

**CITY OF HUDSONVILLE
Planning Commission Minutes**

October 16, 2024

Approved November 20th, 2024

**5486 32nd Avenue – First Christian Reformed Church – Class 3 Expansion of a Non-Conforming Building
6365 Balsam Drive – LaCati Group LLC – Informal Discussion**

Chairman VanDenBerg called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Present: Altman, Bendert, Dotson, Kamp, Northrup, Schmuker, Staal, VanDenBerg, Van Der Laan

Absent:

Staff Present: Steffens, Strikwerda

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Non-agenda items)

1. A motion was made by Northrup, with support by Altman, to approve the minutes of the September 18th, 2024, Planning Commission Meeting.
Yeas 9, Nays 0

2. **5486 32nd Avenue – First Christian Reformed Church – Class 3 Expansion of a Non-Conforming Building**

Jay Miedema of The Architectural Group Inc and Dave Lucas of FCC Construction presented the request.

The staff report was presented.

First Christian Reformed Church is seeking to expand the west side of its building with a 2-story addition of 7,825 S.F. total. The addition would follow the existing footprint. Currently, the northern side yard setback is 0 feet, while 30 feet is required. The proposed addition would remain on the lot line. This building is classified as a Class 3 non-conforming structure, which includes buildings that do not meet the minimum setback requirements of the district's build-to zone standards. Due to the 0-foot northern side yard setback, the ordinance stipulates that this type of building cannot be expanded without approval from the Planning Commission.

The following discussion took place with Commissioners:

- Parking.
 - The seating area near the west lot line of the parking lot improves the use of the property and contributes to the feel of the property.

- Could the two SE corners of the parking lot be grass instead of paved and striped? They could still be used for snow.
- The separate parking lot to the N, could that be restriped? If the Planning Commission makes that a requirement then the applicant will look into it.
- See if you could get the same parking numbers if the 32nd access was removed entirely.
- The N lot was redone 3-4 years ago, before that was 10 years. What was done a few years ago was what was recommended by the city at the time.
- Utility.
 - This would be covered by the site plan review process if we approve the motion today, allowing for a site plan application to be submitted.
- Use.
 - Will there be daycare in the building? No this is for the current congregation for meeting rooms, and group programming, etc.
- Sidewalk/Pedestrian Safety.
 - This improves the safety in this neighborhood by making the pedestrian access clearer than it is. The sidewalk should extend all along the property line towards Pleasant Ave to only better improve that access.
 - To the north, that continues to the greater neighborhood, where the N side with the church building doesn't, so it could be seen as more lenient.
 - Do not encourage mid block crossing, so that sidewalk should continue to Pleasant Ave rather than run right by the building.
- Landscaping.
 - Remove the tree on the western side of the curb lawn to keep clear vision.
 - Promote more of a landscaping feel in the striped off areas of the parking lot.
- Aesthetics.
 - Take care in applying architectural elements that would allude to other types of uses. Churches are held to a higher standards typically, so keeping that in mind for the addition to help make the building feel more like what it is, rather than more of an office like feel. Have the materials match more of the gothic style.
 - The covered parking area is still a discussion with the church, but the plan was to try to activate it more.

A motion was made by Schmuker, with support by Bendert, to approve an expansion of the Class 3 non-conformity for 5486 32nd Avenue in accordance with Section 4.02.03 C. 5. of the City of Hudsonville Zoning Ordinance. This will allow the applicant to move forward with a site plan amendment application for their property.

Yeas 9, Nays 0

3. 6365 Balsam Drive – Landings at Rush Creek – Informal Discussion

Chad Cassidy of LaCati Group LLC and Chuck Hoyt of Nederveld presented the request.

The staff report was presented.

Chad Cassidy of LaCati has submitted a PUD application to develop 6.9 acres at 6365 Balsam Drive, behind the commercial building where Signatures Restaurant is located which has been vacant for about 25 years. At the last City Commission meeting, the rezoning was approved to change the property from NC to HDR-B. The proposed development has 90 single-family attached units with one-bedroom and two-stall attached garages.

