

Rock Island Planning & Zoning Commission Minutes

Community Room, Rock Island Police Department
1212 5th Avenue
November 4, 2024
5:30 PM



Voting Members Present	Don Mewes Maureen Riggs Mike Creger Bill Sowards Reshanda Johnson Sarah Wright Tanja Whitten
Voting Members Absent	Norm Moline Samuel Odeyemi
Staff Present	Eunice Amissah-Mensah, Urban Planner Tanner Osing, Planning & Zoning Manager Leslie Day, City Attorney

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Riggs called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM and read the roll call.

Public Comment

No members of the public wished to comment so the meeting continued.

Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes

Mewes moved to approve the minutes for October 7, 2024. Sowards seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a vote of 7 to 0.

Public Hearings

2024-15 Public hearing: Request from City of Rock Island to consider a rezoning from C-1 (park conservation) district to R-1 (one unit residential) district for Realtor's Park (PIN 1613200007)

Osing presented the staff report with the recommendation for approval.

John Gripp, Director of Parks and Recreation, was called to speak on the request. Mr. Gripp provided the background and reason on the park and it needs to be rezoned. He stated that the park was acquired in the 1960s and emergency vehicle access is a challenge. A 2016 study recommended selling the park due to liability concerns He

stated that the city is considering a process to allow neighbors to submit proposal to purchase the property.

Several neighbors to Realtor's Park, including Judy Elliot, Gary Nowak, Lisa Coleman, and Katie Schiefter, expressed concerns about the park's future use and potential for future development, advocating for its preservation as a natural area.

Alderman Healy expressed that he would not support any plans for a structure on the property and encouraged the neighbors to consider options to purchase the park.

As there were no other questions or members of the public wishing to speak, Chair Riggs called for a motion.

Recommendation for Case 2024-15

Creger made a motion to recommend approval of the rezoning request to the City Council. Whitten seconded the motion. Chair Riggs called for a vote. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0 (Riggs, Mewes, Johnson, Sowards, Wright, Whitten, and Creger)

2024-16 Public hearing: Request from Jared Kitterman to consider a variance from the Rock Island Zoning Ordinance in an R-1 (one-unit residential) district for property at 2443 28th Avenue.

Amissah-Mensah read the staff report with the recommendation for approval.

The applicant, Jared Kitterman, was called forward to speak on the request. Mr. Kitterman stated he concurred with staff's analysis and stated his desire to expand his home.

As there were no other questions or members of the public wishing to speak, Chair Riggs called for a motion.

Recommendation for Case 2024-16

Mewes made a motion to approve the variance for the 14ft by 22ft kitchen addition as there is a unique circumstance and the addition will not alter the character of the neighborhood. Wright seconded the motion. Chair Riggs called for a vote. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0 (Riggs, Mewes, Johnson, Sowards, Wright, Whitten, and Creger)

2024-17 Public hearing: Request from Hani Aqel of Greenleaf Tobacco to consider a variance from the Rock Island Zoning Ordinance in a B-3 (community business) district for property at 3101 11th Street.

Amissah-Mensah read the staff report with the recommendation for denial.

Aubry Caldwell, business representative of Greenleaf stepped in to speak on the request. She highlighted the business' positive community contributions and presented

petitions signed by Rock Island residents in support of the request. The applicant, Hani Aqel, spoke in favor of the request and responded to questions from the commission explaining that the focus of the business is on providing a variety of products beyond just tobacco and ensuring the business's clean and professional operations.

Alderman Hurt informed the commission of the city's moratorium on vape shops.

As there were no other questions or members of the public wishing to speak, Chair Riggs called for a motion.

Recommendation for Case 2024-17

Whitten made a motion to table the request until the City Council's moratorium on new vape shops is lifted. Mewes seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0 (Riggs, Mewes, Johnson, Sowards, Wright, Whitten, and Creger)

2024-18 Public hearing: Request from Demetrius T. Johnson to consider a Special Use Permit from the Rock Island Zoning Ordinance in R-2 (one-and-two unit residential) district for property at 1501 5th Street.

Amissah-Mensah read the staff report with the recommendation for denial.

