

**MINUTES  
CITY OF DARIEN  
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MEETING  
July 6, 2022**

**PRESENT:** Lou Mallers – Chairperson, Robert Erickson, Bryan Gay (7:02 p.m.), Hilda Gonzalez, Chris Jackson, Julie Kasprovicz, Ralph Stompanato

**ABSENT:** Brian Liedtke, Shari Gillespie

**OTHERS:** Jordan Yanke - City Planner

Chairperson Lou Mallers called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Darien City Hall, Council Chambers, 1702 Plainfield Road, Darien, Illinois. Chairperson Mallers declared a quorum present and swore in the audience members wishing to present public testimony.

**REGULAR MEETING:**

**A. Public Hearing – PZC2022-03 - 8431 Wilmette Avenue – Special Use Amendment & Variations -Petitioner (Art Cano) seeks approval for an amendment to a Special Use and Variation requests from Sections 5A-7-3-5(D) and 5A-7-3-8(B) of the Zoning Ordinance. The petition specifically requests to allow for the interior remodeling and addition of three (3) studio apartments inside an existing apartment building. Property is located within the R-3 Multi-Family Residence District and the Variation requests are from the following standards in the City of Darien Zoning Ordinance:**

- 1) Section 5A-7-3-5(D): R-3 District Land Area per Dwelling Unit Standards.**
- 2) Section 5A-7-3-8(B): R-3 District Minimum Floor Area Standards.**

Mr. Jordan Yanke, City Planner reported that the subject property was annexed into the City in 2012 and was granted special use approval for multi-family use within the site's lone structure approving 5 dwelling units. He reported that the petitioner has proposed a remodel to the building's lower-level storage area into three additional studio/efficiency apartments resulting in eight total throughout the building's three floors, and the increase in dwelling units. He further reported that this requires an amendment to the existing special use for the site as well as variation requests regarding the square feet in the land area and square feet of floor area.

Mr. Yanke reported that zoning code requires a minimum of 31,000 square feet in land area for the site given the type and number of units proposed and that the property is 17,706 square feet according to the plat of survey. He reported that the code specifies studio/efficiency units shall contain a minimum of 750 square feet in floor area and that the proposed studio/efficiency units are 400 square feet in floor area. He further reported that no exterior improvements are proposed with this petition and that the existing conditions, such as building setbacks, parking setbacks, and lot coverage will not be altered and are allowed to remain.

Mr. Yanke reported that the site contains the required number of parking spaces for the proposed number of units and that the code specifies a ratio of 2 spaces per dwelling unit are required. He reported that the site contains 16 parking spaces

Mr. Art Cano, petitioner stated that he has lived in Darien for over 50 years and served on the Zoning Board of Appeals, Zoning Commission, and a volunteer for over 9 years. He stated that he is proposing to add three additional apartments to his 3400 square foot building with no exterior structures. Mr. Cano stated that the building was built in 1974 and annexed in 2012.

Mr. Cano reported that that the basement level was mainly used for storage and that Darien is a high market area for seasonal students at Argonne Labs. He stated that students are living at Woodsprings Hotel and paying high prices. He further stated that there is a demand for small units under \$1,000 per month.

Chairperson Lou Mallers questioned if there would be a separate entrance.

Mr. Cano stated that the main entrance will be used for entry and that the windows in the lower level will have to be a certain size with 8% of light and 32 square feet of window for Fire District restrictions and ingress and egress. He stated that the window wells will have to be excavated and installed.

Commissioner Chris Jackson questioned if the balconies above would be affected, and he questioned why the windows were not considered outside construction.

Mr. Cano stated that the balconies would not be affected, and Mr. Yanke reported that the fundamental walls would not be changed and therefore not considered outside construction. He did report however that the petitioner will have to go through the permitting process and work with the City Engineer.

Commissioner Bryan Gay questioned if there were two points of access for the front and back stairwell.

Mr. Cano stated that the side entrance will remain as entry to the apartments and the stairs converted to closets.

Commissioner Julie Kasprovicz questioned the need for 3 apartments and if the petitioner would consider 1 or 2 instead.