The following discussion took place with Commissioners:

- Utility.
 - Assumed the sanitary has adequate capacity, has that been confirmed? No, the engineer is looking to see what the utility can handle.
 - Is the intent to build a commercial driveway that is more defined than what currently exists off Balsam Dr? Yes, there will be improvements, some of the challenges are S of the drive there is a utility pole that could affect that taper.
 - Minimizing cover on the sewer, The sewer on Balsam Dr is shallow, assuming 9'. If there were no basements in this project, is the developer minimizing the cover on the sewer? Yes, stoney creek is identical in pitch height because the engineers company designed that project years ago.
 - The groundwater level of the pond is at the same height as rush creek to the N.
 - Could the 24' roads be switched to one way to give more setbacks? The engineer could look into that, but the developer does not see that happening.
- Amenities.
 - Dog Park.
 - That should be moved away from the property line. A pocket park on the SE corner of the property would be nice as it could be more available to the public.
 - Pond.
 - Does that require aeration? That has not been discussed yet.
 - Is this necessary for the project or is it just a feature, as it was said for plan B (More apartment like buildings) the pond seemed like it wouldn't exist.
 - What the large pond does is allow for better grading on the property to use more of that soil. This also provides for the amenity of the project. With plan B, which has not been fully engineered, it would be reduced. The stormwater outlet is in the NW corner, but the size would look different.
 - The soils are all sand on the site, not clay as was reflected on the report.
 - Is the pond size just large enough to store just one 100 year flood? The engineer says he doesn't need to provide for anything more than that, but it is larger to help with fill on the site.
 - If this is being considered an amenity it should look more natural than just a detention pond feel. Architect involved with less straight lines.
- Parking.
 - There is room on one side for a full-sized SUV in the garage, an additional car, and two cars can fit in the driveway as well. The developer feels that with the one bedroom that is adequate parking including factoring in visitors.
 - Would be nice to see some areas for additional guest parking, as the garage is quite tight, and the driveway is just 20' long.

- Fire Lane to Port Sheldon.
 - Could that be paved to be a two track, and have more green space? No, the fire lane needs to be fully paved to provide adequate access and stability for the fire trucks.
 - There needs to be visual separation, so people do not drive down the road.
 - There would be a crash gate, but possibly something sooner to keep people from continuing to drive so they do not get stuck at a dead end. With the locked fire gate, that would be similar to balsam meadows. People do come to realize quickly that they cannot go in that direction.
- Setbacks.
 - South End.
 - This is proposed as 15' when 30' is required. There is concern with this based on public comment from the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance changes back in time.
 - Those buildings would be sitting 2-3' higher based on grade, so they either need to buff up the landscaping or the buildings need to be pushed further away.
 - The required setback should either be honored or have a significant increase.
 - Architectural features and building offsets could help with the setback.
 - Narrowing the roads slightly down to 22' instead of 24' could help to move the buildings away from the S property line.
- Aesthetics.
 - The architecture is nice but would love to see staggering of buildings to help with privacy.
 - All of the decks would be on the front of the buildings, so there would be no connection to the rear.
 - Goal of the developer is to have a project that is residential in nature. The unit count is not as ideal as it could be. There is no common area trash, everyone would have their own. Essentially identical to the communities to the N and S.
 - The developer cannot afford to lose any density in the project, to have 2 story structures with a pond, no surface parking lot, no lighted parking lot, garage parking, with a driveway instead of parking lots, that is a good tradeoff in the developers mind for the 15' setback deviation.
 - It would be nice to see more variety in the project.
 - Fearful of looking at the buildings and it is just a straight flat wall, that would feel more industrial. Offsets and architectural features could help with that. Interest and differences in the architectural could help with the mass feel of the building.
 - The layout overall feels very crowded, if the center extra road wasn't there it would allow for better layout and less of a tight feel. The pond is also quite large.
- Pedestrian.
 - According to the developer there is a connection on the fire road to Port Sheldon. The feeling of this development is the same as a lot of other communities in the area. Sidewalks in this setting would not work because the cars in the driveways would be in the way so the residents would walk in the street anyways.
 - The maintenance and costs of this would be great.

