

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Planning Chairwoman Claire Durio

The secretary called the roll.

Commissioners Present: Nicholas Cressy, Claire Durio, Andrea Fulton, Mike Pierce, and Brian Rhinehart


Absent: Karen Gautreaux, Scott Quillin

Also Present: Cara Bartholomew, Director Planning Department; Rad Dickson, Planner; David Parnell, City Attorney; Tina Myers, Secretary

Mr. Rhinehart made a motion to adopt the minutes from the September 12 and September 26 meetings, Ms. Durio seconded, and all were in favor.

New Business

As there was no new business for the Planning Commission, Ms. Durio moved to the Zoning Commission.



Alex Weiner, Secretary



Claire Durio, Chairwoman
Planning Commission

Brian Rhinehart commenced the Zoning Commission Meeting.

Notification of Filing Case Addendum - Any additional information determined to be needed by the Commission in order to make a decision regarding a case shall be required to be submitted to the Planning Department by the end of business on the Friday following the meeting at which the additional information was requested or the case will automatically be tabled at the next meeting.

New Business

V23-10-35 – Adam LeBlanc requests a variance to CLURO Section 9.2.5.5 Landscape Requirements in Districts Other than Low-Density Residential, Magnolia Ridge, Square A Lot 73-A-2-1, B-1 Neighborhood Business District, Square A Lot 73-A-2-1, 3022 East Causeway Approach

Mr. Rhinehart asked if the total inventory of trees is 24 at the moment. Ms. Bartholomew said that is what the applicant stated in their email.

Mr. Rhinehart said this is sort of a competing agenda. Not to be trite but there is the issue of wanting to be seen and wanting to keep greenspace and striking the balance between the two is not easy.

Ms. Durio said there was a similar case for Loft 18 which wanted to increase the visibility and remove trees and replace with smaller landscaping. She asked what was being built here and how high it would be. Ms. Bartholomew said it was to be a one story salon so not higher than 25'.

Mr. Cressy asked which nine trees are in question. Ms. Bartholomew said that is what needs to be cleared up with the applicant. The original application said to remove nine trees, but then the applicant went out and said there are more trees than what is listed on the landscape plan so that needs to be fleshed out with what they want to remove.

Ms. Durio asked if they had the right to put signage in front of the trees on the roadside. Ms. Bartholomew said signage has to be on their property and must be 5' off the property line so they would have to put it somewhere on their property.

Ms. Durio asked if any trees had been removed for the driveway or if there was an existing opening. Ms. Bartholomew said they removed trees, but that was permitted. Ms. Durio would like to know how many trees they have already taken out.

Mr. Rhinehart said they are wanting to remove nine trees and replace them with 20 trees? It looks like they will be 6 magnolia trees and 14 red maple trees. If they take out nine and replace with twenty will the visibility be negated?

Adam LeBlanc, 10460 Matherne Place: There are 24 trees in the area, 9 pine trees and 15 oaks. The pines are 80 – 100 feet tall and he would love to take the pines out. They are a risk, being 10ft from the powerlines. He would also clear out the smaller oaks. The nine is based off of the landscape plan being approved. He is fine with any number; he does not want to completely take down everything. He wants some kind of screen, but visibility as well. He wants to figure out that number and then go from there. The nine trees are what he was aiming for as he can pick out nine great trees that will remain.

Ms. Durio said that you can see through the tall trees at street height, if you take them out and replace them with smaller trees, there will be a much denser screen. There are currently openings since they are taller trees, and the greenery is higher.

Mr. LeBlanc said at minimum he would at least like to remove the underbrush stuff. He does not know what is considered a tree but the smaller stuff he would like to remove just to clean up the opening.

Ms. Durio asked if there was any information that the smaller trees were impacting the growth of the larger trees? Mr. LeBlanc said he had no information on that.

Mr. LeBlanc said that there are 69 trees going back in with the approved landscape plan. 32 Class A trees and 37 Class B trees. The Class A trees will be 45 gallon and 2 inches in caliper.

Ms. Durio asked what was being proposed to be planted along the front if the trees are taken out. Mr. LeBlanc said there are five maples upfront with a lot on the rear greenbelt. He would like to shift them forward.

Ms. Durio said it would seem like the maples would obscure the building more than the tall, skinny trees. She asked if the trees that Mr. LeBlanc wants to remove could be marked and photographed for the next meeting. Mr. LeBlanc said he would. Ms. Bartholomew added that a member of the Planning Department could go out as well to get a better, more clear request.

Makael Leblanc: It was not just pure visibility, there were also some construction concerns with lines being run. There is no way to run utilities with as many trees. They spent a lot of time on the architecture and just want to see their business.

