

Contact: Josh White
Phone: (620) 441-4420
Fax: (620) 441-4403
jwhite@arkansascityks.gov

Public Works Department
City of Arkansas City
118 W. Central Ave.
Arkansas City, KS 67005



News Release

Planning Commission votes 7-0 to recommend housing rezone

Despite some opposition, board advances Veterans Lake senior living project

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (December 15, 2016) — The Arkansas City Planning Commission voted 7-0 on Tuesday night to recommend the rezoning of a City of Arkansas City-owned parcel land to allow a potential senior housing development just east of Veterans Memorial Lake in southwest Arkansas City.

The commissioners made the decision after hearing testimony during a public hearing from seven citizens — six of whom oppose the project — as well as a representative of the developer, Joplin, Missouri-based Red-Wood Development. Most who spoke against it live or own land near the area.

The public hearing was held in the commission room at City Hall, 118 W. Central Ave.

Red-Wood president Rick Schroeder highlighted the positives of the project and tried to mollify some of the residents' concerns, pointing out that seniors are fairly quiet and all of the units would face inward.

But several residents expressed fear that the area would lose its rural character if the development is allowed to proceed. One woman spoke about flooding problems on nearby streets during storm events.

There was little disagreement among the commissioners once the public hearing was closed, however. Commissioner Charles Jennings was outspoken about the need to follow planning goals.

"One of the things that both our professional staff as well as our consultant really pressed us to look at was — and we struggled with it, because all of us have nostalgia and fond memories of places — how long certain areas of the community have indeed sat idle," Jennings said of the Comprehensive Plan.

He served on the broad-based, citizen-led steering committee that drafted the newest version of the plan in 2013. It later was adopted in 2014 by the Planning Commission and City Commission.

"That is what went into that steering committee recommendation to look at different uses ... and that is why staff is bringing it up now," Jennings said. "Everybody says we need more housing, but where are

For immediate release

more

we going to put it at, unless we tear down old housing and replace it with new housing? Which gets us new housing, but not more housing. ... That's the rationale of the last five years: How do we grow?"

"Every housing study that's been done for Ark City has indicated a lack of senior housing," said vice chair Andy Paton. Public Information Officer Andrew Lawson cited some goals from the 2014 Cowley County Comprehensive Housing Study that advocate the specific type of housing Red-Wood plans.

"You just need to go to the Senior Center to see them," Commissioner Mary Benton said of the people who would be served by the housing project. "I see them. And most of you people will be there soon, too, in age," she added, addressing those in the audience.

Additional benefits cited by City staff include Red-Wood's offer to extend the current paved hike-bike trail along the west edge of the property, construct a new public restroom facility and deed both improvements back over to the City. The company also offered to pay for all utility extensions to the site.

Jennings said this was the first real opportunity to bring development to the southern part of Arkansas City since the new levee was completed, removing the area from the floodplain map. This location was chosen because it is the largest parcel in that particular Census tract, a requirement to seek tax credits.

Once the discussion was done, Jennings made the motion to approve the rezoning recommendation.

"I don't very often get to follow my work from the parking lot all the way to this point, but I'd like to have the opportunity to recommend that we approve making a recommendation to the City Commission to approve this request for this particular property to be rezoned from Public Use District to an R-3 High-Density Residential District," Jennings said.

His motion was seconded by Paton. The only hesitation in the vote came from Brian Wells, who initially was hesitant about losing possible park expansion space for the Veterans Memorial Lake area.

But testimony from Public Works Director Eric Broce, who said the park area could be expanded north once the City's lime lagoons are decommissioned in 2018, seemed to sway Wells to vote in favor.

The only citizen to support the housing project was Glen Morrison, 1031 N. Second St. The following residents spoke against the proposal:

- Caryn Owings, 1315 S. Sixth St.
- Charles White, 1225 S. Sixth St.
- Dianna Ingram, 1308 S. Fourth St.
- Harvey Moore, 1308 S. Fourth St.
- Dennis Phillips, 906 N. First St.
- Cody White, 700 W. Fifth Ave.

The rezoning recommendation now goes to the City Commission of Arkansas City for its consideration and possible approval at its Jan. 3, 2017, regular meeting.

The meeting began at 5:30 p.m. and was adjourned at 6:50 p.m. Commissioners Albert Brown and Carl Mills were absent. Paton arrived at 5:54 p.m. and Commissioner Mike Munson left at 6:38 p.m.

In other business Tuesday, the Planning Commission:

- Unanimously approved the minutes of the Nov. 8 meeting.
- Voted 5-0 to recommend the approval of amendments to Article 25 of the Zoning Regulations that removes duplicative provisions created by the passage of general provisions for boards. The vote occurred after Munson left and while Jennings had stepped out of the commission room.
- Heard an update from Jennings on the Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration of Unity event planned for Jan. 15, 2017.

In other business Nov. 8, the Planning Commission:

- Unanimously approved the minutes of the Oct. 11 meeting.
- Voted 5-0 to recommend vacating portions of the 300 block of South Seventh Street and 700 block of West Adams Avenue, adjacent to the Cowley College softball field.

In other business Oct. 11, the Planning Commission:

- Unanimously approved the minutes of the Aug. 23 meeting.
- Voted 7-0 to recommend the approval of amendments to Article 23 of the Zoning Regulations, regarding telecommunications towers, to comply with recent changes in state law.
- Discussed possible changes to the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan.

###