



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
PALISADE PLANNING COMMISSION
March 7, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission for the Town of Palisade was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chair Amy Gekas with Commissioners present: Riley Parker, David Hull, and Vice Chair Leora Ruzin. Absent were Commissioners Don Bosch and Ed Seymour. A quorum was declared. Also in attendance were Community Development Director Brian Rusche and Administrative Assistant Shelley Kopasz.

AGENDA ADOPTION

Motion #1 by Commissioner Riley Parker, seconded by Commissioner David Hull to approve the agenda as presented.

A voice vote was requested.
Motion carried unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Community Development Director Brian Rusche announced that the applications for the opening for the Planning Commission has been closed and the review process is underway with the Board of Trustees conducting interviews with the applicants on Tuesday, March 14, 2023.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion #2 by Commissioner Riley Parker, seconded by Vice-Chair Leora Ruzin to approve the Minutes from the February 7, 2023, Regular meeting of the Palisade Planning Commission, as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None was offered.

PRO 2023-05 – TOWN CENTER OFFICE USE TEXT AMENDMENT

The Planning Commission will consider a text amendment to the Land Development Code (LDC) and Table 6.1 – Use Table relating to office uses within the TC (Town Center) zone district.

Chair Amy Gekas opened the hearing at 6:02 p.m.

Community Development Director Brian Rusche presented the application, stating that in May of 2021, the Board of Trustees adopted an ordinance which amended the Land Development Code, specifically Table 6.1 which is the Use Table. The ordinance relegated general and medical office uses within the Town Center (TC) zone district to only the upper story of buildings, with the intent of reserving the street

level space for uses that would promote shopping and dining within the Town Center, and by extension generate sales tax revenue for the Town.

The owners of 305 Main have requested to allow general office use on the street level in the TC zone with a Conditional Use Permit. The impetus for this request is the proposed expansion of an existing engineering firm to a portion of the building previously containing retail use. A conversion of the space from retail use to office use is not currently permitted due to the change in 2021.

Brian Quarnstrom, 500 Illinois St., Golden, CO, ½ owner of REO Holdings, LLC of 305 Main Street, Palisade, Colorado. Mr. Quarnstrom asked for a consideration on a case-by-case basis for an engineering firm, J-U-B Engineers, to expand the office space in Unit 4, which is 475 sq feet, not a viable space for the code change. He feels it not a great pace for retail or restaurant and hopes to allow the engineering firm to expand employees by 100 percent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chuck Nowak, 3276 Semillon St, Palisade, CO, owner of 101 W. 3rd Street, Palisade. Mr. Nowak explained that he purchased the adjacent building across the street in hopes to revitalize the Town Center with retail and to bring people into Palisade from the outside areas. Mr. Nowak feels that the proposed space, Unit 4 of 305 Main Street is a viable space for retail or small business. He added that currently, rental space upstairs could easily be used for an engineering company. He was against the proposed change to the text amendment.

Becky Davis, 3670 G 4/10 Road, Palisade, CO, owner of Nana's Farm Store located at 237 S. Main Street, Palisade, CO. She is a resident of Palisade since 1990 and stated that that building is very big part of the Town of Palisade. She feels the 305 Main Street building space to be viable, as she feels the town needs more retail and she against the office space proposed.

Jessica Burford, 781 Foxtail Road, Grand Junction, CO, Palisade Chamber of Commerce. She is in support of JUB Engineering expansion, indicating that Unit 4 of the building is not a viable space for retail because the lack of restroom facilities. She feels that J-U-B Engineering has been a very good neighbor, employing workers with high paying jobs, stating the fact that they spend money in the town of Palisade.

Nancy Lewis 848 Montclair Drive, Palisade, CO has lived here since 2009 and has seen retail get decimated by businesses that are not retail, being in the very important part of Palisade to raise taxes, and to have business thrive. She is involved with Blue Pig and makes her living in the retail sector of Palisade. There are more viable places elsewhere for the engineering company, the Chamber of Commerce, and the library. She stated 40 percent is retail in the town. She feels that the culture of Palisade will suffer and suggests other locations for offices with only retail businesses on the first floor of buildings in the town of Palisade.

COMMISSIONER COMMENT

Vice Chair Leora Ruzin commented that if they allow for this change, there would not be any retail in the building, indicating that Unit 1 is an insurance company, which is never there. She has concerns that if J-U-B Engineering expands by 100 percent, she questions how Unit 4 will achieve that. She has problems with the proposed language as it stands, and her recommendation is that if this is approved that there be a caveat, that a certain percentage of any one building be retail. She later implied that the sales tax revenue would decline, especially with the existing cannabis industry growth in the valley.

Commissioner David Hull declined comment on this stating only that the Planning Commission and the Board of Trustees approved this amendment back in 2021 for a reason and believes that we should not set a precedence with this change.

Commissioner Riley Parker likes the proposal. It is not equipped with plumbing so cannot be used for food or retail difficult and best outcome to allow the J-U-B Engineering to expand. Any vacant space that the Town has sends the wrong message and gives the impression that the town is in decline with vacant space.

Chair Amy Gekas agreed with Mr. Parker stating that Conditional Use Permits are the way to proceed in the manner. She also commented that in moving forward, there is a need to keep the Comprehensive Plan in mind. She recommends that the Board to consider the minimum of 32 hours per calendar week for all businesses downtown.

Mr. Quarnstrom in closing stated that REO Holdings worked hard in finding a business to activate the space. He suggests that there is a building on Third Street is for sale and could be an option for commercial retail space. He also clarified that the space in the upper part of the 305 Main Street is residential and is not vacant.

Chuck Nowak spoke again stating that Gubbini Winery's lease was terminated and was asked to leave otherwise, she would still be in business. Copeka Coffee, located at 103 Main, was month-to-month and the lease was terminated. Sandy King's Gallery building is being sold which gives another option for retail or restaurant.

Motion #3

Riley Parker made the motion to approve the text amendment as presented. The motion died for lack of a second.

David Hull made the motion to object the text amendment, with the intent of addressing the Land Development Code in the future.

Seconded by Leora Ruzin.

A roll call vote was requested.

Motion carried 3 for, 1 against.

Chair Gekas closed the hearing at 6:37 p.m.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Community Development Director Rusche after the adoption of the Palisade Game Plan, the next step is to evaluate the Land Development Code. The Town has asked for a grant to receive some funds to accomplish this. He also offered the Commissioners to participate in training with CIRSA at a future date.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion #4 to adjourn by Commissioner Hull, seconded by Commissioner Riley Parker at 6:43 p.m.

X 

Amy Gekas
Planning Commission Chairperson

X 

Shelley Kopasz
Administrative Assistant