

Fair Grove Planning and Zoning **Public Hearing**

81 S. Orchard

April 7, 2025

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Roll call taken by Chairman John Hayes.

Travis Lee PRESENT Thomas Voorhis PRESENT, Paul Foreman PRESENT, Don Brite PRESENT, Shawn McCormick PRESENT, Dennis Roe PRESENT Darrin Moyers PRESENT

Opened Public Hearing at 6:31 PM

**Public Hearing for** – Rezone #RZ25-02-01, 425 W. Old Mill, owner Chastain Properties; **FROM** C-1 General Commercial **TO** R-4 Multi-Family Residential.

**The Public Hearing will proceed as follows: The petitioner will step up to the podium, state name, and be recognized by the Chairman. The petitioner will be given 5 minutes to speak. Those in favor of and those opposed, will be given 3 minutes each. Maximum time limit for Public Hearing will be 30 minutes. Public Hearing will remain open at a minimum of 15 minutes.**

**Petitioner:** Tim Schowe with Cochran engineering, here on behalf of the developer. Here to run through this proposed project and its 48 apartment units. We're proposing apartment units, because nationwide there's a growing demand that's roughly 10-15 million multi-family units short. Starter homes are becoming less and less affordable than ever before. Apartments would provide housing for fire fighters, police officers, health care workers and teachers. It should be noted that during the last meeting several P&Z members indicated there was a need for additional housing in Fair Grove. The proposed units would be two bedroom roughly 1,250 square feet. The exterior would have a stone veneer. A property management company would maintain the complex insuring development was well kept. The development would be phased over the next handful of years as demand requires. Per the comprehensive plan, housing availability is a concern, roughly 65% of the respondents during that comprehensive plan, indicated they supported growth throughout the city. This would be a large investment in the area that would help boost the local economy. Multi-family residential would be a decrease in the intensity from the current C-1. It would provide a transition from C-1 to the single family housing behind this development. For traffic concerns, looking at traffic requirements that would be during the peak hours roughly 24 cars per hour, which is less than one car every two minutes. It is very close to highway 65 for quick access to Springfield. For the proposed entrances, we're lining up with the two existing entrances that are already on the road. Any kind of improvements within the right of way would also have to meet MODOT review and guideline requirements. Storm water detention will be met for the site. The developer has already cleaned up the back fence and cleaned up brush in an act of good faith in working with the city. A couple of other things, we originally came here last year and were originally proposing 72 units. At the request of the city we've dropped it down to 48 units. That comes out to be 13.8 units per acre. That is an increase over the city allowed 11 units per acre. What we just handed out, shows what surrounding areas, what cities allow for multi-family and other than Fair Grove we would comply with all other multi-family requirements for the surrounding communities. I'm here to answer any questions or comments that the P & Z Commission may have.

Roe - Could we rotate that a little bit more so the audience can see that? The public needs to look at that.

Hayes - Tim, I'm sure you've realized this, just for clarification purposes. What we're discussing tonight in the public forum is the zoning change itself. So any variances like you were just discussing we know that there's two right now that are going to be tabled. They are contingent upon if you get the zoning change.

Roe - I do have one question Tim. Have you talked to MODOT about the driveways?

Schowe: There was preliminary conversations early on in this process, but not in the last few months.

Hayes - Since last month the Subway station are having a lot of problems with MODOT right now. Again, that's got to be a consideration.

Schowe - And if this were to be approved, then we would do all the full construction documents and coordination with MODOT, meeting all of their requirements.

Hayes - Anybody like to speak, for or against? Mr. Icenhower

**Those in favor of:** None

**Those opposed to:**

Richard Icenhower, 280 Northview Circle East - I'm opposed to it and I'll tell you why. I own the property right behind it and for more reason than one. Number one, traffic when school is getting ready to take up I've seen traffic backed up over the overpass. Number two, I don't feel like this property is suited for multi-family you've got a residential area behind it. We've been there a long time and I don't think that's the proper place for that. Also, I'm not for sure, but I think we need to have an engineer study on sewer. Because our sewer all goes that a way and it has to be pumped back east and I'm not sure the sewer can handle it. I'll reiterate again, I don't think it's the right place for this development. I think it's the wrong side of town. Any questions?

Hayes - Point of clarification with your knowledge, with our water system, all the sewage from that side, everything has to go through a 10" pipe to the other side of town. So I just wanted to make sure that, that is in the consideration at least.