- Oak tree apartments does not have sidewalks, and the developer says that it is not an issue that they do not have any, and that there is very little foot traffic to begin with.
- The developer will look into connection to Balsam Dr.
- This shouldn't be called a walkable project if it is not going to provide walkability. As you walk through the community there is an unsafe feeling with the number of driveways that are on this drive if it were to be treated as the developer says, a walkable street. It doesn't matter that there is a grocery store down Balsam Dr because there is no good access to it. The scale of the project isn't great, it is all garage doors and driveways, it doesn't feel like a community. We don't need to be held hostage to that with our standards, there are ways to improve the project with more of a give and take.
- Access to Balsam Dr is very important and needs to be helped strongly as a feature of the project.
- Put sidewalk all the way through the southern street to Port Sheldon Complex to help with connectivity.
- Would love to see the requirement of sidewalk on at least one side of the street to be met, if not on both sides. We would not want to promote just driving, there need to be encouragement of non-motorized access.
- Walking on the roads is not promoting walkability.
- Would like to have less dead end streets, would be nice to see language in place to get rid of this and create mobility within communities rather than enclaves attached to feeder roads.
- Landscaping.
 - The open space in the center of the property, could that be reduced to bring back to the south wall. That is already down to 30' where 80' is required.
 - Preservation of the existing landscaping around the property.
- Density.
 - Has there been a thought to changing the plan to bring in a variety of housing by changing out some of the townhouses to multifamily buildings? The developer feels what is shown is unique, and would lessen the sell. Architectural costs would double, more fire rating would have to take place, etc. The intent of this is to stay residential in nature as it meets residential code. Trying to hit the 80-120% AMI to provide missing middle, especially with the attached garage. Additional space is then chewed up with parking lots.
- Architecture.
 - The carriage house style with a party wall as a development community is interesting because it is the only type offered.
 - Anytime there is just one type of housing it reads as an enclave and less of a community. Less of varying levels of socio-economic status. This does not provide any ADA accessibility due to the layout of the property, which is a detriment to the community.
 - The developer has said that at his Oak Tree complex there are 50% main floor and 50% upper floor units, so having this multilevel style supplementing that is normal for him. This is from an efficiency standpoint in his mind.

- If this site needs to be apartments, then that is what it needs to be. This type of community doesn't really fit in with a lot of the wording of our ordinance. It just doesn't feel right to have the entire community done this way. There is no guarantee that this developer will own both this site and oak tree in perpetuity.
- The community needs to have flexibility and variety, this is just asphalt and driveways where you are slotted into a box. What does this mean to the experience of the tenant? The commission needs to think about that.
 - The bonus room on the ground floor will have egress so it can be seen as a variety of housing in a way because that room can have so many uses according to the developer.
- The intent of the master plan is to hold developments to a higher standard than what we have had in the past. We as a commission need to do a better job to create variety in the city. The language to do so is already available, it just needs to be revised to be able to be used better. There is limited land in the city, there needs to be a better way to empower this body to do better.
- The need for single-bedroomed housing in the community is needed. Is there a compromise, yes. But on the flipside, there could be higher density and possibly more inferior to what is presented.
- Is there a willingness to meet with MEDC to talk about funding to help offset the developer's costs based on the comments we have made today? Yes, a general meeting for funding would be worth having.

A consent vote was made for the statement of findings and recommendations to be provided to the Planning Commission to review by the end of day Monday. They will then be provided to the Applicant.

Yay 8, Nay 1 (Schmucker)

4. Discussion

- Land Use of Highland Drive Property
 - The city is running out of space, and the contact the Meijer property is receiving is from residential developers.
 - In past conversations the commission was not drawn to having more apartments, the concern was for more jobs/industry in the city and the same sentiment was echoed tonight.
 - This is one of the better spots to have industrial/commercial left in the city.
 - Would rather save this prime freeway site for other uses besides residential.
 - Maybe some residential mixed in a development, but not as a whole complex, would lean more towards mixed use.
- Students from Calvin
- S Buttermilk Ct - Hotel

5. Adjournment

A motion was made by Northrup, with support by Staal, to adjourn at 9:19 pm.

Yeas 9, Nays 0

Respectfully Submitted,
Sarah Steffens
Deputy Planning & Zoning Director