

City of Hood River
Planning Commission
Public Meeting
March 5, 2018

City Council Chambers
211 Second Street
Hood River, OR 97031

PRESENT: Commissioners Arthur Babitz (Vice Chair), Mark Frost, Bill Irving, Sue Powers, Tina Lassen,

ABSENT: Nikki Rohan, Casey Weeks

STAFF: Planning Director Dustin Nilsen, Associate Planner Jennifer Kaden, Administrative Assistant Bobbie Van Tassel

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER: Vice Chair Arthur Babitz called the meeting to order at 5:33pm.

II. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S UPDATE:

Planning Director, Dustin Nilsen, stated that a Measure 56 Notice was mailed to schedule various code updates, and that the first evidentiary hearing for the Westside Area Concept Plan will be March 19, 2018.

III. PUBLIC HEARING:

FILE NO.: 2017-48

PROPOSAL: Conditional Use Permit and Property Line Adjustment for construction of a new 80-room hotel and associated site improvements, including shared parking with the Columbia Gorge Hotel. The new hotel site is located on the same parcel as the Columbia Gorge Hotel, however the application also includes a Property Line Adjustment which would result in the two hotels situated on two separate parcels.

APPLICANT: Mark Vanderzanden

OWNER: A-1 Hospitality

LOCATION: 4000 Westcliff Drive. Legal Description: 3N10E27D Tax Lots #100 & 101.

ZONING: The property is zoned General Commercial (C-2) and within the Exit 62 Interchange Area Management Plan (IAMP) overlay.

Babitz opened the public hearing and read the procedural script. He then asked the Commissioners for any bias, ex-parte contact, or conflict of interest.

Commissioner Tina Lassen mentioned her ex-parte contact. She recently visited the site to look at the scale and would like to discuss the trees.

Babitz mentioned his ex-parte contact as being part of the Landmarks Review Board, who already heard a hearing on the Historic Columbia Gorge Hotel. The issues discussed were different from the topics being discussed as part of tonight's hearing, but both hearings will be part of the same record. Babitz also added that he was City of Hood River Mayor when Vijay Patel purchased this property, and they had several meetings in previous years. Babitz asked if the audience or any Commissioner wished to challenge any other commissioners.

There were no challenges.

STAFF REPORT:

Associate Planner Jennifer Kaden presented the staff report and described applicable criteria. This application is for a Conditional Use review for the proposed new 80-room hotel, adjacent to the Historic Columbia Gorge Hotel. There is also a proposed Property Line Adjustment, to adjust the size of the two existing parcels so that each building will be on a different parcel. The other part of the review is that this was subject to a Landmark Review due to being located on the same site as a National Historic Landmark. The Landmark Review Board Hearing was held on February 15th to decide if the proposed hotel was consistent with the Historic Preservation criteria outlined in our code. The Landmark Review Board approved the application. The Notice of Decision was sent out last week, and we are currently in the middle of the appeal period. The Oregon Department of Transportation sent out comments this afternoon, which were provided to the Commissioners, as well as a letter in support of this proposal from the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association.

Babitz suggested that the Commissioners ask their questions prior to the Staff Report so that staff can address them in the Staff Report.

Commissioner Mark Frost expressed his concern with the contextual nature of the building, and its compatibility, as proposed.

Kaden stated that there is overlap in criteria between the Conditional Use criteria and the Landmark Review criteria related to Historic Preservation. Kaden outlined the applicable criteria for the proposal. Kaden highlighted the parking requirement should be noted. The HRMC states that the requirement in the C-2 zone requires parking be provided on-site in the amount of one space for each employee and additional parking to meet the needs of clientele. They are proposing 129 parking spaces, which is the current number on site today, with no additional parking proposed. The proposed new structure will have 80 new hotel rooms to be added to the existing 40 units in the original Historic Columbia Gorge Hotel. At peak times, they will have 16 employees on-site. This adds up to 140 parking spaces. The applicant did a parking study that showed parking demand is less than this during different times of the day and under different scenarios. The applicant believes that the proposed parking plan is sufficient in

meeting their needs.

