

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

JULY 19, 2022

A meeting of the Planning and Economic Development Committee was held Tuesday, July 19, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber and via Zoom which meeting link can be found on the agenda and on the city's website.

The roll call was taken with 4 members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee present:

Alderman-at-Large Melbourne Moran, Jr.
Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr., Vice-Chair
Alderman-at-Large Ben Clemons
Alderman Derek Thibeault

Also in Attendance: Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

ROLL CALL

PUBLIC COMMENT- None

DISCUSSION - None

COMMUNICATIONS - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None

PETITIONS - None

NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS - None

NEW BUSINESS – ORDINANCES - None

TABLED IN COMMITTEE

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN THIBEAULT TO REMOVE FROM THE TABLE THE PETITION FOR REZONING – GATEWAY HILLS
MOTION CARRIED**

- Petition for Rezoning - Gateway Hills off Research Drive (A-798, A-1010, A-1011, A-1008, A-1021)
- Tabled at 3/15/22 meeting

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Good evening members of the Committee. Frankly very little to report this evening. The Committee had charged staff with approaching Flatley representation for more information and really direction about why they had chosen to request withdrawal of the Petition. We did have some conversations I would say sort of off the record about some frustrations that I think you were aware of as part of the discussion at this Committee. Ultimately the decision to withdraw was due to a multitude of factors and they were not necessarily comfortable putting those into writing. So based on that action or that lack of action by the Petitioner, we've obviously placed forward a motion this evening or a request this evening that the Committee take action to essentially not consider this piece of legislation moving forward.

We are currently in active discussion with representatives of the Flatley Company about other developments that are happening on the property and that's not say that those will not come forward. This specific Petition to consider rezoning to allow the multi-family project to proceed will not be part of those active discussions, though I would just say that in the future should demonstration be made by the Flatley Company that they're willing to have more comprehensive conversations about the development plan for their site. We'd be happy to have those and continue the very solid partnership that I think we've had with Flatley over many, many decades but at this time, we're not comfortable recommending this Petition moving forward.

Chairman Moran

Thank you Director Sullivan. Just one question from me before I open it up to everybody. Corporation Counsel is

recommending this indefinite postponement. Is that correct?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

That is correct.

Chairman Moran

Anyone have any questions for Director Sullivan?

Alderman O'Brien

Thank you. Mr. Sullivan as we move on to the future while this is still on the table, do you think it would be wise for us to do some impact studies to be prepared to have somewhat of a folder and a jacket on it that when Mr. Flatley or somebody of interest wants to come forward, we have something prepared. The things that we'd like to see such as the traffic study. If it's residential development, what would be the impact on the schools? Two schools in the district – New Searles and Bicentennial. One middle school – Fairgrounds. To look at that in a deeper perspective that so we'll understand what we're dealing with in the future?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Thank you Alderman O'Brien. I think it's a great question and I believe that, and I'm not just saying this for the record, but I truly believe that both parties have that in mind. The Flatley Company did perform some level of study relative to traffic for the proposed development and they certainly have made some efforts to contemplate school impact, sewer infrastructure impact, and the larger traffic impact of the development. I would also add that they have been at least thinking about the impact to the abutting residential neighborhoods and the character of the neighborhood.

I think where the rub is is that that has been on a project by project basis rather than as part of a larger comprehensive development plan that contemplates all of the future buildout. So I think Flatley is interested in having further conversation about that. Whether the city should take that on, I think that's part of the discussion that needs to be had. I tend to think as part of the way that we run our development process here in the city that that's the responsibility of the developer themselves. We are more than willing to be a part of those conversations. I would just note for the record that they have performed traffic studies historically in partnership with city staff. There's been sewer investigation and partnership with city staff in the past. They've developed student impact in partnership with the School District. So there have been efforts made. It's really a matter of ensuring that those are larger and include all of the potential development that Flatley may be considering for this area. That conversation has not necessarily happened to a point where we're comfortable making a larger recommendation.

