

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, January 27, 2025

The North Chicago Planning & Zoning Commission met on Monday, January 27, 2025, at 6:07 P.M. at 1850 Lewis Avenue in Council Chambers.

I. Call to Order/Attendance

Present: Paula Carballido, Angelica Douglass, Antonio Jackson (Chairman), GeanNell Jackson, Renee Jones

Staff Present: Taylor Wegrzyn, Director of Economic and Community Development

II. Membership Update

T. Wegrzyn noted that Virginia Gibbs has been appointed to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Meeting Minutes for October 28, 2024

Motion by P. Carballido, seconded by G. Jackson, to approve Meeting Minutes for October 28, 2024

Ayes: P. Carballido, G. Jackson, A. Douglass, A. Jackson, R. Jones

Nays:

Abstain:

Absent: V. Gibbs; R. Jones

[6:11 P.M. – Renee Jones arrived]

IV. Old Business

None.

V. New Business

Public Hearing: PZC2024-02 – GPS Transitional Housing – Text Amendment, Special Use Permit, and Zoning Variations for a proposed Community Residence at 1919 Sherman Avenue

Motion by A. Jackson, seconded by P. Carballido to open the hearing for PZC2024-02.

Ayes: A. Jackson, P. Carballido, A. Douglass, G. Jackson, R. Jones

Nays:

Abstain:

Absent: V. Gibbs

Motion passed (5-0)

Director Wegrzyn provided a presentation on the background, history, context, and facts of the petitioner's requests and the subject property.

Stacy Bullard, President and Chairman of GPS Transitional Housing, gave a presentation on his organization and their requests for text amendments, special use permit, and variations. He was joined by Rosalind Bullard and Nimonica Barrett. The presentation included the organization's mission statement, intake procedures, improvement plans, staffing, partnerships, and resources, among other project details. They have been working on this project for three years. Ms. Barrett presented further details on the organization's mission and intake process. No felons or sex offenders would be admitted into the program. Mr. Bullard provided further details on the amenities which would be available to the guests such as outdoor play area, gymnasium, garden, and barbecue area. The facility would house up to nine families and six other individual guests, in addition to one full time staff member. Additional staffing support would be provided by the organization's partnerships with the College of Lake County, Lake County Health Department, and Illinois Workforce Development, among others. They have an agreement with CCI to help them pursue operating grants. Funding has been obtained to purchase the building. Mr. Bullard and Mrs. Bullard previously operated a transitional house in Zion where they got experience with referrals from other local agencies.

Chairman Jackson opened the floor to public comments. He invited those wishing to express support for the petition to speak first. No one elected to step up. He then asked those opposed to or neutral to the petition to speak. Roger Booker, Sherman Avenue, wanted assurance that it would be limited to women and children. Schelmadine Murray, Prospect Avenue, was happy to see that it was for women and children but wanted to confirm a maximum of three children. Mr. Bullard confirmed that three was the cap. Kevon Swilling, Wright Avenue, hoped that North Chicago could host the facility, but questioned what it would do to local resident's tax burden. Roderick Wilder, 20th Street, noted his opposition. Wayne Williams, Signal Security, spoke in favor of the project and noted that his company would be providing security for the facility, including a vehicle parked outside. He could not confirm whether the

security personnel would be armed or not. Mr. Bullard responded to say that security would be armed. Lori Collins, Sherman Avenue, noted that Allendale came in with the same promises about security. The local community would not benefit from the facility. Outsiders are trying to make decisions for their neighborhood. Organizations such as this use grants to advance their agenda at the expense of the local taxpayer. Facilities should instead provide services to the community already present. These types of proposals tend to change after making promises. Ryan Ray, Sherman Avenue, expressed his opposition as a young homeowner and father in the area. His kids walk past the facility to get to school, and they would not feel safe anymore. Moreno Torres, Wallace Avenue, noted that this facility would make his neighborhood unsafe, especially at night. Emily Poole, Winter Avenue, asked for the qualifications of staff and for the petitioners to share some success stories from their property in Zion. Walter Wright, Wallace Avenue, expressed his opposition to the project. Vernon Poole, Winter Avenue, wanted guarantees that the operation would not change once up and running. He also expressed concerns about guests coming into the facility and how it would impact their taxes. Christell Ayers, Kristan Avenue, noted that taxes have gone up and this could place more burden on the taxing districts and taxpayers. She would prefer more training for clients. Michael Atlas, Argonne, asked what problem this project solves. He also expressed concern about the security plan. Jasmine Ray, Sherman Avenue, expressed her opposition to the project and noted that it provides no benefit to the community.

Mr. Bullard provided a response to the public's comments. The facility is transitional housing and intended for clients to move on. The facility would be locked, and clients could not come and go. The guard would be armed. They would work with the city to have local representatives on their board. He said that there is a homelessness problem in North Chicago. The board will consist of eleven members and only three will be from GPS. If homelessness is a problem in Waukegan, then it is only one step away from North Chicago's problem. The facility would use trained professionals from the College of Lake County and Lake County Health Department. No one would be allowed to roam out of the building. Clients must qualify for the program. There is a one strike policy. Those in violation of the requirements will be released from the program. They had success in Zion and two have stable jobs now. It was asked if GPS had looked to other communities for their facility. Mr. Bullard responded that they had not.