The allowed building height is 45 feet, and the proposed structure is between 43 and 45 feet. There are two projections that go above the roof, but they will not have human occupancy, and may be exempt from the height limit: a staircase that leads to the roof for maintenance purposes and an elevator overrun to be used for elevator equipment. Kaden summarized the Conditional Use Criteria. The proposed hotel is located in an area where there are other lodging facilities, located to the east and west. The hotel would not add any adverse impacts. The Site-Plan Review criteria include air quality, grading, public facilities storage, equipment storage, compatibility, and design. The public facilities criteria was looked at by multiple departments, including the Building Department and ODOT, to determine if there are adequate public facilities to service a new 80-room hotel. The public street serving the site is designated a Local Street. It is not improved to our current standings, which includes curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and planting strips. One of the required improvements is to construct the frontage improvements to meet current standards.

Other recommended conditions of approval include a requirement to provide a proportionate share for a planned traffic signal at the Cascade and Rand intersection.

The traffic analysis concluded that the intersection of the westbound ramp at Exit 62 and Cascade Avenue will not meet an adequate level of service once the additional trips from the proposed hotel are online. The recommendation is to address the adequate facilities in two ways: in the short-term, construct a 4-way stop at that intersection, and for the long-term, to provide proportionate share for the cost of improvements for ultimately signaling that intersection. Lastly, there is an inadequate sewer facility to serve this site. Public Works and the Engineering Department recommend that a proportionate share of the construction improvements is required.

Exterior materials, scale, height, and bulk of the building are considered to determine whether the project is compatible with other developments in the area. The existing Columbia Gorge Hotel is approximately 28,000 square feet total and three stories high, while the new proposed hotel will be 60,000 square feet and four stories high. Other lodging facilities in the area are between one and two stories high. The proposed structure will be larger than the Historic Columbia Gorge Hotel. The exterior materials proposed are meant to blend in with the landscape, but not necessarily with the original Historic Hotel. The Landmarks Review Board did not want the proposed structure to match the Historic Hotel. The proposed structure is compatible with the compatibility and design standards criteria. Lastly, the Property Line Adjustment Analysis shows that Tax Lot 100, which is currently just parking, will be increased by 2.13 acres and will include the new Hotel.

Commissioner Tina Lassen asked whether the sidewalk improvements are only be required for the new parcel where the construction is taking place?

Kaden responded that street frontage improvements will be required for the entire site, both

tax lots.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY:

Vijay Patel of 21505 Cottonwood Drive, Kennewick, WA is the President of A-1 Hospitality, the owners of the Columbia Gorge Hotel. Patel explained the history of the Hotel since A-1 took ownership in 2009 as well as all of the obstacles and challenges they faced to keep the historic hotel open. A-1 has put a lot of energy, effort, and money into restoring the building. However, full occupancy does not sustain the hotel operations, and there are no other alternatives except adding new rooms to support the historic hotel.

Mark Vanderzanden of 2840 SW Talbot Road in Portland, OR, the applicant, echoed the importance of the property. He presented additional drawings that displayed the scale of the original structure and the proposed structure. There is not much land to work with and the western property will be the best spot for an addition. Vanderzanden discussed how the orientation of the proposed addition will preserve specific aspects of the original historic property, including the grounds and landscaping. He also described the trees and gardens that will be preserved during construction.

Commissioner Sue Powers asked the applicant about the current occupancy rate of the Historic Hotel is.

Patel responded that the winter occupancy rate is approximately 52 percent, while the summer occupancy rate is approximately 95 percent.

Lassen asked if there will be another western parking access for in and out.

Vanderzanden responded no. The fire chief confirmed that their equipment will be able to maneuver through the existing parking areas and ingress/egress.

Nilsen elaborated that the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, SHPO, consults on projects affecting National Historic Landmarks. This building is also reviewed for consistency with the Secretary of Interior on a federal level for the Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties for preserving rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction.

Powers asked the applicant about the current parking situation, and how full the parking lot gets during the summer during wedding season.

Patel responded that the parking lot is full during events.

Frost asked if there is another wedding venue because during the summer there are vehicles parked all the way down Westcliff Drive. What impact will this have, with the lack of adding additional parking on Westcliff Drive?

Eddie Vanreenterghem of 933 Sieverkropp DR, Hood River, OR explained that most of the vehicles parking along Westcliff Drive are overflow guests from White Buffalo during music events. During weekdays, other people, not guests of the hotel, use the parking lot. However, on the weekends, they are no longer allowed to use the Columbia Gorge Hotel parking lot because those spaces are reserved for guests, which is why you see these cars parked alongside of the road.

Vanderzanden added that the parking lot clears out by 9am, when guests leave to go out and do tourist things. It is not until 10 or 11pm that the parking lots fill up again.

Commissioner Bill Irving asked if the parking for the restaurant was factored in to the parking study.

