WINNETKA ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 13, 2023

Zoning Board Members Present:	Matt Bradley, Chairman Kate Casale MacNally Mark Haller Lynn Hanley Max Weigandt
Zoning Board Members Absent:	Mike Nielsen Todd Vender
Village Staff:	David Schoon, Director of Community Development Ann Klaassen, Assistant Director of Community Development

Call to Order & Roll Call:
Chairman Bradley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

a. January 9, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes.

Chairman Bradley asked if there were any comments or corrections to be made to the January 9, 2023, meeting minutes. No comments were made at this time. He then asked for a motion. A motion was made by Ms. Casale MacNally and seconded by Ms. Hanley to approve the January 9, 2023, meeting minutes. A vote was taken and the motion unanimously passed, 5 to 0:

AYES: Bradley, Casale MacNally, Haller, Hanley, Weigandt
NAYS: None

Community Development Report:
Mr. Schoon provided an update with regard to the 484-488 Elder Lane plat of consolidation which the Village Council approved. He stated with regard to the 232 Sheridan Road variations requested, it is be presented to the Village Council next week. Mr. Schoon also stated a public hearing will be held on Wednesday relating to the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Casale MacNally asked for the status of the property at Linden and Cherry Streets. Mr. Schoon responded he contacted the applicant months ago and due to escalated costs, the applicant is trying to determine how to move forward with the project.

New Cases:

a. Case No. 23-01-SU: 310 Green Bay Road - North Shore Country Day School: An application submitted by North Shore Country Day School seeking approval of an amendment to an existing Special Use Permit, which allowed construction of additions to the Upper School Building, and zoning variations to allow renovation of the existing school gymnasium and construction of an addition to the existing gymnasium consisting of an additional gymnasium and multi-purpose space. The requested amendment would allow renovation of the existing Mac Gymnasium and construction of an addition to the existing gymnasium located on the southeast corner of the school campus. The variations would permit the proposed addition to exceed (i) the maximum permitted gross floor area; and (ii) the maximum permitted building height of 2-1/2 stories. The Village Council has final jurisdiction on this request.

Ms. Klaassen referred to the project location at the southeast corner of the site and identified the Mac Gym noting the property is zoned R-5 single family residential. She also identified surrounding zoning and uses which are permitted by special use permit within the district. Ms. Klaassen stated the applicant's use of the property is consistent with both the zoning ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan land use designation. She provided the property's history and the request to remove Leicester Hall, which is currently being used for administrative offices, as well as the removal of the pool. Ms. Klaassen stated the Landmark Preservation Commission reviewed the request and required an Historic and Architectural Impact Study (HAIS). She also referred to photos of the site and the arbor vitae that would remain to provide a landscape buffer to the residential neighbors to the south, with an additional landscaping buffer being proposed to enhance the existing landscape screening that is currently provided. Ms. Klaassen also identified the west and north building elevations, the areas to be removed and the net increase in gross floor area, as well as the proposed addition and existing gymnasium. She noted two parking spaces would be removed and a Campus Transportation Review was provided by the applicant with the determination that the current traffic management plans functioned effectively and there would be no impact on the campus or neighborhood with the proposed improvement. Ms. Klaassen stated Village Engineer Jim Bernahl agreed with the study's findings and stated the amended special use permit would not result in additional issues around the site recommendation he provided. She described the reasoning for the applicant being required to apply for a special use permit due to its location in a residential area and referred to a table outlining the variation requests for the project. Ms. Klaassen stated the applicant can further address the specifics relating to the proposed addition and its uses. She then referred additional renderings provided by the applicant of the west and south building elevations. Ms. Klaassen noted the Design Review Board considered a Certificate of Appropriateness and recommended approval of the proposed improvements with the Plan Commission scheduled to consider the special use amendment at their next meeting. She added no public comment has been received and asked if there were any questions noting a draft motion is provided in the packet.

