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MEETING: Site Review Committee
SUBJECT: Belden Center
ADDRESS: 870-880 Eastport Centre
PRELIMINARY SITE REVIEW

LOCATION: Zoom
DATE: January 19, 2023

IN ATTENDANCE:

Beth Shrader, Planning Director
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Jessica Gage, Associate Planner
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Vicki Thrasher, Building Commissioner
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Tim Stites, Fire Department
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Bill Laird, Engineering Dept.
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Matt Zubriggen, Engineering Dept.
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Nate McGinley, VCS
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Tony Fahel, VCS
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Mike Jessen, City Administrator
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Hannah Seats, VCS
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PRESENTERS:

Haresh Prithyani
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Sarah, Accountant/Bookkeeper

The following is a summary of the discussion at this meeting.

OPENING: The Site Review Committee met to discuss the proposed Montessori School to be located in the Belden Center at 870-880 Eastport Centre Drive. Shrader stated that site review is not an approval. Rather, it is a preliminary discussion of the requirements and issue to be considered by the developer or owner. It is possible it will need to come back before site review or to seek other approvals.

EXPLANATION OF PROJECT: Prithyani has owned Chesterton Montessori for almost five years. He wants to expand into Valparaiso. Prithyani is planning to purchase the buildings at 870 and 880 Eastport Centre Drive. Both buildings are on the same parcel. Initially they will occupy the first floor in building 870 (front building) and the top floor of 880 (back building). In 870 they plan to have a Toddler House which will serve children from 18 months to three years of age. The back building will be the Early Childhood House which will serve four-, five- and six-year olds. The majority of the construction will be done on the inside to setup the classrooms. The majority of both floors they are going to occupy are vacant and will be totally vacant, once they start construction. They will open up the walls to have bigger classrooms and a couple of offices. A playground is being planned for the outside. Prithyani mentioned that he had to change architects. The new architect is working on redrawing the playground to make sure they are not infringing on any of the easements. The new architect is looking at what has been done and will redraw anything that needs to be done to make sure everything is accurately drawn out. There will be access to the playground from both buildings. Prithyani would like to have a 6' privacy fence. The fence will provide safety and security for the children. Landscaping and parking will not be changing. Prithyani is thinking about having a small garage in the back. There would be a driveway from the parking lot to the garage. The garage would be used for

lawnmowers etc. The garage will be built on a concrete slab. The trash bins will be moved to the right side of the back building. The main office will be located in the front building. The general public will enter through the front building. The general public will not have access to the back building. The back building will have a keyed access. Prithyani explained that there will be five classrooms in the front building and three classrooms and a couple of small offices in the back building. The project will be submitted to the State. Updated drawings should be completed by the end of this month and sent to the State by the end of February. Prithyani believes that parking will not be a problem. There seem to be too many spaces. Some of the spaces will be taken away for the playground. However, even after taking some of the parking away, he believes parking requirements will be met. The south side of the front building will remain a grassy area. Shrader requested an explanation concerning the interior changes. Prithyani said the front building will probably change from what was submitted. The costs for plumbing and construction were three times that amount he expected. The plan for the front building is to have five classrooms. There will be a reception area immediately after entering the building. The administrator will be directly behind the reception area. A hallway will provide access to the classrooms. Prithyani stated a bathroom is being planned for each classroom. The bathroom locations may change on the updated plans. The back building was occupied by a dental office and there are a number of small rooms. Prithyani will repurpose this area, but the current plan does not reflect that because the original architect put all the plumbing in the center. There are existing bathrooms that he wants to reuse. LabCorp is a tenant in the upstairs of the back building. LabCorp will remain in this location. There are also a couple of offices that will be used by Prithyani and his accountant. The general public will not have access to this area. Both buildings have staircases as well as functioning elevators. Windows will not be changed. No changes will be made to the rooftop units; however, dampers may be installed so that each classroom can control the temperature. Some electrical outlets will be added. Shrader mentioned that each of the buildings is two levels. Shrader is aware that Prithyani will occupy the first level with a Toddler House and asked what will occupy the second level. Prithyani indicated that the Mortgage Department for Tech Credit Union occupies that space. Shrader asked what occupies the bottom floor where the older children will be. Prithyani said this space is occupied by a National Youth Advocate Program. This organization places children into foster families. They occupy the entire first floor. The only access to the first floor is the walk-in through the main door. This entry gets to the elevator and stairs. Everything else is sealed off. .

