

CITY OF ALBERT LEA
PLANNING COMMISSION
ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

November 7, 2018 - 5:30 pm
City Center – Council Chambers

Members Present

Rick Mummert
Tim Samuelson
Pam Schmidt
Jason Willner

Members Absent

Larry Baker, Ex-Officio
Colby Cunningham
Thayne Nordland

Staff in Attendance

Wayne Sorensen, Building/Zoning Administrator
Cierra Maras, Fire & Inspection Administrative Assistant
Jeffery Laskowske, Deputy Fire Chief
Steve Jahnke, City Engineer/Director of Public Works
Molly Patterson-Lundgren WSB Planner

Interested Parties

Joe Wagner, ISG Project Manager
Steve Anderson, Director of Facilities – Albert Lea Schools

Planning Commission Chair, Rick Mummert, called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Approval of the Agenda

Samuelson made a motion to approve the agenda and Schmidt seconded the motion. The agenda was approved unanimously on a voice vote.

Approval of Minutes

Willner made a motion to approve the minutes from October 2, 2018. Samuelson seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously on a voice vote.

Public Hearings

1. CUP – Hammer Field Expansion

Staff report prepared by Molly Patterson-Lundgren, Planner WSB & Associates, Inc. and an audio recording of this meeting become part of these minutes by reference.

ISG on behalf of Albert Lea Schools have submitted an application for a Conditional Use Permit to improve and expand Hammer Field, the high school sports complex located on the corner of Bridge Avenue and Hammer Road. The improvements and expansion includes new structures and fields, stormwater management, parking lots, landscaping, and trails.

Patterson-Lundgren reviewed the staff report and gave background on the proposal. She noted that City Staff met with the applicants and addressed having an emergency type connection between the two routes instead of a full open driveway. Deputy Fire Chief Jeff Laskowske clarified fire code requirements and requested all requirements be met in the proposal. The findings of fact and conditions for the requested CUP were updated today.

Mummert asked what the need for the separation between parking area and field house area was for. Patterson-Lundgren explained it is for emergency response vehicles. She explained the potential of traffic congestion in the case of an accident and having access for responding emergency vehicles.

Mummert opened the public hearing at 5:45 p.m.

Steve Anderson, Director of Facilities for Albert Lea Schools, thanked City staff for their efforts in working together with the applicants. Anderson noted the 20' width of the emergency vehicle path and explained that it looks like a road. He addressed concerns of students using that path to drive to the field house and said it is a safety hazard they are trying to avoid. He questioned why the two paths needed to be connected.

Deputy Fire Chief Laskowske explained that there needs to be a second connection to the access point and the 20' width is for supporting fire apparatus. He explained that there are several different styles to support the surface (grass/paved), and noted that the full 20' width must be kept clear during winter months.

Sorensen explained the concern of people driving down the road and asked how that can be avoided. Laskowske said that other communities have used posts with chains in the middle that break away when a fire apparatus goes through.

Joe Wagner, ISG Project Manager, spoke on the trail proposed from the high school to Hammer Field. He explained that the trail system is a paved trail that would be used for walking as well as use for maintenance vehicles.

Mummert closed the public hearing at 6:00 p.m. after calling 3 times for additional public comment.

Samuelson made a motion, seconded by Schmidt, to recommend to City Council the adoption of a resolution approving a CUP for Hammer Field expansion citing the findings of fact listed and with the conditions as stated.

The motion was passed unanimously on a voice vote.

2. CUP – Halverson School Addition

ISG on behalf of Albert Lea Schools have submitted an application for a Conditional Use Permit for an addition to Halverson School located at 707 10th Street East. The property is located in the R-1 residential zoning district. Schools are permitted as a Conditional Use within this district. While the school has been at this location for some time, no CUP is on file for the facility, making it a non-conforming use. The issuance of the CUP will bring the school into compliance with City Code allowing for the proposed expansion. The proposal includes demolition of a section the existing building and a new addition for a gym and new offices with improvements to the school entrance from the parking lot. An addition to the parking lot to the north of the new gym is also planned.

Patterson-Lundgren reviewed the staff report and gave background on the proposal. She explained that screening for parking area is the only condition City staff is proposing.

Samuelson asked for clarification on obscuring 90% of the vision of the parking area. Sorensen explained that code does not specifically address. He said that staff discussed a minimum 3' height as to cover any headlights in the area. A hedge can obscure vision but a fence does as well. He said the Planning Commission can make that determination.

Mummert opened the public hearing at 6:15 p.m.

Joe Wagner, ISG Project Manager, explained that they are looking at a fence for obscuring so that the school would not have to maintain it.

Steve Anderson, Director of Facilities for Albert Lea Schools, said with the parking addition they are almost doubling the parking space. Patterson-Lundgren explained that elementary schools base their parking area around the number of classrooms.

Mummert closed the public hearing at 6:20 p.m. after calling 3 times for additional public comment.

Samuelson made a motion, seconded by Willner, to recommend to City Council the adoption of a resolution approving a CUP for Halverson School expansion citing the findings of fact listed and with the condition as stated.

The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

New Business

1. Fire Department Consistency Comprehensive Plan

Patterson-Lundgren explained that the comprehensive plan shows the site is located within the downtown land use district. One of the goals for the downtown area is to expand and be the center of government purposed for the City and County. Staff is making a recommendation to City Council indicating that his location is consistent with the comprehensive plan.

Mummert made a motion, seconded by Willner, to recommend to City Council the fire station site is consistent with the comprehensive plan.

The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Old Business

None

Commissioner Communications

None

Staff Communications

1. 2019 Calendar

Staff is working on putting together a calendar for 2019 meeting dates. There are no applications to review for the next scheduled December meeting so staff will send out that calendar once it is finalized.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:32 p.m. The motion to adjourn was made by Samuelson and seconded by Schmidt. The motion to adjourn was approved unanimously on a voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Cierra Maras
Planning Commission Secretary

Rick Mummert
Chair, Planning Commission