



**CRYSTAL LAKE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2009
HELD AT THE CRYSTAL LAKE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Hayden at 7:30 p.m. On roll call, members Batastini, Esposito, Goss, Greenman, Jouron, Skluzacek, and Hayden were present. Mr. McDonough was absent.

Michelle Rentzsch, Director of Planning and Economic Development, Erik Morimoto, Assistant City Engineer, and John Cowlin, City Attorney, were present from Staff.

Mr. Hayden asked the people in attendance to rise to say the Pledge of Allegiance. He led those in attendance in the Pledge.

Mr. Hayden stated that this meeting is being televised now as well as being recorded for future playback on the City's cable station.

APPROVE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 21, 2009 PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING

Mr. Goss moved to approve the minutes from the October 21, 2009 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting as presented. Mr. Batastini seconded the motion. On roll call, members Goss, Greenman, Jouron, and Skluzacek voted aye. Members Batastini, Esposito, and Hayden abstained. Motion passed.

2009-60 METRA RIDGEFIELD STATION – PUBLIC MEETING

Conceptual Plan Review.

Joe Gottemoller, attorney, Phil Pagano and Rick Mack with Metra, and Kevin Harder and Ted Hamilton with Smith Engineering, were present to represent the request.

Mr. Hayden stated that this is a Public Meeting and under the UDO, which was recently adopted, a conceptual review does not require presentation from the public because this is a conceptual plan only. He said this conceptual plan will also be discussed at the November 3 City Council meeting. Mr. Hayden said he understands that this site is one of several Metra is looking at for this project. The Commission will not discuss the other locations nor will they discuss if one site is better than another.

Mr. Pagano said this discussion is to talk about the improvements to the UP Northwest line. They are the largest commuter rail system in the US and second largest based on ridership. Since they have owned the system, they have put considerable dollars in capital investments. Mr. Pagano said this line is the longest in their system which is 71 miles long and the largest job market is along this line – approximately 600,000 jobs. They feel they do a pretty good job of bringing people into Chicago but they need to improve overall such as adding more express trains. He said they currently have a 96 to 97% on-time performance rating.

Mr. Pagano said this station will be part of 4 New Start projects over the next 10 years. They plan to add

a new line to the southwest; a second new line called STAR which would be suburban to suburban from O'Hare to Prairie Stone to Joliet; and 2 major infrastructure projects. This is a very long process when dealing with Federal dollars but they are now at the point of starting to design plans. Their purpose is to increase service and make significant improvements. They will be extending the McHenry branch line to Johnsburg and adding another station in Woodstock.

Mr. Pagano said they have had several meetings with staff to get input into the process. They understand the wetlands, watershed and traffic issues and are very familiar with building a station in Crystal Lake. He said they are currently expanding their parking lot at the Pingree Station.

Mr. Mack said most of their ridership for this new station would come from the northwest which will help to reduce the traffic on Walkup and Oak Street. Their conceptual plan is to use the property north of the Alexander Lumber site just west of Country Club Road in Ridgefield. The property is 17.5 acres. The parking area is planned to be on the in-bound side of the tracks. There will be a small station and two warming shelters. Mr. Mack said the site will accommodate a shuttle bus to McHenry County College and they have talked with PACE about the roads and radii to accommodate a bus. They will also provide 875 parking spaces and 18 handicap spaces. Mr. Mack showed photos of the typical small depot and shelter. They have found this to be a more efficient operation.

Mr. Harder said storm water management and traffic are major concerns. The property is within the Crystal Lake Watershed and they will be using best management practices for the project. They will have 5 ½ acres for the watershed bio-swales with only 50% impervious. They propose to have no water release from this site. Mr. Harder said they have presented a preliminary storm water report to staff for their review. He showed photos of the rain garden and the cross section of the bio-swale. Their plan includes the use of native vegetation in the landscaping island in the parking lot so the water will soak into the subsurface.

Mr. Harder said they have done mechanical traffic counts and the report presented to staff is the first look at the site and surrounding areas. This report is not final. They have talked with the County and staff regarding 6 intersections they feel need further study and they are currently conducting manual traffic counts on turns at those intersections. The intersections they are studying closer do not have any turn lanes except for Tartan Drive which leads to McHenry County College. He said they will probably be making improvements to those intersections. Mr. Harder said the trip generation numbers matches what Metra staff told them from their surveys of ridership. The peak hours will change as ridership changes. The numbers show that 70% of the traffic comes from the northwest region of the station.

