



CITY OF THE DALLES PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Thursday, March 21, 2002

City Hall Council Chambers
313 Court Street
The Dalles, OR 97058
Conducted in a handicap accessible room

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Bruce Lavier called the meeting of the City of The Dalles Planning Commission to order at 6:30 P.M.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Bruce Lavier, Ted Bryant, Ron Ahlberg, Jean Thomas, and Mark Poppoff
Absent: None
Staff: Gene Parker, City Attorney; Dan Meader, Planning Consultant; Denise Ball, Admin. Secretary.

AGENDA: Thomas moved to approve the Agenda as submitted and Bryant seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

MINUTES: Lavier asked if any corrections were needed for the minutes of March 7, 2002. Ahlberg asked to add the dialog between himself and the proponent regarding the necessity of an ambulance to transport the patients from the hospital to the helicopter. Lavier directed staff to revise the minutes and re-submit for approval at the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

PUBLIC HEARINGS-

A. Continued hearing for Conditional Use Permit 126-02 of Mid-Columbia Medical Center to site a Helistop for Lifeflight transport at the Fire Department Training Grounds. Property is located at 1400 W. 8th Street and is further described as 1N 13E 4 Tax Lot 101. Property is zoned "RH" - Residential Medium High Density with a "CFO"-Community Facility Overlay zone.

Chair Lavier read the rules for conducting a public hearing. He asked if any Commissioner wished to declare any ex-parte contact, bias, or conflict of interest. There were no declarations from the Commission. Lavier asked if anyone in the audience wished to challenge any of the Commissioners and no one responded. Chair Lavier declared the public hearing re-opened.

Dan Meader, Planning Consultant, told the Commissioners that a letter from the Oregon Aeronautics Dept was in their packet and clarified the proposed heliport requirements. Meader said also, a fax was received today from Mark and RaeAnn Clark. He noted that they are in the audience so he believes they will present the information themselves.

Lavier asked if any Commissioners had questions of staff. There were none.

Proponent Testimony

Lavier opened the hearing for proponent testimony.

Mark Scott, 2628 W. 13th, President and CEO of Mid-Columbia Medical Center was the first proponent. Scott apologized for not being available at the first hearing. Scott said the original helipad was located behind the hospital on some grassy land across from the maternity department and operating rooms. When the Celilo Cancer Center was constructed, the intent of the hospital was to move the helipad, temporarily, to the fire department location. The labyrinth was also constructed at that time, and was intended to be the new site for the helipad. During this construction period, however, both Airlife and Lifeflight upgraded their helicopters to larger models. Scott said both Airlife and Lifeflight could no longer land in the labyrinth area due to the increased size of the helicopters, and the presence of an additional building that created a potential landing hazard. That is why the hospital is now requesting that the temporary helipad at the fire department become a permanent site. There is no suitable location at the hospital that would be acceptable for a helipad. It would require \$1,000,000 to \$1,500,000 to construct a helipad on the roof of the hospital and the hospital does not have the finances for such a project.

Bill Hamilton, 3201 Fairview, is a general vascular surgeon at the hospital. Hamilton and his partners take care of basically 100% of the trauma patients that come in to this region and need to be moved by Airlife or Lifeflight. His concern is the amount of "out of hospital" time these patients experience. Going to the Dallesport Airport would add more "out of hospital" time for these critically ill or injured patients and Hamilton feels this is unacceptable from a medical point of view. Hamilton agrees that the ideal location would be directly outside of the operating room at the hospital. That is not possible, however, so the next best location is where the helipad is now, at the fire department.

Lavier asked if any Commissioner had a question of Scott or Hamilton.

Bryant asked Scott what the Hospital's Plan B is should the Fire Department location not be available in the future.

Scott said the next location choice would be the Dallesport Airport.

Bryant asked him if that was all.

Scott said he supposed the next location would be Hood River. He said that is why they are asking for a permanent approval for the helipad at the Fire Department.

Bryant pointed out that the Fire Department stated in their letter of March 6 that they supported this helipad only until their current needs change and this is not a permanent solution but is still a temporary site.

Meader read the last sentence of that letter to clarify Bryant's statement about it being a temporary site. He quoted "Until such time that the fire district's current needs change, Mid-Columbia Fire & Rescue endorses and supports Mid-Columbia Medical Center's application for a conditional use permit."

Lavier said that currently there is nothing behind the fire department. Lavier wondered how development would impact the helipad.