Ms. Hanley asked if there is a parking requirement for institutional uses and Ms. Klaassen responded there is not. Chairman Bradley referred to Slide 7 and the existing nonconformities to remain. Ms. Klaassen identified the setback to the Lower School which would remain. Chairman Bradley also asked if existing nonconforming variation requests is incorporated into applications. Ms. Klaassen stated it was not written that way since the existing gym and the proposed addition complies with the setbacks and the nonconforming setback is related to a different building on the campus. She then referred to the zoning matrix and explained how the variations exceed requirements since the school is located in a residential zoning district. Ms. Klaassen noted the proposed addition would conform with front yard setback requirements in consideration of the neighbors and described the use for the proposed addition.

Chairman Bradley asked if the existing nonconformities would remain on Elder Lane. Ms. Klaassen explained that the existing nonconforming setback would remain but the proposed construction would comply with the required setback, and then identified the setback line on the site plan. Mr. Haller questioned whether the proposed 60 foot height is permitted and if 60 feet would be an allowable height for any building on the property. Ms. Klaassen responded yes but it would be limited to 2.5 stories. No additional questions were raised at this time.

Chairman Bradley swore in those speaking to this matter. Trina Sandschafer of Kahler Slater stated they have worked with the school since early 2022 and introduced Tom Flemma and Cindy Hooper of North Shore Country Day School along with the remainder of their team. Tom Flemma introduced himself as the Head of School and described the school's history, their mission and their health and wellness program. He referred to a quote from their strategic plan in 2017 and described key elements from their plan including a comprehensive wellness program and connection. He then described the addition which would service their JK-12 students, faculty, staff, parents and the community at large which would encompass how wellness and fitness has evolved. Mr. Flemma also described other activities which would be incorporated by the addition and the features enhanced with the addition including air quality and HVAC improvements and that the project would also serve to educate the student body. Mr. Flemma then introduced Cindy Hooper.

Cindy Hooper introduced herself as the school's Director of Operations and described her background, their master planning and prior improvements. She identified several features of the new building which included ADA accessibility. Ms. Hooper then referred to an illustration of the proposed addition and explained how the old gym did not meet their current requirements. She then described proposed alternative locations for the new gym and how those locations would not work. Ms. Hooper further explained how the proposed location worked best for the campus in terms of safety and accessibility.

Ms. Sandschafer identified the location for the proposed addition and existing buildings, parking, the pool and the Mac Gym among other buildings on the site. She also referred to the site's contextual images identifying green space and residential areas. Ms. Sandschafer noted they would be in compliance with setbacks to be mindful of the neighbors and preserving open space. She also identified the site's various access points with the proposed building slope matching the Mac Gym as well as a connection point between the two buildings and green roof space. Ms. Sandschafer identified the building functions and windows for visibility in terms of light and air. She then referred to various elevation views of the existing and proposed gym buildings as well as those of the other existing buildings. Ms. Sandschafer noted the color scheme would match the existing gray and white coloring of other building throughout the campus. She noted the north elevation would remain unchanged and the south elevation would have a low, sloped roof to match the residential neighbors. Ms. Sandschafer then introduced Scott Freres of The Lakota Group.

Scott Freres stated there are two key components to the landscape plan which he described as the outside in and the inside out which began with consideration of the neighborhood. He referred to the southern illustration which showed the predominant existing vegetation that would be retained and supported by additional infill plantings and a second layer of arbor vitae. Mr. Freres stated the Church Road frontage is more visible and has been softened with vegetation to soften the building base. He then stated inside the site, they focused on the desire to use plant materials which are native and low maintenance. Mr. Freres also stated on the southern edge of the building, the blank wall was addressed by the installation of columnar English oak trees and low maintenance ground cover. He further described the proposed pallet of planting materials and then introduced Mr. Peter Lemmon.