Ms. Durio said if there is a utility line that the trees are creating an issue with, she would like some more information about that. Lady said that they are not that far along yet, they are working with their contractor on getting all the information they can on that. Mr. LeBlanc said that assessing other businesses in the area it is hard to compare as the business across the street has three trees in their greenbelt. He is not asking for them to be completely gone as he does love the buffer. He would like to have a little more exposure for their business.

Ms. Durio said she understood but the problem with comparing to the business with only three trees is the opposite of what they want to do. Wanting to remove trees to create something similar is the opposite of what the greenbelt is for. They are trying to prevent that from happening.

Mr. LeBlanc said that nine was his number, but he is willing to meet in the middle with 12 or 15 to give some adequate spacing and screening at the same time.

Mr. Cressy clarified that nine was the applicants ask. Mr. LeBlanc said that nine was his ask because going back to the approved landscape plan, that was the number on the plan. Since then, he has learned that Mandeville loves to preserve everything in the greenbelt. He is sticking with nine but is open to other suggestions. He would just like to open up the greenbelt.

Mr. Rhinehart said that a prior commissioner had made the point that when you go to thin things out and leave the tall trees, it looks like you have telephone poles. Ms. Durio agreed with Mr. Rhinehart.

Mr. LeBlanc said his first instinct was to take the pines down as they are all trunk.

Mr. Cressy asked if there were nine pine trees, Mr. LeBlanc said there were nine pine trees and 15 oak trees.

Ms. Durio said she would look at which ones had the most green as you would want to leave the green buffer, not just sticks. Mr. Cressy said that appears what they are trying to do with removing height and adding width. He is confused about the visibility aspect as he agrees with the other commissioners that what is being proposed would give less visibility.

Mr. Rhinehart said it seems like it would be more camouflaged with the new, lower trees.

Mr. Cressy said he thinks the lower trees would look nicer in his opinion.

Mr. LeBlanc said they would just get adequately spaced trees that are more proportionate for a better curb appeal. He understands the size, going from full mature trees down to 10' trees.

Z23-10-04 – St. Tammany Parish School Board requests the rezoning of two lots and a portion of a third lot designated R-1 Single Family Residential District to I Institutional District, Old Town of Mandeville, Square 59 Portion of Lot 1, All of Lots 2 & 3, R-1 Single Family Residential District, Square 59 Portion of Lot 1, All of Lots 2 & 3

Mr. Rhinehart asked if this would strictly be for a parking lot, and there was no intention of a building being located on the property. Ms. Bartholomew said that was her understanding.

Ms. Durio asked if the house showed was located on the Livingston St. and Clausel St. corner. Ms. Bartholomew said it was.

Mr. Rhinehart asked if the permeability of the material used was known, Ms. Bartholomew said it was not, but it would have to meet all of the site development standards.

Ms. Fulton asked what the plan was for the remainder of Lot 1 and why it was omitted.

Jeff Schoen of Jones Fussell Law Firm, P.O. Box 1810 Covington: He is representing the St. Tammany Parish School Board and is joined by Ms. Cameron Tipton who is Chief of Construction for the school system. The portion of Lot 1 is all they were able to acquire. They tried to acquire everything along Livingston St. that was undeveloped. There are numerous owners of the remainder of Lot 1 and the area to the west of Lot 1.

The plan is simple. There is a parking problem at this school. The facility is K through 3rd grade with about 500 students and a faculty of 40. The intent is to construct as many spaces as reasonable on the site. His best guess would be 35-45 but would be lucky to get 40. He understands and respects that they need to meet the parking, landscaping, and drainage requirements but they also want to be respectful to the residents on the corner.

Ideally, they would have some combination of pervious and impervious parking, meaning that the driveways would be hard surface but the parking area itself would be some form of limestone or other soft material. They understand that they need to integrate landscaping throughout the parking area, with emphasis on the perimeter and buffer areas.

Mr. Pierce asked if they needed the rezoning to get this done, and that you could not have the parking lot in the R-1 Zoning. Ms. Bartholomew said that is correct.

Ms. Fulton asked what the nature of the existing parking was, and how much it accommodated. Mr. Schoen said he did not have a count of on-site parking. The shoulders are obviously being used. They think this will allow them to move a lot of the vehicles off of the shoulders. A K-3 school will have less activity as there are not students driving to school and there are not as many evening activities.

They look at this as either a solution or significant partial solution to take parking off of the street shoulders.

Ms. Durio asked if there had been any communication with the neighbor on the corner. Mr. Schoen said there was not any communication recently but there has been in the past with what they hope to do. They understand that there needs to be a buffer between them. Ms. Bartholomew said there is a 20ft buffer between civic and residential zoning, so that would be the minimum requirement.

Ms. Durio said she understands that there is not much parking there, and asked if the teachers are able to fit into the parking lot. Mr. Schoen said there is not enough off-street parking, hence their request. Ideally, they would have the entire southern area of that square but that seems unlikely as they have been trying to acquire the parcels for a number of years.