Parker pointed out that there are several flight paths available to the helicopters. They don't have to come only from the south.

Poppoff said there might be possible height limitations on future development to the south. He said he believed the ordinance allowed for 50-foot high buildings in the RH zone.

There were no more questions of Scott.

Pete Kingsley, 140 S.E. Wires, White Salmon, Washington spoke in favor of the application. Kingsley was involved in the door-to-door survey regarding the helipad location of the neighbors of the fire department. Those people that were home had no objection to the helipad being located at the fire department. Kingsley also pointed out that when the hospital calls for a Lifeflight helicopter they don't always get one. Sometimes the weather is too severe and the helicopters are forced to return before reaching The Dalles. This would add additional time and cost should the ambulance be waiting at Dallesport for a helicopter that isn't going to arrive. If the ambulance is at the fire department waiting for the helicopter then it is not really out of service.

Thomas said she had not heard testimony in the previous hearing about the helicopters being larger. She asked if that was for safety reasons.

Hamilton said the increase in size of the helicopters allowed for additional on-board life support systems and occasionally surgical teams are transported with the helicopter.

Bryant asked Kingsley about the wording on the initial survey.

Kingsley said he believed the question was if they had any problem with the helicopter landing at the fire department. There was no specified time mentioned and there were no objections from the neighbors.

Poppoff asked about moving these trauma patients from the hospital. Poppoff asked if the hospital had the necessary equipment.

Hamilton said no. The majority of patients are on life support and cannot be wheeled on a gurney for any distance. The ambulance and trained personnel are necessary to get them on Lifeflight as quickly and safely as possible.

Ahlberg asked if this was a policy or rule of the hospital.

Hamilton said this is a patient safety issue that is determined by medical staff.

Ahlberg asked who or what determines when an ambulance is required. Testimony from the previous hearing indicated a fifty-foot distance would trigger the need for an ambulance.

Hamilton said it is a common sense decision. These patients are critically ill and you can't be wheeling them around on a gurney out in the parking lot.

Scott said these are not simple medical cases or else the hospital would keep them. These are gravely ill people who need constant, life supporting care.

Ahlberg said his concern is whether this ambulance transfer is necessary. Ahlberg also asked if medical staff is waiting at the helipad with the patient for the arrival of the helicopter.

Hamilton said the ambulance does not leave the hospital until the helicopter confirms it will be landing in The Dalles.

Ahlberg asked how the hospital feels this location has worked during the temporary period of time.

Hamilton said it has worked reasonably well and that is why they are requesting this conditional use permit.

Lavier asked if there were night flights and Hamilton said yes there are.

Bryant told Scott that the Commission is not against the helipad but he doesn't believe there was much foresight by the hospital in thinking about the needs of these critically ill patients.

Scott said the medical center is growing dramatically. The Celilo Cancer Center is getting patients from Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, and Portland. Scott says they have tried very hard to make the correct decisions to handle the medical care needs of this community. The hospital is limited by the amount of space it has at the medical center location and they have looked at it in depth. This helipad at the fire department is the best location and does meet the needs for critically injured or ill patients.

Tom Peachey, 420 E. 3rd Street, the attorney for Mid-Columbia Fire & Rescue, spoke next. Peachey said Mid-Columbia Fire & Rescue and Mid-Columbia Medical Center are partners providing services for the community's health care. They support the hospital in this request for a conditional use permit. They have previous agreements with the hospital and they have a pending written agreement with the hospital and the Lifeflight companies. Within the next five to eight years, however, the fire department hopes to construct a training tower at their facility. At such

time, the agreement between Mid-Columbia Fire & Rescue and Mid-Columbia Medical Center will need to be revised.

Bryant asked Peachey to show him on the drawing where the proposed training tower will be located.

Peachey had Bob Palmer, Assistant Fire Chief, show the Commissioners the proposed training tower location. Peachey confirmed that the construction of this thirty to forty-foot high training tower could terminate the existence of the helipad.

Bob Palmer, 1902 W. 13th, expanded on Peachey's statement by saying that Oregon Aeronautics, Lifeflight and Airlife would need to decide if they would and/or could continue to land on the helipad.

Ahlberg asked Palmer if the fire department would be opposed to continuing the helipad service at their facility if a different location could be found on the property. Palmer said no.

Ahlberg asked if the need for the helipad was strictly driven by the hospital. Palmer said it is primarily for the needs of the hospital. A large interface fire, however, would create a potential need for helicopter landing.

Ahlberg asked what it costs for a patient to be transported from the hospital to the helicopter.