Peter Lemmon of Kimley-Horn stated he would address transportation patterns on the site. He referred to the staggered start and end times for students which served to broaden the traffic impact with onsite and on-street pick-up and drop-off traffic queuing being managed by the staff. He stated parking is mostly accommodated onsite and messaging is provided to the community and students in terms of events and planning. Mr. Lemmon stated they observed traffic patterns over several days and times throughout the day noting the management strategies in place are effective. He noted no changes were recommended as part of the plan in terms of impact and concluded the current plan is well run. Chairman Bradley asked if an assessment was done in the summer relating to campers. Mr. Lemmon stated there was not with the primary focus of the study being on the academic school year.

Ms. Sandschafer referred to the two zoning ordinance variations for GFA and building height and an amendment to the special use permit being requested in connection with the project. She also referred to the zoning variation and standards and stated their demonstration indicated they met the standards and asked if there were any questions.

Chairman Bradley then asked the Board if they had any questions. Ms. Casale MacNally asked where the admin functions would move to. Ms. Hooper responded it would be decentralized throughout the campus. Ms. Casale MacNally asked what would happen to the west gym, and Ms. Hooper stated it would remain and would better serve their younger children's programs and would be used for gathering space. Ms. Casale MacNally stated for the 549 students, how many of them would utilize the two main gyms. Ms. Hooper responded approximately 400-450 children. Mr. Flemma added it would depend on the time of day and on the function and outlined the space used by the various grades. Ms. Casale MacNally asked if any signage is being proposed as part of the project. Ms. Sandschafer responded they are considering a small sign on the west side and a larger school logo sign on the east side. Ms. Casale MacNally asked how parking is assigned with the removal of two parking spaces in the student lot on Elder Lane. Ms. Hooper responded spaces are first assigned to seniors, juniors and then to commuters and car poolers. She confirmed there would be 69 student parking spaces.

Mr. Haller questioned the construction plans, duration, etc. and effect on the neighborhood. Ms. Hooper responded they considered project phasing with the renovation of the Mac Gym being done in phase one during the fall of 2023 lasting 10 months. She then stated the new gym building work would be done following that and further described the work to be done in phase two for a total project construction time of two years. Mr. Haller asked how the construction mechanics would be accommodated with regard to the neighborhood. Ms. Hooper responded in terms of staging, there would be no effect on the neighborhood. Jim Valenti of Valenti Builders referred to the site plan and stated since all of the work would be done on the southeast corner, all of the equipment, workers, etc. would access the site from Green Bay Road. He also stated they planned to discuss plans with the neighbors prior to construction.

Mr. Haller asked what the overall community uses for the school would be. Ms. Hooper responded they have had a longtime relationship with Troup 20 and the Winnetka Park District among others and described their uses for the campus. Mr. Haller then asked if they discussed the proposed plans with the Elder Lane neighbors. Mr. Flemma responded they began discussions with the neighbors in December and have interacted with them several times a year. He stated two neighbors who live directly across from Leicester Hall reviewed the plans and positive feedback was received from them. Mr. Haller asked if there are other community neighborhood outreach ideas for neighbors to offer them the use of the school property in terms of being a good neighbor. Mr. Flemma referred to the parking lot on Elder Lane and Forest for neighbors who have used the parking lot on the weekends. He added they have made it clear the campus is open for community use and described the playground use by the neighbors and invitations being extended to various school programs to the neighbors. Mr. Haller asked if consideration was given to using Green Bay Road to provide additional capacity for drop-off and pickup. Ms. Hooper confirmed they have considered it and stated the traffic speed on Green Bay Road would make it difficult and would require IDOT approval. She also described the specifics outlined in the traffic study done by Mr. Lemmon. Mr. Haller asked if there was any consideration in doing anything with the power lines. Ms. Hooper responded as part of the work being done, they can inquire about it on that side of campus and they are not at that phase of the project yet.