The applicant, Demetrius T. Johnson, was called forward to speak on the request. Mr. Johnson stated he is setting up the business to serve the needs of the immediate community as the neighborhood is a food desert. He further explained that the business model is call-ahead and pick-up only for chicken wings and french fries. Mr. Johnson also expressed his commitment to complying with all city ordinances and maintaining a positive relationship with the community

Some Commissioners raised concerns about enforcing the call-ahead ordering system, potential noise from a generator, limited parking availability, and potential traffic congestion.

Commissioners Whitten and Johnson highlighted the need for convenient food options in the area, which is a food desert.

As there were no other questions or members of the public wishing to speak, Chair Riggs called for a motion.

Recommendation for Case 2024-18

Mewes made a motion to recommend approval of the Special Use Permit to the City Council with the stipulations proposed by staff including a six-foot privacy fence and a plan for gas or electric service to the trailer. Whitten seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 4 to 3 (Ayes - Mewes, Johnson, Whitten and Wright, Nays – Riggs, Sowards, Creger)

2024-19 Public hearing: Request from Christina Caldwell to consider a Special Use Permit from the Rock Island Zoning Ordinance in I-1 (light industrial) district for 1600 Mill Street and 1700 1st Street.

Osing read the staff report with the recommendation for denial.

Robert Duckels, representative for DMC, presented their application. Duckels restated DMC's position, specifically calling out the letters of support from five (5) neighboring property owners. He also noted that DMC would be willing to work with the City on stipulations for the Special Use including restrictions on cutting at different times of day and at times of higher wind speeds. He added that DMC is allowed to cut at their main location, 1605 1st Street, and would continue cutting there regardless of any cutting prohibition at 1700 1st Street and 1600 Mill Street. Duckels also mentioned that DMC would ensure that anything they do cut would not have anything in it that would violate the Clean Air Act.

Three neighboring property/business owners, Tom Unley of Unley Marine, Rick Jackson of Jackson Auto Body & Custom Paint, and Pernon Tew, spoke against the request. They discussed poor air quality during times of cutting and that things have gotten worse since Del's expansion. Tom Unley noted that metal debris from DMC's torching lands on his property and his customer's boats. He presented two containers of what he said was metal collected from his parking lot that was a result of DMC's cutting. He added that cutting was not as big of an issue for his property when it only happened at DMC's main location due to the prevailing winds.

Rick Jackson stated that smoke from the cutting is a problem for his customers and employees, and also cited health concerns for him as a result. He noted that AC filters for the business are regularly clogged. He questioned whether proper precautions are taken to remove paint from metal before cutting. Pernon Tew also addressed the commission and commented on health issues that he experiences from the smoke.

Robert Hoffman, an employee of Jackson Auto Body, spoke against the request. He questioned the safety of the operations and stated that he keeps the garage doors closed during times of heavy smoke. He said he has experienced coughing and headaches as a result of the cutting. Alex Jackson, another employee with Jackson Auto Body, stated similar concerns.

Duckels responded that DMC's willingness to restrict cutting based on the wind would assist with some of the concerns. He also addressed the issues surrounding air quality, noting that their operations are heavily regulated by the IEPA and that DMC has a clean record with that agency. Christina Caldwell also addressed the commission noting that the business expansion was driven, in part, by the closure of another metal recycling facility in Rock Island. Duckels and Caldwell also examined the containers presented by Unley and questioned the validity of their contents.

Commissioners continued asking clarifying questions of staff and the applicant. Commissioners questioned the feasibility of enforcing wind-based restrictions on cutting

and expressed concerns about the potential for negative impacts based on the testimony presented. They also noted that properties owners to the north were likely less affected by the use due to the prevailing winds.

As there were no other questions or members of the public wishing to speak, Chair Riggs called for a motion.

Recommendation for Case 2024-19

Sowards made a motion to recommend denial of the Special Use Permit. Creger seconded the motion. The motion carried on a vote of 6-to-1. (Ayes – Riggs, Mewes, Sowards, Johnson, Wright and Whitten, Nays – Creger)

Other Business None.

Adjournment

Chair Riggs adjourned the meeting at 8:05 PM.

Minutes submitted by Eunice Amissah-Mensah.