Palmer said it is a base rate plus mileage. The mileage is not charged from the station to the hospital. It is only charged when the patient is "on board".

Poppoff asked what the mileage charge is.

Palmer said the mileage charge is \$7/mile.

Meader asked Palmer to explain the typical procedure when a night landing is necessary.

Palmer said Lifeflight would contact the department when they are nearing the helipad and the lights will be turned on at that time.

There were no more questions of the Fire Department.

Opposition Testimony

Mark Clark, 1001 Cherry Heights, The Dalles, is an abutting property owner. Clark feels the helipad does not meet the criteria for a conditional use permit. Clark says it is noisy and does not comply with LUDO. Clark said he owns the adjoining property that is zoned Residential Medium High Density. He asked who would want to build an apartment complex next to a helicopter pad.

Bryant asked if Mr. Clark was contacted by the hospital. Mr. Clark said he personally was not.

RaeAnn Clark, 1001 Cherry Heights, The Dalles. She said she has no objection to Lifeflight, she feels it should be located at the hospital, however. Mrs. Clark presented a two-page document to the Commission. She does not believe the helipad is allowable in the RH/CFO zone. Clark also said it is not harmonious in the neighborhood, an airport is already available in Dallesport, and it has a harmful effect on desirable neighborhood characteristics. Clark feels the two to three landings per month create more than a minimal impact on the neighborhood. Mrs. Clark said the noise and vibration are very frightening to her children. She believes there should not be an airport or transportation facility in her back yard.

Bryant asked Clark if she was asked to respond to the Fire Department Survey. Clark said she was told it would be a temporary situation until the Celilo Cancer Center was built. Then the helicopters would be landing at the labyrinth at the hospital.

There was no additional opposition.

Proponent Rebuttal

Mark Scott, 2628 W. 13th The Dalles, Oregon, spoke in rebuttal. Scott said again that the previous landing location at the hospital is no longer safe for the larger helicopters and there is no safe or practical location at the medical center. These flights have been going on for twenty years and they have not had any complaints. He appreciates that there is noise and vibration. Scott went on to say that there are many homes that are close to the helipad and only one resident has voiced objection to this conditional use permit. He asked the Commissioners to approve the application.

Ahlberg asked what the hospital would do if, in the future, they couldn't land at the fire department when they build their training tower.

Scott said they would be looking for an alternative site. There isn't an acceptable place at the medical center facility, however.

Bryant asked if the neighborhood survey was written and Scott said it was verbal.

There were no more questions of Scott.

Meader said he had a couple of technical points to clear up before the public testimony was closed. First, Poppoff's comment about the height of buildings allowed in this zone was incorrect. The maximum height allowed is 40 feet not 50 feet. Also, the Mid-Columbia Fire & Rescue has a Community Facility Overlay that allows medical care facilities and public safety facilities. Staff believes the Lifeflight helipad is allowed.

Chair Lavier closed the hearing to public testimony.

Deliberation

The Commissioners talked about the twenty-foot light pole on the facility. It is a safety concern.

Ahlberg said the property upon which the Helistop is located is a fire department. There is noise and activity associated with this location on a constant basis besides the occasional Lifeflight. Ahlberg said he would like to see the light pole removed. He would also like to approve this use for a limited period of time so it can be revisited. Ahlberg said that the testimony is clear that even if the helicopter could land closer to the hospital, the cost for the ambulance to move these trauma patients would still be necessary.

Thomas asked about the zoning on the property to the south of the helipad.

Meader said a Neighborhood Center Overlay was placed on the Clark property in question.

Poppoff said that helicopters do create a different noise than fire sirens.

Lavier asked to see the zoning map that shows the overlay zone for the adjacent property and Secretary Ball went to get one.

Thomas asked Parker if they could approve this for a limited number of years. Parker said they could make that a condition of approval.

The Commissioner's viewed the zoning map. Lavier asked what is allowed in a Neighborhood Center Overlay zone and Meader read the list from LUDO Section 5.040.

Thomas moved to approve Conditional Use Permit 126-02 with the condition that it be reviewed in five years by the Planning Commission based upon findings of fact as presented in the Staff Report. Poppoff seconded.

Ahlberg said there is another condition of approval in the Staff Report which is "The Siting Permit with the Oregon Department of Aviation must be approved and maintained". Ahlberg also said he could not vote for this application unless there is a condition that moves or removes the light pole.

Thomas withdrew her motion and Poppoff withdrew his second.