Schowe - Yes, last year we had reached out to OWN to do some preliminary conversations about any kind of improvements that would be necessary for this kind of development. So there's been some preliminary coordination, previously.

Hayes - Thanks. Who else?

Icenhower - These people won't speak, but they are opposed to it too.

Hayes - If you want to come up and state your name and say if you are for it or against it. Get it on the record

Roe - We would like to have your address too.

Jason Crandall, 5248 East state HWY CC – I’m against the development for the reason of implications to the school. We don’t have the capacity at the school for a big influx of kids right now and think that would have a negative effect on the school. I also agree with Richard, with the traffic there north bound exit on 65 in the morning. They turn right and go down towards that neighborhood and turn around either in the bank parking lot or MFA and come back out and try to turn left. That is so congested in that area. Those are the two things that I wanted to point out. Thank you.

Hayes – Thank you Jason.

Wesley Shepherd, 264 NW Circle East – I’m opposed

George Penland, Northview Circle East – I’m opposed.

Hayes – Anyone else?

Helen McDowell, 424 Northview Circle - School is not prepared to have a bunch of extra families come into the community. It’s just a busy area traffic wise and not good for place for a multi-family unit.

Betty Burke 446 Northview Circle East - I’m opposed to it.

Hayes – Thank you. Anybody else?

Roe - Jason spoke about the schools. Kelly Petty, who serves on the Aldermen Board, she forwarded a text to me from the teacher. She didn’t name the teacher, but I guess they caught wind of this happening tonight so there’s been discussion at the school. I’ll just read the text. “As a teacher, I am super against this. I know we need to grow, but I don’t know that apartments are the way to do it. As a teacher, I don’t think our school can handle that many new kids, until we build a new building in a couple of years. I also worry about the sewer and traffic among other things. I will try to get people to come to the meeting tonight to speak against it. We have games so I don’t know if I can make it work or not. I just didn’t know if this was the final decision or not.” What I shared with Kelly Petty, that if it passes here, it has to go to the Board of Aldermen, so this is not the final decision for the rezoning. I had lunch today with Ike and Mr. Bell was there, the school Superintendent. We didn’t bring up the apartment complex, but he did mention that they are in need of classroom space, additional classroom space for kids. So I think the school concern is a valid concern and from the teachers. If the school population were to grow significantly, they have concern about the space for additional classes. I’m sharing that as feedback from the community.

Hayes - Does anyone else have any other feedback, any constituents, neighbors, anything they would like to share? Any comments?

Voorhis - I’ve got a question, if this was approved, hypothetically. How long do you think construction would last and take place before the building was complete and residents move into it?

Schowe - If this was approved, we would still have to prepare all of the construction documents that would be needed by the City of Fair Grove and MODOT. That might take up to 6 months. Construction would take 1 ½ to 2 years.

Voorhis - That's my question, right? Because we know that the school is at a deficit and we know the school wants to build and the influx of kids, as you've already heard. Our school can't take that. The planning of a building going up there would be difficult right now if it wasn't prolonged and planned.

Schowe - And yes, we're not going to build all four buildings at once. This would be phased out. Building one or two buildings at first and then in a couple of years, building the third building and then a couple years after that, build the fourth building. So it's not 48 units, it's 12 or 24 units in a year and a half or two years and then a couple of years after that more will be built. Another thing, I can't say for certain how many families will be in this apartment complex with kids, but some of our other clients that had quite a few apartment complexes around the Springfield area, have noticed it is quite a few younger adults that maybe not necessarily have kids in the school system yet. Younger adults mid 20's early 30's. Might be just a man and a wife that haven't been fully established yet.

Voorhis - Thank you.

McCormick - Does anyone know what the 2, 3, 4 year plan for the school is?

Icenhower - In their plan, they are needing to buy some more property. They are looking to buy that property and build a new building on it. The way I understand Mr. Bell, not just, you're probably looking at. They've got their bond. They're in the same situation as the City is with the sewer. I think their bond pays out in three or four years. They are going to look, before their bond runs out, they'll go for a no tax increase bond. That's probably two to three years out, I'm guessing. They're looking at buying that property from the Methodist church. They haven't got the property bought, but they are doing it before their bond, so they can do the no tax increase bond. It's probably a minimum of two years out and construction on top of that.

