

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Thursday, March 8, 2018 – 5:00 p.m.

Police Training Room – Olean Municipal Building

Present: Members: Chairman Gonzalez, Vice Chairman Andreano, Alderman Witte, Alderman Crawford, and Alderman Smith. Others: Alderman Dougherty; Alderman George; Mayor William Aiello; Nicholas DiCerbo, Jr., City Attorney; Fred Saradin, City Auditor; Keri Kerper, Community Development Program Coordinator; Ed Jennings, Code Enforcement Supervisor, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

1. Roll Call

Alderman Gonzalez called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present.

2. Unfinished Business

None

3. New Referrals for Consideration

a. Presentation of Submission – Forest Hills Subdivision Request

Alderman Gonzalez introduced Mr. Eric Biscaro and Ms. Raquel Martin, who have submitted the Forest Hills Subdivision Request.

Mr. Biscaro explained that he would like to respond to some of the comments that were forwarded to him by the Council from the Planning Board. He began by stating that he feels that his homes will be as good as, or better, than the ones currently there. He disagrees with the Planning Board's comment that his homes would have a lower cost design and would feel inferior to what is currently in the neighborhood. He stated that, due to Code changes, his homes would be superior in terms of structure and energy codes. Although the homes could sell for \$160,000 to \$180,000 each, he has chosen not to go in that route and will be renting the homes out to seniors who do not require subsidizing. Seniors who do not want to continue to live in their larger homes can rent one of these, where all maintenance, lawn care and snow removal is taken care of. The homes themselves have a lesser cost to him because his company has been in business for more than 40 years as a supplier of building supplies.

Mr. Biscaro continued in discussing issues regarding home value changes. He stated that since 2009, any house that has sold in that area saw its value go down quite substantially. In Batavia, the properties that back his development have seen their property values increase. He mentioned that Olean has one of the highest tax rates compared to other towns and Cities in

the five counties that he sells building supplies in, and he feels that because of this, property values are lower in the City. His development should not affect property values negatively.

He continued in stating that, along with the information he had provided for the application, he included copies of letters from tenants, owners of neighboring properties and Code Enforcement in Batavia attesting to how they would recommend the project, and how the project has been positive and an asset for their community.

Mr. Biscaro stated that the only lots on the development that have sold since May 2006 are those that involved a resident of the subdivision purchasing a lot adjacent to theirs. The development has failed. Nothing is going to make this development work unless changes are made.

He mentioned that changes have been made in terms of the covenants of the subdivision, but he doesn't feel that they should be discussed at this time.

Alderman Crawford questioned how many properties he owns in Batavia, and Mr. Biscaro replied that he owns 40 properties on one lot, and another 5 down the road on a property that borders a golf course.

Alderman Andreano asked how the homes would be managed, and Mr. Biscaro replied that a manager would be on site. Ms. Martin plans to build her house on site, and he may potentially build a home for himself in the development as well. Down the road, an additional property manager may be added to answer anything for the tenants. There would be a full time maintenance worker, and landscaping and lawn mowing will be contracted out. Any time a rental is vacated, it will be painted and re carpeted prior to being rented out again.

Mr. Biscaro stated that, in terms of the traffic issue, he is not proposing a new development. This is already a development. Traffic studies were done when the development was originally approved, and based on the traffic study completed by an engineer (which bases traffic on the number of bedrooms in each home), traffic would be 20% less (or more) than if all lots were filled as the development was originally proposed. Alderman Witte stated that she feels that the traffic concern is that there is barely any traffic in the area now. When you add 40-plus units, traffic will increase.

Mr. Biscaro stated that he understands Alderman Witte's point, but it is important that the Council remembers that the development has been approved for more traffic than he is proposing. When the homeowners originally bought the lots where they built and now reside, they knew that this could be coming down the road.

Alderman Witte questioned curbing in the development, and Mr. Earley replied that he doesn't intend to install curbing, but they will have to see what comes down the road and what is required of them. He really doesn't want to put in curbing and he does not want to turn this into a City street. He doesn't intend for people to enter the development who do not live there, and he would like to keep the roadway a 15 mph zone. Alderman Witte stated that two of the property owners there had to put the curbing in on their property, and they then turned the road over to the City to maintain. He responded that he will not only build the roadway, but also maintain it, and keep it plowed during the winter. Again, he would like this to be treated as more of a driveway than a City road so that he can keep the speed limit at 15 mph. He also intends to only have one in and out connecting to Genesee Street, and he does not plan to open the development up on the other end.