Bryant wanted clarification on the zoning of the fire station. Meader said he knows the fire station has a "CFO" Community Facility Overlay. The zoning map isn't up to date and doesn't show the Community Facility Overlay. Lavier said it would sure be nice to know what the fire station is really zoned as.

Meader asked how he could prove it to him. Lavier said an up to date map would be nice.

Ahlberg moved to approve Conditional Use Permit 126-02 with the following conditions:

1. The Siting Permit with the Oregon Department of Aviation must be approved and maintained.
2. The 20' exterior light pole, referenced in the Aviation Permit Report, shall be moved or removed.
3. This Conditional Use Permit is approved through March 21, 2007 and shall be reviewed at the end of five years,

based upon findings of fact in the Staff Report. Thomas seconded the motion. Ahlberg, Thomas and Poppoff voted for the motion while Lavier and Bryant abstained. The motion passed.

Lavier granted a five-minute recess.

The meeting was called back to order at 8:20 p.m. There was no audience so it was not necessary to read the rules for a public hearing again.

B. Public Hearing for Comprehensive Plan Amendment 26-02.

Lavier opened the hearing for Comprehensive Plan Amendment 26-02 to allow the extension of urban services, specifically wastewater collection facilities, to certain specific properties outside the City's Urban Growth Boundary.

Meader presented the Staff Report. Meader asked if any Commissioner had questions.

Ahlberg asked if the three lots with the stars on them have or will have city sewer service and Meader told him yes.

Thomas asked if there are other areas in the Urban Growth Boundary where this needs to be done. Meader said there may be but not any that the City is aware of at this time.

Ahlberg said he needed to declare that he has had a contract with Richard and Roberta Miller for the past twelve years; he is buying his home from them.

Lavier asked if any Commissioner had bias, a conflict of interest or ex-parte contact. Ahlberg asked Parker if this would be a conflict and Parker said he doesn't believe it is. No other Commissioners had bias, ex-parte contact or a conflict of interest.

Thomas moved that the Planning Commission recommend approval by the City Council of Comprehensive Plan Amendment 26-02 to allow the extension of urban services, specifically wastewater collection facilities, to certain specific properties outside the City's Urban Growth Boundary based upon findings of fact and supporting documents. Bryant seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Resolutions

Ahlberg moved to adopt Resolution 429-02 approving, with three conditions as modified, Conditional Use Permit 126-01 of Mid-Columbia Medical Center to site a Helistop for Lifeflight and Airlife transport at the Fire Department Training Grounds. Thomas seconded the motion. The motion carried with four voting in favor and one abstention (Bryant)

Bryant moved to adopt Resolution #431-02 recommending approval to City Council of Comprehensive Plan Amendment 26-02 of the City of The Dalles to allow the extension of urban services to certain specific properties outside the City's Urban Growth Boundary. Thomas seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Action Items

Planning Commission Minutes
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Meader presented the Staff Report for the Revocation of CUP 117-00 of Windy River Gleaners.

Bryant said some people have voiced concern regarding lack of compliance with conditions of approval and enforcement of those conditions. He believes the Commission should support staff on this revocation.

Ahlberg asked if they would be given a year to comply. Meader said they will be given time to comply and the Director will have discretion in handling the enforcement procedure.

Commissioners and Staff discussed the possibility of Gleaners moving to a new location and where that may be. Funding seems to be a problem for this volunteer organization.

Ahlberg mentioned he had been a member of Gleaners years ago, when it was located in the City owned Getchell Building. He does not want to create a real hardship for them. He knows they have struggled financially.

Bryant moved the Planning Commission direct Staff to prepare a resolution to authorize the Community Development Department Director to revoke CUP 117-00 at his discretion, but no later than one year after the date of the resolution. This decision will be based upon the efforts of the applicant to comply with the Land Use and Development Ordinance 98-1222. Thomas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Commissioners discussed items from their training in Hood River. One thing to make note of is that a visit to the site of an application, for the specific purpose of reviewing and evaluating the application, should be declared as ex-parte contact. It was recommended that the rules for conducting a public hearing might be posted on the wall.

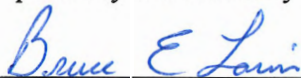
NEXT MEETING:

The April 4, 2002 meeting is cancelled. The next meeting would then be April 18, 2002.

ADJOURNMENT:

The regular Planning Commission meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Denise Ball, Administrative Secretary.



Bruce Lavier, Planning Commission Chair