Chairman Jackson opened the floor to questions by the PZC members. P. Carballido reminded the audience that the PZC must review the matter as it relates to the standards outlined in zoning. G. Jackson asked why the program seeks to only help homeless women and not others needing assistance for other reasons. She noted that Saint Martin de Porres in Chicago has had success and could be a model worth

replicating. She also noted the large audience in opposition, and she recommended that the petitioner's resubmit in a different form. It was asked how long the construction period would be. Mr. Bullard responded that it would take six months to complete. Mr. Bullard also recognized that homelessness is a range and does not impact individuals in the same way. G. Jackson recommended more of a school format. Mr. Bullard noted that the program includes numerous forms of training and schooling. A. Jackson reflected on the fact that the organization's website already reflected control of the property and could be perceived as having assumed their ability to use the property. Mr. Bullard expressed that the website was not intended to be viewable yet for the public. A. Jackson confirmed that the website was already public. He also asked why drug abusers would not be accepted into the program. Mr. Bullard responded that they were looking for good success stories to start. A. Jackson asked if the business was running yet at another location. Mr. Bullard confirmed that they do not have any operations up and running yet. A. Jackson asked how they determine the education status of clients. Mr. Bullard responded to note that the College of Lake County would help with that. R. Jones also expressed concern that there are many other negative factors impacting women today. Homeless can be viewed as a trigger word. She asked how this facility differs from the Staben House in Waukegan and what type of client is the organization looking for. Mr. Bullard noted that they are looking for good successes and would mostly take overflow clients from other local organizations. Mrs. Bullard added that their previous home ended up taking clients after the school district, and later NICASA, contacted them. The facility ends up providing meals and a stable family environment. This removes some of the burden from other agencies and organizations such as the schools. P. Carballido asked what the Comprehensive Plan says. Director Wegrzyn noted that the Comprehensive Plan promotes a diversity of housing options to meet local needs and envisions this property as an "institutional" future land use. P. Carballido expressed concern about the structure of the board. Mrs. Bullard noted that they held an open house in September and passed out flyers. She also noted that there would be an advisory committee to supplement the board. R. Jones asked for confirmation of the number of staff and clients as well as the training provided. Mr. Bullard noted that there would be 9 families and 6 additional individuals as clients, one staff member, one security guard, two or three teachers provided by other agencies, and one mental health specialist. Training and curriculum would be provided by the College of Lake County but will be more developed once approved for the site. A. Jackson asked for clarification on psychologist, socialist, or social worker. Mr. Bullard confirmed that they would use a social worker. G. Jackson what would happen if women did not complete the program. Mr. Bullard responded to note that they would be directed to other agencies.

Motion by P. Carballido, seconded by G. Jackson to recommend the denial of the

Petitioner's request for a text amendment. After some confusion about the motion, T. Wegrzyn clarified that an "aye" vote would be a vote for denial of the petition.

Ayes: P. Carballido, G. Jackson, A. Douglass, A. Jackson,

Nays: R. Jones

Abstain:

Absent: V. Gibbs

Motion passed (4-1)

Motion by P. Carballido, seconded by G. Jackson to recommend the denial of the Petitioner's request for a Special Use Permit.

Ayes: P. Carballido, G. Jackson, A. Douglass, A. Jackson

Nays:

Abstain: R. Jones

Absent: V. Gibbs

Motion passed (4-0)

Motion by P. Carballido, seconded by G. Jackson to recommend the denial of the Petitioner's request for two variations from Section 5.4.3.9 of the North Chicago Zoning Ordinance.

Ayes: P. Carballido, G. Jackson, A. Douglass, A. Jackson, R. Jones

Nays:

Abstain:

Absent: V. Gibbs

Motion passed (5-0)

Motion by G. Jackson, seconded by P. Carballido, to recommend approval of the Findings of Fact for PZC2024-02.

Ayes: G. Jackson, P. Carballido, A. Douglass, A. Jackson, R. Jones

Nays:

Abstain:

Absent: V. Gibbs

Motion passed (5-0)

Closing of the Hearing

Motion by P. Carballido, seconded by G. Jackson, to recommend the closing of the hearing to the public.

Ayes: P. Carballido, G. Jackson, A. Douglass, A. Jackson, R. Jones (5-0)

Nays:

Abstain:

Absent:

VI. Questions and Comments

None

VII. Public Commentary

None.

VIII. Adjournment

Motion by P. Carballido, seconded by G. Jackson, to adjourn the PZC meeting.

Ayes: P. Carballido, G. Jackson, A. Douglass, A. Jackson, R. Jones

Nays:

Abstain:

Absent:

Motion Passed (5-0)

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 P.M.