Mr. Biscaro explained that when this property is complete, the homes will be assessed and he will be paying taxes on the full assessment of the homes, including the full cut to the school without any exemptions. Seniors will help aide the school because of these taxes, even though those in this development are not bringing new kids into the school district. Only new money is coming in. He stated that in order to rent these \$1200 a month units, they will ensure that there is guaranteed income (including SSI, etc.) of \$3800 per month. He doesn't want to have to evict the elderly. They will also have this additional income to spend in the City. Water and sewer bills, building permit fees, and potential increased sales taxes would all benefit the City.

Mr. Biscaro mentioned that, since the idea of this hit the paper, he has been contacted by people who have looked into leaving the area since there was no housing option like this for them.

Alderman Crawford questioned how many properties would be built per year. Mr. Biscaro stated that there would be phases of the project, and each would take two years. Each phase would consist of 12 to 14 homes, with the foundation and framing being done first. The remainder of the two years would be used to finish out the homes, and the next batch would start. He feels that the homes will be filled almost as soon as they are completed. He has financing taken care of for the build, and he intends to get started as soon as possible.

Alderman Crawford questioned if these properties will be subject to rental inspections, and Mr. Bishop replied that it would be fine with him to have the properties inspected. Mr. Jennings stated that the properties would be initially inspected as well prior to being rented out for the first time.

Mr. Biscaro stated that there were concerns passed along regarding utilities, and he stated that all water, sewer, electric, gas, and telephone infrastructure is already in the development. He only needs to connect from the homes to the street. He mentioned that water is also estimated

to be 20% less than the approved usage. Lighting in the development will go along with Code Enforcement requirements.

Alderman Gonzalez reiterated that there are currently 50 lots, and Mr. Biscaro and Ms. Martin intend to increase to 52 lots. Mr. Biscaro stated that all of the houses will be different, and will not be exactly the same. They will also not be on top of each other.

Alderman Gonzalez stated that, at the end of the day, it is nice to know how these homes would be built; however, he is struggling to understand how material this information is to the decision in front of the Council. The Council is only approving dividing 40 lots into 52. The primary concern of the neighbors is decreased property value. Mr. Biscaro could begin the building process tomorrow, if he chose. If there is a difference, it would be from having no homes, to building some. A change from 40 to 52 is not going to make a difference.

Mr. Biscaro commented on Alderman Gonzalez's statement by saying that he does not feel that there would be an impact to go from 40 lots to 52. When he picked out the number, he went through building requirements for the zoning district, to ensure that all of the homes and lots would comply. His intentions were to best utilize the land while following the rules.

Mr. Biscaro explained that the major difference between 40 and 52 homes is that 12 less houses are being taxed on. That is \$200 less per month, per home that is going back to the City, County, and school. He stated that he and Ms. Martin will be the people with the biggest financial stake in the development. He stated that these lots will also be the only ones in the development to keep most of their trees, as large yards are not required for the homes. Others in the development took trees out when they built. He stated that three houses have been built in Olean in the last 10 years, to which Mr. Jennings replied that it could be even less. The City is shrinking and he wants to keep people here. This development will benefit the City and its taxpayers.

Alderman Witte asked that they send photos of the development in Batavia, and Ms. Martin stated that she will forward them.

Alderman Crawford questioned if the density of homes in Batavia will be the same of those in Olean, and Mr. Biscaro replied that Batavia is tighter than what is proposed in Olean. He plans to leave 88% greenspace in the Olean development.

Mr. DiCerbo stated that the next step is for the Council to declare itself Lead Agency for the SEQR, as every Council action requires a SEQR. He stated that he will make a determination to see what additional is needed and will be in touch with Mr. Biscaro and Ms. Martin.

4. Approval of Committee Reports

None

5. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Gonzalez, seconded by Alderman Andreano. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:55 p.m.