chairman Sierzega asked if they only own the 16-foot strip. Mr. Shanklin stated yes.

Member O'Brien stated the door (in the rear) look like it has not been opened in decades. And added, there is difficulty in allowing a variance when the space is available. Ms. Shanklin stated except they do not own it.

Member O'Brien stated something has to be remediated, and the new owners might want to use the space.

Member Johnson stated he is confused about the number of spaces, the application mentions 9 or 10 spaces are needed. Mr. Shanklin stated seven.

Staff Liaison Mesaros stated ten, because three spaces would be for employees. Ms. Shanklin stated they are willing to reduce the proposal from three to two (chairs) and keep the other space as an office if they can get six parking spaces.

Member Johnson stated technically they have three spaces, and asked Staff Liaison Mesaros if it is right that they need four additional spaces. Staff Liaison Mesaros stated that is right.

Chairman Sierzega stated it was nine spaces.

Staff Liaison Mesaros stated if they are using two suites, then four spaces are needed. The Code= 2 spaces/chair and one/employee.

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Member Johnson asked how many chairs. Ms. Shanklin stated three, but they can operate with two chairs.

Member Johnson stated there is no shortage of barbershops and hair salons in Homewood. Ms. Shanklin stated she has seen two barbershops, but there could be more. Ms. Shanklin stated there is also one barbershop in Flossmoor that she has seen.

Member Johnson stated it would be interesting to find out, and the overall concern is the proliferation of barbershops and salons. Mr. Shanklin stated the salons service specific genders or ethnicities.

Member Johnson stated they cannot discriminate. Ms. Shanklin stated he is not saying that, but if people are looking for something specific for their needs and it is not there, they will go outside the community.

Chairman Sierzega stated one salon to the west of the location, Jonathan Kane, has men, women, and children in and out.

Member Johnson stated there are 49 salons in Homewood. Ms. Shanklin asked if any of them are private and per person.

Member Johnson stated he wouldn't know that information, and asked if they had spoken to anyone else about additional parking.

Ms. Shanklin stated they are negotiating with private owners, but are trying to do their due diligence and added that there is a public parking lot across the street, the old Savoia's, and the old Bogart's lot. Staff Liaison Mesaros stated the Savoia's lot is Village property, but there is a LOI from a developer for potential future development.

Chairman Sierzega stated the Bogart's lot will be redeveloped as the Homewood Brewing Company.

Member Castaneda asked if the barbers will be independent contractors, what the highest use times are, when they all will have clients in, and how often it will be during the week. Mr. Shanklin stated 2:00 -5:00 pm would be the heaviest traffic, but with barber suites they can set their own hours of operation.

Member Castaneda asked if there are any prospective tenants. Mr. Shanklin stated they have several.

Chairman Sierzega asked what the hours would be. Mr. Shanklin stated 8:00 am-9:00 pm.

Member Castaneda asked if someone would be working all the time or certain times no one is there. Ms. Shanklin stated someone should be there during open hours.

Chairman Sierzega asked if they have to use someone else's property to access the lot. Ms. Shanklin stated yes.

Chairman Sierzega asked if there are plans to improve the appearance of the rear entrance. Ms. Shanklin stated yes, tuck pointing, signage, paint, and lighting.

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Chairman Sierzega asked how long the Country Insurance would be remaining. Ms. Shanklin stated there are two years left on the lease, but they would allow breaking the lease.

Chairman Sierzega asked what the plan is for the front area when he is gone. Ms. Shanklin stated they would leave it empty for now, but could come back for approval at that time.

Chairman Sierzega asked how a person would know to use the hallway to access the back. Ms. Shanklin stated there is space in the window for signage.

Chairman Sierzega asked if someone walked to the front of the building, is there a doorway to enter each business. Mr. Shanklin stated no, it is a shared entrance.

Chairman Sierzega stated the concern is what would be in that space and that would affect parking. If approved, how would the customers be told they can park in the rear and how they could access it? Mr. Shanklin stated though the booking app. Ms. Shanklin stated it is the same type of system as a doctor's office that when customers are close or arrive they are told where to park.

Chairman Sierzega asked if there would be any signage. Ms. Shanklin stated only if it is needed.

Mr. Shanklin stated they would use the parking to the south of the building for employees and anything given by the Village would be for customers.

Chairman Sierzega asked if they had spoken to the owner of the building to the south about parking. Mr. Shanklin stated yes, David Albrecht.

