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**Village of Gurnee
Planning and Zoning Board Minutes
October 18, 2023**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

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

Planning and Zoning Board Members Present: Chairman James Sula, R. Todd Campbell, Dane Morgan, Edwin Paff, Josh Pejsach, and Liliana Ware

Planning and Zoning Members Absent: David Nordentoft

Other Officials Present: Tracy Velkover, Planning Manager, and Atrian Fard, Senior Planner

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Minor Sign Exception: Integrity Workforce – 5101 Washington Street

Ms. Fard introduced the item by stating that Mr. Greg Brey is requesting a Minor Sign Exception to allow the height of lettering in his main business name, Integrity Workforce, to be less than six inches on two existing double-faced multi-tenant monument signs at Saratoga Square (5101 Washington Street). The multi-tenant signs predate the Village's sign code requirement and due to the sheer number of tenant panels on these signs, their small size, and the length of the business name (Integrity Workforce), the tenant can't meet the minimum six-inch height requirement on both signs. She stated that the PZB has the final decision-making authority in this matter.

Mr. Sula then turned the floor over to the applicant.

Ms. Zhuming Smith, sign contractor for the business and owner of Apex Sign and Graphics, stated that she is representing the business owner. The request is to allow for lower letter heights on two two-sided ground signs. She noted that due to the size of the tenant panels and the length of the business owner's name, Integrity Workforce, letter heights of six inches are not possible.

Mr. Sula began discussion by asking if there were any questions or comments from members of the Board.

Mr. Paff stated that the PZB has approved similar requests when an existing sign is being refaced and the size of the tenant panel and/or business name length makes six-inch tall letters impossible.

The other PZB members concurred.

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Mr. Sula reminded that the Board has final approval on this matter, and suggested that—unless there were any more questions/comments, a motion in the form of an approval would be in order.

Mr. Pejsach motioned, seconded by Mr. Paff, to approve the request for a Minor Sign Exception to allow Integrity Workforce, located at 5101 Washington Street, sign faces on two two-sided ground signs to have letter heights lower than the required six inches and in substantial conformance with the submitted plans.

Roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Morgan, Paff, Pejsach, Ware, and Sula

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion carried: 6-0-0

Mr. Sula then advised the applicant to seek advisement from Village staff as to the required permits to proceed.

4. Informal Review: Pearl Street Commercial (former Anthony Pontiac site) – 7225 Grand Avenue

Ms. Fard introduced the item by stating that Mr. Steven Schwartz, of Pearl Street Commercial, LLC, and the contract purchaser of the former Anthony Buick GMC Dealership, is seeking informal feedback on a plan for a self-storage facility on the subject site (southwest corner of Grand Avenue and Arlington Lane (7225 Grand Avenue)). The subject property is zoned C-2 PUD and is part of the Grand-Almond Planned Unit Development. The Village's Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Compass 2040, reflects commercial designation for this property. The concept plan also reflects the potential subdivision of the subject site into three lots, and redevelopment of the northeastern parcel as retail and the southern parcel as either retail, industrial, or residential use, dependent on the market.

Mr. Fard continued, suggesting that the PZB may wish to discuss the following matters:

- Comprehensive Plan Inconsistency
- Appropriateness of self-storage with accessory outdoor drive-up units within C-2 district where such use is not contemplated as either permitted or special use
- Appropriateness of an industrial use on the southern lot proximate to residential
- Encroachment of self-storage drive-up units into the setbacks from Arlington Ln. and Buchanan Dr.
- Over-building the site
- Over-parking the self-storage parcel

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Ms. Fard then noted that the petitioner is in attendance to walk the PZB through their plans and answer questions.

Mr. Sula stated that this is an informal review of a proposal for the former Anthony Pontiac site. The applicant has requested feedback from the PZB on a conceptual plan for this property. He noted that there is no formal petition for this property and therefore, no action will be taken. He also noted that the comments provided by the PZB are not binding, should the petitioner decide to come forward with a formal petition.

Mr. Sula then turned the floor over to the applicant.

