

The regular meeting of the Plans Commission was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by President Kim Blumer in the Albany Village Hall. Members present were: Blumer, Eileen Althaus, Virginia Detra, Mark Riedel, and Paul Rhyner. Absent was: Karl Hulbert. Also present was: Chris Lange, Linda Rostagno, Rick and Pam Wollin, Tonya Stephan, Justin Mueller, Joseph and Dee Van Ruyven, Tim Porter, and Jim Laughlin.

Proof of posting verified.

MINUTES: Motion by Althaus, seconded by Detra to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as printed. Carried.

PUBLIC HEARING: The Public Hearing was then called to order to hear a request from Tim Porter regarding his property located at 111 North Water Street. He is interested in turning this property into an overnight stay property. He is wanting to use both floors to do this. Village ordinances do not allow living on the ground floor. Porter stated that he will have one apartment in the property and will fix up the front of the building. Dee Van Ruyven stated that they called about changing one of their buildings into a hotel and were told that the board would not allow any more. However, she feels that it would be beneficial to allow the market to decide. Blumer explained that the board wants the input from as many people as possible so that the board can make the right decision. It was then explained that Riedel has invited a lady to the September board meeting to discuss what her company does for municipalities to develop their downtowns. It was the consensus of the commission to wait to make any decisions until we can hear what she has to say. She specializes in ways to find resources to improve downtowns and to find businesses. The board is anxious to hear her thoughts on what should or could be done in our downtown area. Mark explained that the fire department has concerns over what things are going on in buildings in the downtown area so they know if there is a fire, that there may be places where people are staying so they can make sure that they get everyone out. Lange feels that once a property is made into a hotel and the retail is removed, it will stay that way and not be available for the retail. He feels that there are not enough destination shops here. Dee Van Ruyven agrees to some extent, but does know that retail is tough in this time, as so many people shop either in the big box stores or shop online. Lange stated that we can't compare to larger cities, as we only have a one block area with no option to go any larger. Mark said that there are a lot of volunteers who are willing to help with any work in the downtown area, and the majority of the volunteers do not even own property in the downtown. Wollins reported that they have three vacation rental properties in other municipalities that they own. People seem to really like to stay in the downtowns. They will go where they can stay close, which if it's not here, it will be in another town. Porter told all that he has had a sign up to rent his property for some time and has had no bites or inquiries. Pam Wollin stated that she bought the property to bring her business here from Monroe. The Health and Wellness Center is her business, but now there is not enough parking downtown at times of the year for her customers. She wanted to bring in some type of income on this property since it wasn't working out for her business, so she began renting it out for short stays. Justin Mueller, Albany's Fire Inspector, reported that he recently did the inspections of the businesses downtown. There are several fire issues in the current overnight stay facility on the east side of the street that he needs to pursue; such as a sprinkler system which is a big investment; no fire extinguishers; and parking in the rear of the building. Porter feels that it would be good to bring people into the village, and possibly retail isn't what we're going to get at this time. Mark said that we need a vibrant downtown and we sure do not want to lose our schools or emergency services, so we need to bring in businesses. Tonya Stephan is concerned about people spending the night right next door to fryers and cooking with no proper fire walls. Blumer stated that he feels there are pros and cons to both sides, but he feels that we should wait and hear what the lady coming to the September board meeting has to say. Lange explained that this is why Albany Community 1st was developed – so that they could start working toward improving the downtown together. We need to focus and start to work together. Van Ruyvan sees that everyone is on the same page, but need to figure out how to make it happen. Owners are just trying to make things work. Blumer thanked all in attendance for their very good input and would like to get people to attend more meetings to give their input. Lange would like the makeup of the board's committees to include business owners. Keepers explained that there is a state statute that you must be a resident of the village to be a member. Blumer asked for any further comments and hearing none, thanked all for coming and closed the hearing.

Motion by Blumer, seconded by Detra to table any action until we have our board meeting in September. Carried.

PROPERTY AT 121 NORTH WATER STREET: Blumer reported that he looked at the steps coming out of the property located at 121 North Water Street on the north side onto village property. The village would allow the steps to continue to be there on the village's property, however would require them to be built along the building instead of going out straight north. Some requirements will be required, so it was agreed that the village will have an agreement written up that Wollin's and the village will sign and keep on file. Village will write up an agreement and get it to Wollins.

FREE LIBRARY AT OVERLOOK PARK: Althaus questioned the "Free Library" located in the Overlook Park. This was not approved, and want it to be removed. Motion by Blumer, seconded by Rhyner to have the "Free Library" removed. No – Mark. Carried.

501 NORTH MECHANIC CONDITIONAL USE: Jim Laughlin was present to ask what the commission thought about issuing him a Conditional Use Permit for his property to allow him to repair cars. Obviously a public hearing would be necessary and the neighbors would be invited, but at this point the commission members present were willing to consider it. A public hearing will be held on September 1, 2016 to consider this.

FUTURE ITEMS: Riedel will confirm with Kristen Fish to attend the board meeting on September 12th.

ADJOURN: Motion by Detra, seconded by Blumer to adjourn. Carried.

7:40 p.m.

LAURIE K. KEEPERS, Clerk