Staff Liaison Mesaros asked if it is reasonable walking distance from the public parking lot, but the property is surrounded by private parking.

Member O'Brien asked if it was discussed with Mr. Albrecht to use his lot for access and for parking. Mr. Shanklin stated Mr. Albrecht said he had no issue using his lot for access.

Member Bransky stated he is worried about parking. On paper this does not work well, and he has often disagreed with the parking formula in the code as it uses old modeling.

Member Bransky stated that no one on Dixie Highway complies with the parking ordinances and we want the foot traffic downtown. The problem is the commission cannot say to use street parking and grant a variance with a "park at your own risk" status.

Member Bransky stated he does not see how adding 6-7 cars is creating an intensity problem.

Member Bransky stated he does not have a problem with this request and added that it is different from other salons in town.

Member Cap stated there have been 2-3 similar situations with parking issues, most recently the former Sweat Equity location on 183rd Street. Member Cap stated the village put the burden on the applicant to approach neighboring property owners to get a letter giving assent to use available spaces and that it would be fair to ask to have this applicant redouble their efforts to contact the property owner to the south.

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Mr. Shanklin stated they have one neighboring person saying they can use some spaces some times. Member Cap asked if it is the owner to the south. Mr. & Ms. Shanklin both stated yes.

Chairman Sierzega asked if there is contact information for the owners. Staff Liaison Mesaros stated they Delano's space is proposed to be a restaurant and they will need their parking lot for the future use.

Member Cap asked if it is fair to ask clients to cross Dixie Highway because Dixie carries a lot of vehicle traffic.

Mr. Shanklin stated they are in discussions with Mr. Albrecht, but it is hard to contact him because he is in California.

Member Johnson asked if they would consider two chairs and other restrictions, by appointment only. Member Johnson asked if it should be tabled until after the applicant speaks to Mr. Albrecht or consider it tonight with minor restrictions.

Member Johnson asked what they would like to consider. Ms. Shanklin stated she would like to have considered the two chairs and the rules & regulations to operate.

Chairman Sierzega asked if they want to have it voted on tonight or continue it to see if they get other information.

Member O'Brien stated he does not see why they cannot use the neighboring parking lot since it is not being used.

Member Bransky stated it is not the same as the case with Sweat Equity because that parking lot is an enclosed lot. Member Bransky stated he does not see the negative impact of the minimally increased density in the downtown area.

Member Cap stated he would be more comfortable to approve this variance if the applicant had an agreement with neighbors to use their parking. Mr. Shanklin stated they have one, but it is informal.

Member Bransky stated it sounds like Mr. Albrecht is on board with an agreement.

Ms. Shanklin stated she wants the variance voted on tonight, with the restrictions.

Chairman Sierzega asked if there was anyone on Zoom. Staff Liaison Mesaros stated no one.

Chairman Sierzega asked if they want a vote tonight with the information provided. Ms. Shanklin stated yes.

Member Cap asked if there is any economic desire for the urgency. Ms. Shanklin stated yes.

Staff Liaison Mesaros stated that four votes are needed for approval and if they chose to continue the next meeting would be May 12.

Chairman Sierzega asked how many spaces or chairs they are requesting. Ms. Shanklin stated two chairs.

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Staff Liaison Mesaros stated with two chairs, the requirement is seven spaces, they have three, so they need a variance for four spaces.

Chairman Sierzega stated the special use is for salon/spa, and asked if it should be changed to barbershop. Staff Liaison Mesaros stated the category in the code includes barbershops under salon/spa establishments.

Chairman Sierzega stated it should be called a barbershop in the findings of fact.

A motion was made by Member Johnson to approve Case 22-13 with two chairs, a variance for four parking spaces for a total of seven spaces; seconded by Member O'Brien.

AYES: Members Bransky, Johnson, and Castaneda.

NAYES: Members Cap, O'Brien, and Chairman Sierzega

ABSTENTIONS: None

ABSENT: Member Alfonso

Staff Liaison Mesaros stated this would go to the Village Board with a tie vote, 3-3 is not a positive recommendation and she recommends that the applicant get a parking agreement with the neighboring property before consideration at the Village Board of Trustees meeting.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

ADJOURNMENT: Chairman Sierzega asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Member Bransky moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 p.m., seconded by Member Cap.

AYES: Members Bransky, Cap, Castaneda, Johnson, O'Brien, and Chairman Sierzega.

NAYES: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

ABSENT: Member Alfonso

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Mesaros

Angela M. Mesaros
Staff Liaison