Mr. Cano stated that 3 is better and that he would like to satisfy the single tenant looking to spend less than \$1,000 per month. He stated that this size apartment is really needed.

There was some discussion regarding the average size of a studio apartment. Mr. Yanke reported that the 2018/2019 data showed the average to be 400-500 square feet compared to years ago at 700 square feet and that the numbers appear to be going down.

Commissioner Hilda Gonzalez stated that the units are small and that 3 is a lot in a small space. She stated that she was concerned about getting out of the window and that the proposal does not fit the housing model in Darien.

Mr. Cano stated that the window will be 18" off the floor.

Mr. Yanke reported that he has discussed the proposal with the Fire District and that they had no objection regarding the special use zoning issue.

Commissioner Kasprovicz questioned the outdoor patio.

Mr. Cano stated that the other units will have new decks and will be able to use the outdoor patio as well as the three additional units.

Commissioner Jackson stated that he was concerned that the petitioner was asking for 40% relief. He stated that it makes more sense having two units and that they will be more marketable. Commissioner Jackson also questioned the daycare parking and playground area.

Mr. Cano stated that he owned the parking lot and playground area and that if needed that parking could also be used but that they both had plenty of parking. He also stated that the code is two parking spaces per unit and that all of his tenants only use one space.

Commissioner Bob Erickson questioned the ADA requirements.

Mr. Yanke reported that the architect will figure that out and that the building will have to be reviewed. He stated that the proposal meets the parking space requirements.

Commissioner Ralph Stompanato questioned if there are any restrictions on how many people can rent per unit.

Mr. Yanke reported and cited that the zoning ordinance is one family per dwelling.

Commissioner Gay stated that that there is a need for this type of housing in Darien.

Mr. Cano stated that the hotel has the same size, but they are paying big money.

Chairperson Mallers asked the petitioner if he was open to two units and not three.

Mr. Cano stated that the price goes up for rent and eliminates the need.

Commissioner Jackson questioned if there are any studio apartments at 750 square feet in Darien.

Mr. Yanke reported that he was unable to find any in the ordinance.

There was no one in the audience wishing to present public comment and at 7:54 p.m. Chairperson Mallers closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Kasprovicz stated that the hotel next door are people that want to move into small spaces and that there are a lot of issues.

Mr. Yanke reported that Commissioner Shari Gillespie was not in favor of the proposal.

**Commissioner Gonzalez made a motion, and it was seconded by Commissioner Stompanato to approve 8431 Wilmette Avenue – Special Use Amendment & Variations. Petitioner (Art Cano) seeks approval for an amendment to a Special Use and Variation requests from Sections 5A-7-3-5(D) and 5A-7-3-8(B) of the Zoning Ordinance. The petition specifically requests to allow for the interior remodeling and addition of three (3) studio apartments inside an existing apartment building. Property is located within the R-3 Multi-Family Residence District and the Variation requests are from the following standards in the City of Darien Zoning Ordinance:**

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**Upon roll call vote, THE MOTION was unfavorable with a vote of 6 Nays and 1 Aye.**

**Nays – Erickson, Gonzalez, Jackson, Kasprovicz, Stompanato, Mallers  
Ayes – Gay**

Mr. Yanke reported that the petition would be forwarded to the Municipal Services Committee with a non-favorable motion.

### **REGULAR MEETING - OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

### **STAFF UPDATES & CORRESPONDENCE**

Mr. Yanke provided an update on the Sokol property and that the meeting on July 20<sup>th</sup> will be to review the Comprehensive Plan.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Commissioner Stompanato made a motion, and it was seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez to approve the June 15, 2022, Regular Meeting Minutes with changes.**

**Upon voice vote, THE MOTION CARRIED 6-0. Commissioner Gay abstained.**

### **NEXT MEETING**

Mr. Yanke announced that the next meeting is scheduled for July 20, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS (On any topic related to Planning and Zoning)**

There was no one in the audience wishing to present public comment.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**With no further business before the Commission, Commissioner Gay made a motion, and it was seconded by Commissioner Kasprowicz. Upon voice vote, THE MOTION CARRIED unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.**

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

**APPROVED:**

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**Elizabeth Lahey  
Secretary**

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**Lou Mallers  
Chairperson**