Mr. Pagano said the Ridgefield station needs to be looked at as part of the overall improvements to the system so no one would have to commute to Crystal Lake for Metra service. He said this station will help people living in Covered Bridge, Fox Fire, etc. to help reduce their commute to a station. They are also proposing to relocate the yard to Woodstock. Mr. Pagano said they have met with MCC and they are very interested in having bus service to the station for students and faculty.

Mr. Gottemoller said they are requesting the Commission's comments.

Mr. Hayden said there are a significant number of comments in the staff report and asked if the applicant has any concerns. Mr. Gottemoller said the Fire Department has many questions but they feel the comments are manageable and can be worked out with Staff. They know the traffic study is not complete but it is certain that this station will reduce the traffic on Hillside Road and Walkup. Mr. Hayden asked if this project will annex into the City. Mr. Gottemoller said the City's position for many years is to get the property within the Watershed into the City and under their development control. Mr. Hayden said the County does not recognize the City's watershed requirements. Mr. Gottemoller said their plan is to work with the City. Mr. Hayden said the majority of the road network in that area is not under the City's control. Mr. Gottemoller said they have already been in contact with the jurisdictions about the roads. Mr. Pagano said that will not be a problem. They have had other stations that have had as many as 11 entities to deal with.

Mr. Jouron asked if there will be any warming shelters on the outbound side. Mr. Pagano said usually they don't but there is enough room on the platform to add them in the future if they are needed.

Mr. Goss said his major concern is Market Street. It is a very short street and will be grid locked quickly but if it is expanded it will harm what is existing in Ridgefield. He also feels that parking will be needed on both sides of the tracks. That will eliminate traffic on Market Street and keep Ridgefield intact. Mr. Pagano said they will look at the traffic patterns. He said this will not be an elevated station like Pingree Road. Mr. Goss asked how this station can be sprinklered without City water. Mr. Gottemoller said it has been done in other sites.

Mr. Batastini said the presentation was very good, especially to see the big picture. He also worries about the stacking on Market Street but he also is aware that the cars won't all come at one time. Mr. Batastini added that he believes there will need to be parking on the other side of the tracks due to future residential growth in the area. Mr. Pagano said Metra feels that the majority of the ridership will be coming from northwest of the station. Mr. Batastini is concerned with how this station will work not just in 3 years but in 30 years after the residential in that area is built. He would also like more information on how the pervious surface works as well as how the swales work. Mr. Batastini is also concerned with snow removal and salt that will be used on the parking lot.

Mr. Greenman said he appreciates the opportunity to discuss the project as a conceptual. He is very excited to hear about the service improvements for the area. He would also like a better feel for the enhancements to the system such as traffic. Mr. Pagano said there will be a final traffic study done which will be more than assumptions. He said they will be going before the Council next week and will also ask them to allow Smith Engineering to expand their scope.

Mr. Greenman said he would like a better understanding of the coverage requested. Mr. Harder said the plantings and paving work in tandem. Mr. Gottemoller said there may be generous site coverage but they will be using a pervious type of pavement. Mr. Greenman said he would also like a time line for the projects and the upgrades to the area roads. Mr. Pagano said this project is part of a total upgrade. They do not intend to build without the entire project moving forward. The entire project will be started in 3 to 4 years and completed within 5 to 6 years. Mr. Greenman said things do change and some things are out of people's control.

Mr. Esposito agreed with the concern of the small roads in Ridgefield as well as the snow removal from the lot. He agrees that there is a need for a station in that area and as a daily commuter would welcome the change in the traffic.

Mr. Skluzacek agreed with the comments that had been made. He also would like a parking lot entrance off Ridgefield instead of all Market Street. There will be a lot of traffic going through there. Mr. Pagano said they need to look at where the traffic will be coming from. This station will provide a relief valve to the Crystal Lake traffic and station.

Mr. Hayden thanked the applicant for the presentation and they have clearly done their homework. He is very excited to have the development within the City limits and using the watershed BMPs.

Mr. Goss also requested that emergency response time be presented at a future meeting. He said if the City is checking into another fire station it would be helpful to know that information.

Mr. Pagano thanked the Commission for their questions and input on this project.

REPORT FROM PLANNING

Ms. Rentzsch reviewed the items that will be discussed at the next PZC meeting on November 4.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION

There were no comments from the Commissioners.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.