Vanderzanden responded yes.

Vanreenterghem stated that parking for the Historic Hotel should not be compared to parking for other hotels in the area, such as the Hampton Inn, because the Historic Hotel is a destination hotel. People usually come to the hotel for events and as couples, which reduces the number of cars due to people carpooling.

Patel added that there will be parking attendants on the weekends to ensure that the people using the parking lot are, in fact, guests of the hotel.

Babitz asked the audience for proponents of the application.

Martina Rizzo of 1058 High Prairie Road in Lyle, WA, introduced herself as the owner of the spa located inside of the Historic Hotel. Rizzo explained that she has worked in and for other historic properties. She applauds the Patels for reviving the hotel and wanting to expand consciously. This will provide the opportunity to bring on more employees as more business will come in.

Linda Hardham of 391 Ashley Drive in Underwood, WA supports the proposal. She sits on the board of the Performing Arts Initiative Board to establish a performing arts center which will attract people from out of the area. The Center and Historic Hotel will benefit from each other by providing additional accommodations.

Shannon Day of 80 Bates Road in White Salmon, WA also sits on the PAI Board and is a proponent of this proposal.

Ted Horwitz of 2206 E 19th Street in The Dalles, OR supports this proposal as the pianist of the Hotel. This hotel is an international destination and we should do whatever we can do to continue operating.

Lucy Gorman of 801 Columbia Street in Hood River, OR supports this application as a local

florist. She has been doing over 100 weddings per year at the Columbia Gorge Hotel. She would like to add an additional 100 weddings per year with the new proposed hotel. Gorman explained that the parking situation will suffice, as there has never been an issue during wedding events in the past.

Grant Polson of 2912 Talon Avenue in Hood River and owner of Westcliff Lodge added his neutral comment regarding the requirement of the proposed new structure being too “matchy matchy” with the original Historic Hotel. Polson stated that this should not be a requirement, as no one confuses the Westcliff Villas with the Historic structure. These two structures match. If the new proposed hotel does match, no one will confuse this structure with the original Historic structure either.

No opponents made public testimony.

Babitz asked the applicants if they would like to offer a rebuttal.

REBUTTAL: None.

STAFF RECAP:

Kaden discussed tree preservation. There is a proposed condition to retain trees so they will not be damaged during construction. Another condition of approval from the Landmark Decision, related to compatibility, mentions that any substantial changes to the plans that will impact compatibility should be reviewed again by the Landmarks Board. Kaden discussed the proposed parking plan as well.

Nilsen stated that the common ratio for hotel parking is 1:1, one space per hotel room.

Babitz mentioned that the Hampton Inn has 90 parking spaces to accommodate 88 rooms. The hotel functions in a different way, but how did you factor that into your analysis?

Kaden pointed out that it would not be in the hotel’s best interest to under park their property.

Commissioner Powers pointed out that she has attended several events at the Columbia Gorge Hotel, and there is never enough parking. She mentioned her concern with tripling the number of rooms without adding one additional parking space. Is there an agreement with other business owners for shared parking or shared access?

Kaden responded that the City Engineer did not require cross access easement, and no shared parking agreement is proposed.

Babitz pointed out that Powers disclosed ex-parte contact with her last comments and asked any audience member or commissioners if they would like to comment on this disclosure.

No one commented.

Patel explained how they conducted their parking study and plan.

Theresa Ellifritz of 1408 Taylor Avenue in Hood River, OR, mentioned the different tiers of parking and how valet is available.

Nilsen stated that the 1:1 parking ratio is common, meaning one parking space per room. The idea of 129 spaces for 124 rooms is close to the ratio. There is plenty of room on-site for additional parking. You do have to opportunity to make a condition of approval to revisit if there is a future nuisance impact. Nilsen explained the reasoning behind some of the guidelines put in place by the Department of the Interior, pertaining to new construction on sites of Historic Landmarks. If the new structure were to mimic the original, Historic structure, it dilutes the significance of the structure itself.

Babitz asked about the Columbia Villas.

Nilsen responded that Columbia Villas did not have to go through the Landmarks Review Board because it is on a separate parcel.

Commissioner Frost asked staff about overflow parking.

Kaden described the proposed street improvement. There will not be room for on-street parking for overflow purposes.

Commissioner Powers asked about the condition of approval pertaining to the trees.

Patel mentioned that customer and employee safety are the main concerns for removing this tree. Because this tree is so close to the building, it is a safety hazard.