Alderman O'Brien

Thank you.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you Mr. Chairman. So my concern about Flatley, and I know you just said a bunch of things about them, and generally I probably would agree with some of those. I don't know if my residents or my constituents would agree with that. Part of the reason is Flatley comes to us with a 59 home development. My constituents are up in arms. We go to the Planning Board meeting and there's really nothing we can do to prevent it. Then after it gets approved, they sneak in a we're going to change that to a 48 or 49 unit development so we can get under the inclusionary zoning so they don't have to put any affordable housing in there and they get in just before the deadline. So to me it's like we just approved what you wanted and now you're changing it so you don't have to provide any affordable housing. So I get concerned with that.

The other piece is too by doing it piece meal, it feels like when you play sim city and you don't have it figured out and then you put everything in and all of a sudden it's like big building here, small building here, brewery here, a ski hill here, big place here, and then all of a sudden it doesn't really look like the character of a master plan. It's just a bunch of stuff thrown on a hill and we hope it works. I do like the fact that there's a lot of housing there for people and that they do build nice buildings. The brewery is going to be great. The whole section there with Pressed and all that in that area is all very nice. So they do good work and they do take care of their properties but when you start adding a lot of stuff there, I do worry about like water pressure. We've had – people that are just over on the other side from the Gateway Hills on the

other side where there's actual developments bring up the fact that there is sometimes low water pressure. So you start putting everything else over there.

So those are some of the concerns I have. I'm okay if Flatley is going to be a responsible building and they want to try to be good with the neighborhood. I understand. We need housing. There's a lot of land there to do things with but piecemeal makes me nervous because they change on a whim. We're going to do industrial. No, that's not good. Let's do some housing. No that's not good. Let's do townhouses. Then all of a sudden they have a bunch of different stuff based on what was happening at the time during the economic whatever. Whether it's good economic time or a poor one. They make me nervous at times. I'm fine. I'm glad to take this off the table. They withdrew it anyway. Going forward, I think we just have to make sure that they are doing the right thing because when I told my constituents that they changed their mind...I mean some of it it's like oh good there's not 58 houses there. The other thing is oh they're getting rid of their club house, and their pool. Now they're – why are they doing this? I had to explain why because they don't want to provide affordable housing. So what's going to be there \$600,000 homes that people can't afford? I don't know. That's my ten cents.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

I'm not going to respond to the comments on the active application for obvious reasons. I also want to be careful that we're not expanding the conversation too far beyond the Petition. I know that everyone is sensitive to that. I think the larger comments speak to just the issue that resulted in this Committee's hesitance about the Petition and that is a level of predictability and cohesiveness of development. I don't necessarily think that there's any objection to what Flatley has done to date with the property. I've heard a lot of positive comments related to that. I also believe that they have a long-term interest in that property and they have an intent to do development that is compatible ultimately with what the city's vision is. So I think we're fully supportive of that. It's really just this interest in more open communication earlier in the process so that we can walk hand into hand and to whatever forum it might be whether it's this aldermanic chamber, or whether it's a Planning Board meeting. I think there are some concerns about whether that's been the case particularly recently. So I think there's much time to help repair this relationship that maybe has some concerns on both sides, legitimate on both sides. Perhaps it's not through this significant rezoning effort that's being considered. This seems like an ask that really does trigger further study than what's been provided to certainly this Committee and I think to other boards as well for their consideration. I guess I'll leave my remarks there.

Chairman Moran

Well and thankfully now they know that hardnose Matt is on the job and they can't sneak on by you.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director

Right.

Alderman Clemons

Thank you. Yeah I happen to think Flatley has a mixed – I think some people think they do a great job. Some people think they don't. Overall, I think they've done an okay job with the land and what development is there. I didn't necessarily oppose this Petition to rezone. I don't necessarily oppose them coming forward piecemeal either. I think that it's their property. I think they have the right to do what they want with it as long as they're following our zoning laws. If those have to be changed, then I don't mind looking at that on a case by case basis either. I don't think everything has to have a master plan in order to move forward. I'm hopeful that they continue their relationship with the city and wanting to do business.

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN THIBEAULT TO RECOMMEND INDEFINITE POSTPONEMENT OF THE PETITION FOR REZONING – GATEWAY HILLS
MOTION CARRIED**

GENERAL DISCUSSION - None

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

REMARKS BY THE ALDERMEN - None

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN CLEMONS TO ADJOURN
MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared closed at 7:13 p.m.

Alderman Derek Thibeault
Committee Clerk