

**JOINT MEETING OF THE
PLAN COMMISSION AND
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
January 31, 2001**

Zoning Board of Appeals Members Present: Barbara Thoma, David Nordentoft, Stephen Park, David Kauffman & Chairman Tom Hood

Zoning Board of Appeals Members Absent: Ed Clark

Plan Commission Members Present: William Finn, Cheryl Ross & Frank Papp

Plan Commission Members Absent: Jim Sula, Kathryn McDermott, Bryan Winter & Chairman Lyle Foster

Other Officials Present: Richard Welton, Mayor; Jon Wildenberg, Director of Building and Zoning; Tracy Velkover, Village Planner; Al Maiden, Planning Consultant; and Kirk Skoog, Associate Planner

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

2. Status report on the East Grand Committee

Mr. Wildenberg explained that 38 people attended the first East Grand Committee meeting, which was held on January 24, 2001 at Village Hall. Many ideas were discussed at this meeting for improving the East Grand Corridor. These ideas were compiled into a survey which was sent out to those in attendance. Respondents were asked to assign a rating to each potential improvement in order to establish priorities for the area. The results of this survey will be collated and presented at the next East Grand meeting, scheduled for February 28, 2001.

Mr. Hood asked if there will be interaction between the East Grand Committee and the Plan Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals (PC/ZBA) regarding East Grand. Mr. Wildenberg stated that the groups are inter-related and that recommendations to the Village Board can come from either group.

Mr. Park stated that a range of comments and ideas were expressed at the meeting. The group consisted of a broad range of attendees, including residents and business owners/operators. The discussion included the possibility of creating incentive programs to spur improvements in the area.

Mr. Finn asked if it would be possible to blend the two groups working on the East Grand improvements into one. Mr. Wildenberg stated that this would be possible; the method with which the groups have been established is not set in stone. When the East Grand Committee was created, the initial idea was to work on establishing short-term improvements that could be implemented during this year's budget process in April. Mr. Hood stated that he wants to ensure that this group does not duplicate or contradict recommendations made by the East Grand Committee.

Mr. Wildenberg stated that a cost estimate has been secured for burying the overhead powerlines on East Grand. The Village is also working to establish an estimate for disconnecting the businesses from the existing powerlines and then reconnecting them to the underground utilities. Ms. Thoma stated that at the East Grand meeting, someone suggested moving the connections to the back of the buildings. She asked if this would be a feasible idea. Mr. Wildenberg stated that this could be feasible in some locations; several of the buildings are already rear-fed. The Village is investigating whether a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district would be feasible in this area. Also, because the Village is a Home Rule community, information from the State can be provided for businesses separately, however, because of confidentiality requirements, the data will be presented in aggregate numbers.

Ms. Thoma asked when the construction project will occur for East Grand. Mr. Wildenberg stated that the bid-letting will take place this March 8 or 9, with the project taking place this construction season.

3. Discussion of East Grand Overlay Zoning District

Mr. Wildenberg distributed copies of the priorities ranking survey for updating the Zoning Ordinance that PC/ZBA members prepared in 1999. He listed the changes to the Ordinance that have occurred over the last few years including amendments that address: personal wireless service facilities; group homes; ambulance service garages; child care; boat, trailer and RV parking; neon tubing; car washes; trucks and commercial vehicles; exterior lighting; swimming pools and hot tubs; and gazebos. In addition, the Village Center Overlay District (C/B-2A) was established in 1999. The regulations of this district were provided to the Board members because they could serve as a guide for structuring an East Grand overlay district. Other information that was provided includes a summary of the Floor Area Ratios (FAR) and vacancy rates in the East Grand area, and some examples of commercial sign standards that were set up in other areas of town.

Mr. Wildenberg briefly explained the methodology that was used for the East Grand Gateway Overlay District Use List Survey. This survey was set up for Board members to rank the list of uses that are allowed in the current zoning district for East Grand (C/B-2). Several additional uses were added to this list to be ranked because they may be appropriate uses in the area. When the PC/ZBA went through the process of setting up the Village Center Overlay District, the group went through this list use by use. This process could again be used for East Grand.

Mr. Hood stated that it might be useful to delete the uses that Board members feel are objectionable for this area. Mr. Park asked if objectionable would mean that the use would be negative for this specific neighborhood or uses that do not contribute to the focus of economic development. Mr. Wildenberg stated that both perspectives could be applied when determining a use's compatibility.

Mr. Maiden stated that when the C/B-2A district was established, a mix of uses was encouraged. For example, residential uses were encouraged on the second floor above non-residential uses. Ms. Thoma stated that in order to provide that type of development in the East Grand area, existing buildings would have to be knocked down.