Vanrenterghem added that they have been working with an arborist on preserving as many trees as possible. Any trees removed will be replaced.

Powers asked about the irrigation tank on the site, and if it can be moved or relocated.

Patel responded that they looked into relocating the tank, but nowhere else will work
Babitz asked the applicant if they have a water right on Phelps Creek.

Patel responded that yes, they have a water right.

Commissioner Irving asked staff to clarify parking and building orientation.

Kaden read the orientation criteria. There is flexibility on these criteria.

Commissioner Irving asked staff if there is an arborist report and a preservation plan for the trees being saved.

Kaden responded that no arborist report submitted.

Commissioner Irving asked the applicant if anyone has looked at the proposed trees that will be saved are able to be retained long-term.

Vanderzanden responded that they have not worked with an arborist, but would not mind a condition of approval to do so.

Babitz closed the public hearing and testimony.

DELIBERATIONS:

Babitz outlined the items still needing review, which included parking, building height, trees, compatibility, the Conditional Use Permit and Site Plan Review criteria, and finally the Lot Line Adjustment.

Commissioner Lassen discussed her concern with the lack of added and overflow parking.

Babitz stated that Nilsen mentioned that a condition of approval for nuisance can be added for possible future issues.

Nilsen added that if the proposed use does not live up to the expectation, a condition may be added for a repeated nuisance. For example, if a reoccurring nuisance or an inability to meet parking demand is evident post development, the applicant can return to Planning Commission with a remedy.

Commissioners Irving, Lassen, Frost, Powers, and Chair Babitz are satisfied with the parking plan.

Kaden reminded the Commission that there is currently a proposed condition of approval that the applicant must show the 129 parking spaces prior to obtaining a building permit.

Babitz discussed building height. There are proposed projections for an elevator overrun and a stairwell designated for roof maintenance.

Nilsen mentioned the code exceptions for overall height. The exceptions are for non-habitable spaces.

Babitz discussed tree retention. Babitz suggested tentative language for a possible condition of approval to be added regarding tree removal and retention.

Commissioner Frost discussed his issue with the compatibility of the proposed new structure and his concern with the lack of public knowledge for this application.

Babitz announced a five minute recess at 8:10pm.

The commissioners took a five minute recess.

Commissioner Frost and Lassen discuss the color compatibility of the new proposed structure.

Babitz asked the Commissioners if they have anything they would like to add pertaining to the CUP, SPR, and Lot Line Adjustment criteria.

Commissioner Irving stated that Finding "K" is inadequate.

Babitz asked the Commissioners if anyone has an issue with the orientation of the parking lot.

No Commissioners had an issue with the orientation of the parking lot.

Babitz asked staff if there are any additional issues needing to be discussed before going into a Motion.

Nilsen reminded Babitz about the tree preservation plan, which includes an arborist, as mentioned earlier during the hearing.

Nilsen provided language for a condition of approval for Item #11 on page 43, stating that prior to the issuance of a building permit, a tree preservation plan presented by a certified Arborist shall be submitted verifying that construction will not compromise the longevity of the trees.

Babitz added that the Planning Commission would be the approval body if the applicant reconfigures their parking lot or if any future development requires the removal of any additional trees.

Commissioner Lassen approves the CUP and Property Line Adjustment with the Conditions of Approval found by staff with the following updates:

- Modified Condition #11 will read "prior to issuance of building permit, a tree protection plan prepared by a professional arborist shall be submitted that indicates no additional removal of trees, and not compromise the longevity of the trees identified for retention.
- New Condition #12 will read "any additional site development or reconfiguration of parking lots or the removal of more trees need approval by Planning Commission".
- Additional findings for Condition "K" will read "moving the parking lot behind the building will be in conflict with the Landmark Review Board decision regarding compatibility, may result in additional loss of mature vegetation, and would increase the

prominence of new construction versus the historic hotel.

MOTION:

Commissioner Irving made a motion to approve File No. 2017-48 subject to the findings and conditions made in the staff report, along with the modifications made to Condition #11, added Condition #12, and the additional findings to Condition "K".

Commissioner Frost seconded the motion.

Planning Director Dustin Nilsen did a roll-call vote.

Motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Powers made a motion to approve the January 16, 2018 minutes with the modification, and the February 28, 2018 minutes.

Commissioner Frost seconded the motion.

Motion passes unanimously.

V. ADJOURN

Babitz adjourned the hearing at 8:53pm.

Arthur Babitz, Vice Chair

Date

Dustin Nilsen, Planning Director

Date (Approved)