Hayes - Any other comments from the board, questions, discussion?

Brite - In my opinion and this is just my opinion. The City of Fair Grove, the school system, which I was apart of for 20 years and the water district, the sewer system. We are all having growing pains, because we don't have the tax revenue to support any kind of growth. We can't get the tax revenue because we don't have the beds to support any commercial development. Commercial development won't come out here because we don't have the beds for it. So where do we start? Do we start with the chicken or do we start with the egg? Do we build beds, do we build housing for people to come, which is going to tax our sewer systems, our roads, our schools? Yes, it's going to put extra strain on everything, but in the long run is that going to bring commercial development out here, which is going to raise the tax base which is going to help us grow. MODOT is not going to do anything about the traffic on that bridge, until it gets bad and stays bad long enough for them to see a need to do something about it. How long was traffic bad going through Springfield before they added a third lane on 65 highway. How long has it been bad on interstate 44, before they have finally decided to add a third lane on I-44. It's going to have to get worse out here, before they ever decide to do something across that bridge, be it put stop lights in or whatever it is. And adding four to five units of traffic across that bridge is very minimal in my eyes to the traffic. Is it a mess, yes. I had bus drivers that were coming off that in the mornings that would sit there for ten minutes to make a left turn to get to school. I understand that traffic dilemma on that bridge completely. I get it, but until it gets worse, MODOT is not going to do anything about it. As far as the

crowding in the schools, the school has moved in mobile classrooms before. They're not going to build buildings for kids that aren't here yet. We've had mobile classrooms before. They're not going to do it. I mean we've had mobile classrooms moved in there before. Before the middle school was built. They're not going to build buildings for kids that aren't here yet. If we are going to progress, we are going to have to build bedrooms for those kids, for people to be out here. If we expect to get any kind of commercial business out here. We are going to have to get more people out here to get those businesses to come out here to even support the business that we've got out here. How many people down there on the square are flourishing right now? How many of them are just barely getting by, with the people that we've got here? Do I want an apartment complex in my front door? Not really, but whose front door are we going to put it in. And the roads in Fair Grove out of all the road in the city of Fair Grove, what roads can handle additional traffic, better than 125 and CC highway? Can Orchard handle them, can Main Street handle them? We've got some R-4 property out here on Shelby road, coming in to Fair Grove. Nobody can touch it. No developer can touch that property, because the person that owns it, wants too much money for it. We've got a developer that's willing to invest in our town to bring us some beds and I think we need to get behind them and get some beds built in this town, to try and move us forward a little bit. And that's my opinion and I live in Northview Circle, just like most people sitting out here opposed to this.

Roe - Don, I'm going to add one comment to Commercial growth. I was apart of the Comprehensive Study update this past year. I agree, we need more beds. There's another big component that we do not have and that's natural gas. Commercial will not come out here until we get natural gas. I was told twelve years ago or maybe longer than that, that there was an attempt to get natural gas and it failed. Not to down play what you just said, but there is another component, that we need to get commercial growth and that is natural gas.

Hayes - Any other comments or questions. I'm going to close the public portion and look for a motion, regarding the rezoning request from C-1 to R-4.

Motion made by Voorhis to rezone property from C-1 to R-4. Here's my reason, right. I understand that the problem with the sewer department, that is something that the city is going to have to handle. I understand the traffic and I was on the fence, I've talked to many people, aldermen, constituents. I was torn between this, of allowing apartments to be what people see when they drive into the City of Fair Grove, right. The City of Fair Grove is a small community and in my opinion we like it that way. But talking to businesses, they are hurting. We need people here to spend money, right. I feel for the people who live in Northview circle, I do. I don't want an apartment complex going up out by my house, I don't want to have to look at it, but to keep our city thriving and moving forward, there are challenges that we are going to have to face. We've got to start somewhere.

Hayes – So to clarify the motion, you're making a motion to approve the zoning change from C-1 General Commercial to R-4 Multi-Family Residential?

Voorhis - Yes

Second by Foreman. Lee AYE, Voorhis AYE, Foreman AYE, Brite AYE, McCormick AYE, Roe NO, Moyers NO, Hayes NO

Hayes – The motion carries and pass on to Aldermen for final approval.

**LEFT** Public Hearing for Open Meeting 6:50 pm

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Chandra Scott", is written over a horizontal line.

Chandra Scott, Clerk