Mr. Steven Schwartz, with Pearl Street Commercial LLC, introduced others joining him this evening to present and answer questions on this proposal. The other members of his team include: Mr. Ed Reitan, Reitan Architects, Ryan Swanson, Arc Design Resources, Inc. (Engineer), Mr. Anthony Augelli, property owner, and Mr. Craig Lillibridge, CBRE Inc., agent for the property owner. Mr. Schwartz stated that the subject site is the former Anthony car dealership, located at 7225 Grand Avenue, in the Almond Plaza PUD. The dealership has existed at this site for 25+ years, but was vacated in the last year. The 40,000 square-foot building is hard to repurpose because it is constructed in four sections with ceiling heights ranging from 16 feet to 26-27 feet. The site is also unique in that it is comprised of 6.9 acres separated by a private access road, Buchanan Drive. The portion of the lot south of Buchanan Drive was used by the car dealership as vehicle storage. Mr. Schwartz stated that because the building is hard to repurpose for retail, he believes that the highest and best use for the property is self-storage due to the size, shape, and ceiling heights. He noted that all of the existing access points would remain the same, that an approximate 7,700 square-foot retail building would be carved out of the northeast corner of the site, leaving views into the existing building. He said that the existing building is proposed to be converted to climate controlled interior access storage units. He walked the PZB through a proposed 11,000 square-foot addition to the southwest side of the existing building that would accommodate exterior access non-climate controlled self-storage. In addition, three additional buildings for exterior access non-climate controlled self-storage are proposed to the south, west, and east of the building. The garage doors would be oriented interior to the site, so they will have little visibility from the perimeter of the site. He noted that the site has significant landscaping that will screen the buildings. The portion of the lot that is south of Buchanan Drive is proposed to initially be used for outdoor parking. This lot is screened to the east (Arlington Lane) with substantial landscaping and to the south by a six-foot-tall berm that has a six-foot-tall fence on top and significant landscaping. Eventually, this area could accommodate approximately 18,000 square feet of condo flex space (i.e., contractor/HVAC business) or even residential (i.e., townhomes). No major changes would occur to the front of the building and the south would just have the addition for non-climate controlled self-storage. The new non-climate-controlled buildings will be nine feet tall with seven-foot-tall doors, except that the westernmost building may be slightly taller with slightly taller doors to accommodate commercial situations. The buildings will be constructed of metal siding and painted in grey tones. He then walked the PZB through some slides that showed the site, landscaping, building locations, etc. He stated that they would

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employ a major third-party management company for the facility (i.e., Extra Space Storage or CubeSmart) with a retail portion at the front of the building (boxes, packing/moving supplies). Finally, he noted that a gate would provide keypad entry to the building and that the office hours would be 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. M-F, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Access to the units via the gate would be from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Noxious uses would be controlled through signed leases.

Mr. Ryan Swanson, architect and civil engineer, stated that the overall footprint of the paved area is not changing; with the new non-climate controlled self-storage buildings being placed on existing paved areas. Therefore, storm water detention requirements are not changing. He noted that they are proposing to enhance some of the landscaped areas and that, although staff noted some concerns with Floor Area Ratio (FAR), he believes that they'll be in-line with the approved PUD's FAR limitation.

Mr. Schwartz stated that this summarizes their presentation.

Ms. Ware stated concern with the impact on adjoining property values, noting that the proposed use was not in character for the area.

Mr. Morgan asked for clarification on the hours that the front office/retail area is open to the public, as well as when units can be accessed. He also stated that the additional 18,000 square feet south of Buchanan gives him cause for concern. He asked for clarification on the target market for the taller self-storage buildings along the west side of the site.

Mr. Schwartz stated that the retail portion of the building would be open from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Access to the units is from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and not 24-7. He also noted that the use for the property south of Buchanan isn't industrial; it is flex space that could be a number of things, but which they would need to address by amending the PUD. As for the storage units along the west side of the site, they would be marketed to both residential and commercial users (contractor) and would just be slightly taller with slightly taller overhead garage doors. Typically, customers to the self-storage facility do not come very often (some once a week and others once a month) and that this type of use is usually a very benign, low traffic generator with 20-30 cars expected per day. Because of the low traffic generation, the use will not impact adjacent property values.

Mr. Morgan asked how many units are proposed at this location.

Mr. Schwartz stated that it depends on the breakdown of unit size and whether the mezzanine area is converted to usable storage space, but with 70,000 square feet and typical unit sizes of 100 and 150 square feet (although less is also possible), he would anticipate approximately 700-750 units. He stated that he is a successful retail developer and that this site, because there is no traffic light at Arlington and Grand and because of the depth of the parcel, would be a struggle for retail development.

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Mr. Pejsach asked for more clarification on the 18,000 square feet of flex space called out south of Buchanan Drive.

Mr. Schwartz reiterated it could be probably be condo commercial space utilized by a contractor or HVAC business with roll up doors. He anticipates it could be used by two to three businesses.