Nash Bono, 1603 Livingston: Is the 20ft buffer a garden or kept wild? Ms. Bartholomew said it was a no cut buffer. Mr. Bono said that they have no problem with the parking lot, it is something that is badly needed. When he built the building in 1983, he placed the building very carefully and one day some surveyors were on the property and said that his marker was wrong. He went to the office and after speaking with Mr. Wilson they discovered there were multiple markers. With a no cut buffer it is a moot point, but he wanted to put it out there.

Jane Plourde, 630 Clausel: She had a question about the buffering and screening. Will there be a screen of any kind as she would be looking at the parking lot. Would she see the cars? Ms. Bartholomew said there is a 20ft buffer on all sides.

Ms. Plourde said that when she mentioned screening she was asking if they would be keeping the trees so she would not see anything. Ms. Bartholomew said it was a 20ft buffer so she could not guarantee what she would be able to see or not see.

Ms. Durio said that a no-cut buffer meant that they could not take anything out and it would grow up on its own.

Ms. Plourde said there is a lot in between her, and for property sale values the owner would not be happy if there is a parking lot there as it is not very attractive for anybody.

Mr. Rhinehart said there should not be any reason for visibility as they do not have a business and are not trying to attract people.

Judith Bono, 1603 Livingston: After Ida they lost quite a few trees and the people who took them down notified them of a dead oak on the property. They got in contact with the school board who were great and sent somebody out to take it down. To get access to the tree they had to go onto her property and now there is an area that is all mud, would they be required to replace that area?

Ms. Bartholomew said there are minimum planting requirements that require a certain number of trees in the buffer so if they did not meet those requirements they would have to replant. We would not know that until a plan was submitted. Ms. Bono said she is hoping that they will fill in the gap. Ms. Bartholomew added that there is vehicular screening that is required, which would be a lower bush or shrub, but she would let the applicant speak on that.

Ms. Bono said she is happy for the parking lot. She is tired of the parents parking on their lawn.

Mr. Schoen said they will make sure there is more than adequate plantings as required by code, but also as a practical matter. They will try to add in plantings that will provide the screening that they are looking for. He understands that it is currently woods, and they are changing the use but there is no reason they cannot be respectful and try to accommodate their concerns. If they get the property rezoned they will submit a landscape plan that will indicate what is existing and what will be planted, which they will share with the neighbors as well.

Mr. Rhinehart said at one of the resiliency workshops there had been talk of catch basins under parking lots to catch sheet flooding. He was wondering if this was an opportunity to

do something with the Parish. He added that he was just spit-balling here.

Ms. Bartholomew said there was a conversation with Waggoner & Ball this morning and they may have some language that the commission can use for the impervious parking and native trees. They said there is probably an opportunity for them to help the City with some language to better improve the parking spaces and developed area.

Mr. Rhinehart said that language would be going forward and was not necessarily in the works. Ms. Bartholomew said that even in this situation if the Commission was to conditionally approve something it could help articulate what it is that the Commission wants to see from applicants.

Mr. Rhinehart said he was not pushing that, but it could be something of a cooperative endeavor. Mr. Schoen said he understood the spirit of what was being said.

Ms. Fulton said she wanted to understand the property where everything is currently located. What is the extent of the consideration to expanding the parking already existing. Mr. Schoen said he would let Ms. Tipton address that.

Mr. Rhinehart said it might be wet. Ms. Tipton said it was. Behind the buildings drops off very quickly and turns into wetlands which holds water. There is currently a parking lot at the front of the school and another side parking lot adjacent to one of the wings. She said the City was very helpful the last time there was a construction project by allowing the development of the Foy Street extension which gives access to the back for parking. They also own a lot on the corner that is a limestone parking lot, located at the corner of Foy and Livingston.

Ms. Fulton asked in the new lot how much of it would be pervious vs impervious. Ms. Tipton said they have not designed it at this point but they would use impervious and some of the driveways would be pervious. Mr. Schoen said that for handicapped spaces you would probably need some hard surface but there is no reason they cannot have some soft parking.

Ms. Fulton asked if there was enough handicapped parking at the school itself where it would not be needed for this parking lot. Mr. Schoen said they would have to do an inventory of what they have and what their needs would be. He said he hoped that a lot of this could be dedicated to faculty. They are the first arrivals and there would not be a lot of movement during the day and then leave at the end of the day once the children are gone.

Public Comment

Ms. Bartholomew said the next meeting would be on the 24th. The APA state conference is next week in Alexandria if any commission members wanted to attend. She added that the Resiliency Plan won an award so she along with Ms. Brinkman and Mr. Dickson would be there to accept it.

Mr. Rhinehart motioned to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Durio seconded, and all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:42pm.



Alex Weiner, Secretary



Brian Rhinehart, Chairman
Zoning Commission