STAFF COMMENTS:

LAIRD – Looking at the plan, a few of the parking spaces will be removed for the playground. It appears there is additional parking being proposed south of the front building. There is also a parking area being proposed southeast of the back building. Is that correct? Prithyani stated these parking areas already exist and nothing is being done with them. No new parking is being proposed. The previous owner was NIPSCO and they required all the parking. Laird stated that adding the garage and driveway will add impervious area. However, some impervious area is being removed. Engineering will need to know the difference between the existing impervious area versus the proposed impervious area. Engineering needs to consider what affect this will have on surface runoff for drainage. If the parking lots are not proposed but are existing, there may be a net decrease which would be very good. Engineering just needs to be able to confirm this. Prithyani stated that the garage would be the equivalent of a two-car garage. Laird conveyed that a Site Permit will be required for the project. The Site Permit will be submitted to the Building Department but approved by the Engineering Department. Prithyani said there are 6 over grown pine trees that he wants to remove. Laird deferred this to the Planning Department for comment. There are tree survey requirements. If these trees do not qualify, they may be able to be removed.

ZURBRIGGEN: The Engineering Department needs clearer plans showing what is being proposed and what is being demolished.

FAHEL: Fahel asked how extensive the kitchen will be. Will any grease equipment be installed? Prithyani explained that the kitchenette area will have a refrigerator, a very small sink, a dishwasher, and electric stove. Prithyani stated that they very seldom use the stove top and the oven is used once a quarter when the parents bake 20 tiny muffins. Hot lunches are not provided, everything is bagged, served, and removed. Fahel requested submittal of internal plumbing plans and detailed floor plans.

MCGINLEY: McGinley asked if there will be any changes to the existing water service or the existing sewer service to the buildings. Prithyani confirmed that no changes are being considered. McGinley provided no further comments.

STITES: During construction, all initial inspections are scheduled through the Building Department. If any new fire protection systems are required or systems need to be changed, this will have to be submitted to the Building Department. Once occupancy is granted, the project will be subject to annual fire inspections. Prithyani conveyed that the building currently is not sprinkled. Will this be an issue? Thrasher interjected that she will cover this issue in her comments.

THRASHER: Thrasher stated her first question was going to be if the building had a sprinkler system. The plans were hard to read and not very clear. It is difficult to calculate the size of the buildings and she did not know the ages of the children in the rooms. For an E occupancy there tends to be a requirement for a sprinkler system depending on the size of the space being used. It appears the buildings are mixed use buildings and a sprinkler system may be required. Thrasher was unable to do any calculations because the information was not clear enough. At a minimum a two-hour separation between all uses will be required. It is doubtful that there is any separation right now. Thrasher said the architect will have to explore all these things. Thrasher can work with the architect if she has questions. Prithyani said he mentioned the sprinkler system to the architect and requested that she put the study into place. Thrasher asked if there are any children under 2-1/2 years old. Prithyani stated the youngest children are 18-months old. Thrasher conveyed that the occupancy is outside of an E occupancy and into an I occupancy which has stricter requirements not only for egress but also for sprinkler systems. Thrasher is assuming the architect is well versed in all the requirements of the State Building Code. Prithyani said the architect has been involved in several day care centers. However, this project is a school, not a day care. Thrasher advised that the State goes by age not curriculum. There may be additional egress requirements and separation requirements. McGinley interjected if either or both buildings require a sprinkler system, they will have to install a separate fire service to each building. The fire service cannot come off the domestic service. It will be necessary to contact the Collection and Distribution office for coordination. Thrasher advised that this project must be submitted to the State of Indiana to obtain a Construction Design Release. A Building Permit is required. It will be necessary to submit one set of paper plans and one PDF set of plans. A complete list of contractors is required at the time of submittal for the Building Permit and all contractors must be registered with the City. Thrasher indicated it will be necessary to contact the Porter County Health Department to make sure they don't have any requirements for the kitchenette and that this project will be in compliance with the Health Department's rules and regulations. Signage will require a separate permit. All permits can be submitted at the same time to the Building Department.

SHRADER: Shrader requested Prithyani explain traffic flow on the site. Prithyani stated that they do a carpool procedure. Parents stay in the car and staff takes the children out of the car and walks them into the building. They have staff available for the morning, afternoon and evening arrival and dismissal process. The front entrance of the front building will be for general public and office staff. When parents come in to drop children off, they will enter through Eastport Center Drive, go straight and then right. Six cars can park at one time. Staff members will get the children in and out of the buildings. All children going into the front building will use the back door. The cars will turn around by the fence line. If the children are going into the back building, they will stop and that is where a staff member will get the children out and take them to the back building. The bottom of the back building and the center left is where staff will park. Shrader is aware that there are four different users. Each of those has a different parking demand. Before any parking is taken away Planning needs to ensure that there is sufficient parking for all the uses that are there. Parking is calculated by useable floor space. The parking calculation does not include the bathrooms, kitchen, mechanical rooms, elevators, stair towers, and areas devoted to storage. The architect will need to provide the square footage of all the useable space for this project. Planning will also need to know the square footage for all the other uses. If gross space for all the other uses is all that can be provided, Planning will work with that. If Prithyani is buying the buildings, plans should be available to figure out what the