Mr. Campbell expressed concern with inconsistency with the Village's Comprehensive Land Use Plan, and noted that area residents will not support the project. He stated that the low traffic generation is somewhat attractive. He asked if the residential neighborhoods were built prior to or after the construction of this commercial area.

Mr. Schwartz volunteered that the residential pre-dated the commercial development. Staff concurred with Mr. Schwartz.

Mr. Campbell stated that he is not totally opposed to the use, but has concerns due to the proximity of the residential.

Mr. Paff stated that the one positive of the use is the low traffic generation, but after that there are a lot of concerns. First, it's not even a contemplated use in the C-2 zoning district, either permitted or special use. There appear to be problems with setbacks, as the buildings are in very close proximity to Arlington Lane. He likes the repurposing of the building but noted that this use doesn't fit the character of the area. He asked if the retail that is proposed at the northeast corner of the site would be constructed up-front.

Mr. Schwartz that the retail would be market driven. The fact that there may be a retail development occurring to the north would be a positive for this site as retail begets retail. However, retail on this site will not be constructed up-front and instead when the market bears out the need.

Mr. Paff stated that he is concerned that the retail aspect of the site will never be constructed and future non-retail (self-storage) may be continued in this area.

Mr. Pejsach thanked the applicant for their presentation. He agreed that the use is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and said that this is the main commercial corridor for the community and he didn't think that it would be appropriate to consider what the Village views as an industrial use in this area. Finally, he noted concerns with some of the new building setbacks proposed, as well as the FAR, and use of the property south of Buchanan. He felt that the site was being over-built and he is not excited about the aesthetics. Overall, he is not completely opposed to self-storage due to its low traffic generation, but has serious concerns with the plan presented tonight.

Mr. Sula stated that he is struggling with an industrial use in a commercial zoning district. The rows of overhead garage doors, even if oriented interior to the site, is of concern as there will be glimpses into the site. He also expressed concern about taking parking away and putting buildings

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up, as those building setbacks are minimal adjacent to Arlington Lane. He expressed concern about what could potentially happen on the portion of the lot south of Buchanan and noted that the options are too wide open. Finally, he questioned the need for self-storage and indicated that he is not convinced that this is the highest and best use of this property.

Mr. Mario Melone, CRBE, noted that he is the listing agent for the property owner, Mr. Tony Augelli. He noted that he does a significant number of listings for auto dealerships. He said that they had hoped to get another dealership to take the site, but there are no dealerships looking in the area. He indicated that, in addition to other problems, the site was overbuilt to accommodate three franchises. He pointed out the difference in building size between Mr. Augelli's building and the dealership to the west. Most dealerships are downsizing, since they don't keep as much inventory on-site. The uses that they were approach for reuse of the site included Habitat for Humanity, a basketball training facility, health club, and soccer academy. He noted that all would have significant more traffic that the self-storage facility and for this reason, they felt this was the best reuse.

Mr. Sula stated that the other side of that argument is that all the uses that Mr. Melone pointed out would draw people into the site and provide synergy with other businesses in the area. Self-storage does not provide this benefit.

Mr. Paff asked if the Board had a copy of the use list for this PUD.

Ms. Velkover noted that a copy of the use list was not provided, but that it includes the typical retail, office, service uses that you would see in the Village's C-2 zoning district. The fact that it has uses specifically called out (apothecary, etc.) is due to the nature of the Zoning Ordinance that was in effect at the time the PUD was adopted (i.e., it listed out uses individually instead of the current approach that provides general categories like retail, professional office, service, etcetera).

Mr. Craig Lillibridge, CBRE Inc., agent for the property owner, stated that an amendment to the text of the PUD would occur to address the use of the property to the south of Buchanan. As Ms. Velkover noted, they believe that these uses (self-storage, contractor/HVAC facility) are service and not industrial.

As the review ended, Mr. Schwartz then thanked the Board for their time.

5. Next Meeting Date: November 1, 2023

Mr. Sula confirmed with Village staff that there is a public hearing item and an informal review scheduled for the November 1st meeting.

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6. Public Comment

Mr. Sula opened the floor to the public. As there was no one in the audience, he then closed the floor to the public.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Morgan motioned, seconded by Mr. Pejsach, to adjourn the meeting.

Voice vote:

All "ayes," no "nays, and none abstaining

Motion carried: 6-0-0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joann Metzger
Recording Secretary