Mr. Weigandt stated he did not have any questions. Ms. Hanley stated her biggest concern related to parking and questioned the number of parking spaces. Ms. Hooper responded there would be 218 parking spaces and 8 ADA accessible spaces with only two spaces being lost. Ms. Hanley asked if they foresaw any changes to the weekend activity. Ms. Hooper described current activities and usage on weekends. Ms. Hanley then asked if there would be adequate parking with the new gym. Ms. Hooper explained that the seating capacity in the Mac Gym is for 350 people and the new gym would have bleacher seating for 20 people. Ms. Hanley asked if street parking is allowed on weekends and Ms. Hooper confirmed that is correct although they want the streets clear for emergencies with most parking taking place on campus.

Chairman Bradley referred to the special use permit standard nos. b, d and e, the removal of the administrative building, etc. and referred to the summer programs and camps asking how it would run post construction. Ms. Hooper described how the traditional day camp is currently run for approximately 270 children. She then stated they planned to hold sports camps with the new climate controlled gym and described how that programming would be focused. Chairman Bradley questioned how pickup and drop-off would occur. Ms. Hooper described how pickup and drop-off would take place. Chairman Bradley then asked if there are any other major uses planned for the space such as graduation. Ms. Hooper responded it would be moved from being held outdoors back inside in the existing auditorium and the plan is for the new space to accommodate the programs they currently have. Chairman Bradley referred to the variation figures and stated as part of the challenge with such a unique property, there are no limits with regard to GFA that can be meted out for possible future projects. He asked if for the requested 24,000 square feet of GFA, whether any other projects are coming up in relation to the amount of space they have on campus. Mr. Flemma informed the Board they are not looking to continue to grow in any substantial way and referred to their attempts to cluster the building at the southeast corner so as to not affect the amount of open space they have. No additional questions were raised at this time.

Chairman Bradley asked if there was any public comment. No comments were made at this time. He then called the matter in for discussion. He referred to the zoning standards and variation requests identified in the packet.

Ms. Hanley stated for the record, there should be planned developments for institutional uses. She stated her only issue is the standard relating to parking for the special use and since there is no parking requirement for institutional uses, they have to take the applicant's word it is adequate. Ms. Hanley commented overall, the new gym addition is thoughtful and well planned and she is in favor of the request. Ms. Casale MacNally stated she is also in favor of the request and trusted the applicant would do everything they say they would do although she is concerned with the amount of GFA creep. She agreed with Ms. Hanley's comments in that they have to consider requests for schools and churches in the same manner as single family residences.

Mr. Haller stated his concerns are similar, relating to each incremental request and commented the landscaping is very important. He stated future projects should consider what can be given back to alleviate potential concerns. Mr. Haller also stated he is concerned with increased programming relating to the amount of traffic and hoped the applicant can consider ways to do something for the neighborhood to lessen the impact. He then stated he would be in favor of the request. Mr. Weigandt stated he is also in favor of the request and described the request as extremely thorough, although he had the same concerns which were raised. Chairman Bradley described the presentation as thoughtful and stated he appreciated the concern relating to the project's placement. He agreed landscaping is a huge part of the project which would give directly impacted neighbors a sense of privacy and beautification. Chairman Bradley also agreed with the parking concerns raised. He added as they consider the Comprehensive Plan, applications such as this should move in a different direction as opposed to being presented to three different boards.

Chairman Bradley then asked for a motion to recommend approval as indicated on page 17. A motion to recommend approval of the request as outlined on pages 17-19 of the agenda packet was made by Ms. Casale MacNally and seconded by Ms. Hanley. A vote was taken and the motion unanimously passed, 5 to 0:

AYES: Bradley, Casale MacNally, Haller, Hanley, Weigandt
NAYS: None

New Business:

a. March 13, 2023, Meeting - Quorum Check.

The Board Members discussed their availability.

Public Comment.

No comments were made at this time.

Adjournment:

Chairman Bradley asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Hanley. The motion was seconded by multiple Board members. A vote was taken and the motion unanimously passed, 5 to 0:

AYES: Bradley, Casale MacNally, Haller, Hanley, Weigandt
NAYS: None

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Antionette Johnson
Recording Secretary