useable floor space is for the tenants. Shrader indicated that if LabCorp is just an office, the requirement is 3 spaces per 1,000 sq ft. If it is medical office, the requirement is 5 spaces per 1,000 sq ft. Shrader knows this is a school and they have a curriculum. By zoning code this falls under day care which is a subcategory of public assembly so the specific requirement is 1 space per 250 sq ft. Prithyani will need these calculations to figure out the number of spaces required. If Prithyani is certain the extra spaces are not needed, then a parking study showing how demand works or how there are different peak use times for the users will be needed. Shrader is aware that there is a new architect on this project and that some things are being reworked. Shrader conveyed that the dumpsters are required to be behind principal buildings and she pointed out the areas on the plans where dumpsters would be allowed. If a new dumpster area is being built, it must be masonry, have a front gate, and a door for people to get in and out. All the requirements are in the UDO in section 2.406. Shrader recommended that this information be supplied to the architect or the architect can contact Planning directly for code references. Prithyani explained that the spot behind the back building was chosen because it will be easier for the trash hauler to get in and out. Shrader asked about the purpose of the garage. Prithyani indicated that the garage will be used for storage space. Depending on construction costs, this may be eliminated. Shrader advised that accessory structures are not permitted in the Business Park Zoning District. Prithyani asked if a shed would be allowed. Shrader stated that it would be necessary to talk about it being attached versus a separate structure. It would be something that would be tacked on to the back of the building. Shrader cautioned that setbacks need to be kept in mind. Shrader shared the side and rear yard setbacks associated with each. Prithyani asked if this was for the fenced area or the garage. Shrader said this concerned structures. The fence can be on the property line as long as it is built with the decorative side out. Prithyani said a 6 ft., white privacy fence is being considered. Shrader said the fence location does not appear to be a problem. It will be necessary to check height and material requirements.

GAGE: Gage is assuming that accessibility in terms of handicapped parking spaces already have appropriate ramps in place. Prithyani will double check but is pretty sure they do. Gage thought she heard that the fence to the playground will not cause asphalt to be removed for the parking spaces that are leaving. Prithyani explained that all that will be done is that holes will be dug for the fence posts. The asphalt will not be removed because eventually either rubber mulch or poured rubber will be installed. It needs to be kept flat. Gage asked if this configuration works for this site. Prithyani confirmed that it will work. He pointed out where the playground equipment will be located and the area where they can have lunch or group times. Gage requested that Shrader speak to landscaping. Gage is unsure if the City has seen a fence constructed in a parking lot. In terms of separation of uses between the car drop off, parking, and the playground, Planning would typically see the bottom line of the playground having a landscaping edge to separate the two and wonders if it makes sense in this situation. Gage is wondering with this project if the conversation of parking lot landscaping and what she just spoke about makes sense in this situation with the south line of the playground to separate the playground from the drop-off turn. Prithyani asked about installing metal poles outside the fence. Landscaping will require removal of all the asphalt. Gage said that is what would typically be seen. Prithyani suggested a raised garden bed. Shrader interjected that typically some sort of curb would be installed to prevent a car from crashing into the fence. Shrader believes there are no specific standards about putting a fence up against circulation areas in parking lots. This will have pretty heavy use on a daily basis. It is clearly something that needs a little more thought. Shrader said with something that has a 6" curb around landscaping is very appropriate. When what is going to be done with the site is defined, there may be some landscaping that will need to be removed that can be put somewhere else. Shrader is unsure if the existing landscape meets the standards. At the very least, landscaping cannot be removed and no be replaced. This is something to think about when the outdoor area is designed. Shrader

stated that the fence needs to be 6" off the property line. Where it is currently located is acceptable. The finished side has to face out. It can be a privacy fence 6' tall maximum. Durable high-quality materials appropriate for a commercial application must be used. The standards for that are in section 2.402 and materials specifically are subsection (e). Gage said just for clarification on her part, it is site circulation, safety, and aesthetics that the Valparaiso Ordinance encourages. The typical treatment of this is what she described. It ties into the landscaping ordinance Beth was talking about. It is two- or three-parts related of Valpo's expectation of the aesthetics that happen, instead of a fix in terms of a site design and a finished product.

ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED:

Calculation for Proposed Impervious Area Versus Existing Impervious Area

Site Permit

Submit Complete Internal Plumbing Plan

Submit Complete Floor Plan

Determine If A Sprinkler System is Required

2-Hour Separation Between Uses Will Be Required If a Sprinkler System is not Installed

Submit to the State of Indiana for Construction Design Release

Building Permit

Submit One Set of Paper Plans and One Set of PDF Plans

List of All Contractors and All Must Be Registered with the City

Contact Porter County Health Department

Sign Permit

Fire Service Line Will Be Required If Sprinkler System is Needed

Determine Useable Square Footage of Floor Space for All Uses for Parking Calculation

Curb or Some Sort of Barrier At The Bottom of the Fenced Area