Mr. Hood stated that he recalls Larry Dempski proposing a two-story mixed use development. Mr. Wildenberg stated that the proposal was changed to a more traditional residential use and it was approved by the Village. Mr. Maiden stated that the mixed use approach may be more appropriate for redevelopment sites. He pointed out that the district could be more densely developed, even as it is zoned now. The C/B-2 district allows for a FAR of 0.8. The highest FAR currently in the area is 0.59. There are also in-fill opportunities available.

Mr. Park asked that parking information be added to the FAR & vacancy rate sheet. Ms. Thoma stated that some of the uses may need to be amended. For example, she has no problem with bookstores locating on East Grand as long as they are not adult bookstores. Mr. Wildenberg stated that staff is working on a Zoning Ordinance amendment for adult uses.

Mr. Papp suggested that the group could consider eliminating uses that have a rating of 12 or less (out of a possible 24). Alternatively, Mr. Hood stated that the group could see if there are any uses rated 20 or higher that might be eliminated, such as automotive accessory stores.

Mr. Park stated that the concern he has with this type of use is that sometimes auto parts stores include automotive service.

Ms. Ross asked if we are looking only at uses that front on Grand Avenue. Ms. Velkover stated that the East Grand district includes all uses that are zoned C/B-2 in this area.

Mr. Papp asked if a use is not established as permitted or special in this overlay district, could someone still apply for the use 50 years from now? Mr. Wildenberg stated that the petitioner could apply for a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance which would add the use to the list of permitted or special uses.

Ms. Thoma stated that an auto parts store could be a good fit for the vacant grocery store property. Mr. Kauffman agreed and stated that economic vitality in the area is more important than getting a perfect fit of uses. Mr. Finn stated that he has seen high-end auto supply stores, such as one that he visited in Barrington.

The PC/ZBA determined that the best way to address the issue of uses in the East Grand district was to go through the list one by one and determine if each use is appropriate for the area. An attempt was made at reaching consensus on each use; if this was not achieved, the group decided to revisit that use at the next

meeting. Also, the names of some uses were thought to be confusing, obsolete, or duplicated elsewhere. The group asked staff to improve the titles of these uses or to better define them and they would be considered at the next meeting.

After the entire list of uses had been considered by the PC/ZBA, Mr. Wildenberg asked the group to look at the examples of sign standards used in some other commercial areas in the Village. These programs were set up in cases where petitioners proposed to exceed the permitted limit of 1,000 square feet of signage or another type of special use, a Planned Unit Development, or where an annexation agreement was required.

Mr. Welton asked that if a program was established for the East Grand area, are there grandfather clauses that can be established to phase out signs? Mr. Maiden stated that there are several approaches that a Village can take. One would be to simply wait for the businesses to turn over. Each new business would have to meet the new sign requirements. Another would be to establish a sign amortization program. He recommends that if a Village chooses to pursue this option, the Village should deal with the extreme cases first. For example, if the limit is set for a certain type of sign at 50 square feet, the Village should try to eliminate a sign of 100 square feet before attempting to remove a 55 square foot sign.

Ms. Velkover stated that if sign standards were set up for this overlay district, as they were in the C/B-2A district; it could help business owners to see what type of improvements would be eligible for receiving a rebate if a facade rebate program were established.

Mr. Nordentoft asked if business owners have been surveyed regarding this issue. Mr. Wildenberg stated that the topic is included in the survey that was distributed as a result of the East Grand Committee meeting. Mr. Welton stated that if a program is set up, there should be incentives for landscaping, signage, building facades, etc. The Village will probably have to establish a pool of money for the program.

Mr. Hood stated that the consensus seems to be that these advisory groups (East Grand Committee and the PC/ZBA) should make recommendations and set parameters for a program and the Village Board could establish the amount of funding for the program. Mr. Park agreed that the Village will have to front the cost of an improvement program.

Mr. Hood asked if specific programs can be discussed at the next meeting. Ms. Velkover stated that the group could look at a facade rebate program one night, a TIF district at another meeting, etc.

Mr. Hood stated that the agenda items to be addressed at the next meeting (scheduled for February 14, 2001) will be to finish establishing a use list for the overlay district, discussion of a facade rebate program, and discussion of sign standards for the district.

To conclude the meeting, Mr. Welton asked Mr. Wildenberg to summarize the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) improvement plans for East Grand Avenue. Mr. Wildenberg stated that this summer, IDOT will add a center turn lane to Grand Avenue from Route 41 to Magnolia Avenue. This will include the addition of retaining walls on the north and south sides of the street from Route 41 to Waveland Street. The Village will submit recommendations to IDOT regarding the appearance of the improvements, such as terracing the walls to allow for landscaping, sidewalk placement, etc. In the next two to three years, IDOT plans to reconstruct the Route 41/Grand Avenue interchange in order to improve access in the area.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Submitted by,

Kirk Skoog, Secretary
Zoning Board of Appeals &
Plan Commission