

ALTOONA PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING

November 28, 2023

Altoona City Hall

Members Present in Person: Dan Dove, Scott Henry, Jill Pudenz, Steve Chase

Members Present Virtually: None

Members Absent: Dan Narber, Erin Herbold-Swalwell, Steve Moyna

Staff: John Shaw, Jenn Naylor, Natalie Jacobson

Guests: Meeting was held in a virtual Zoom format and in-person; In-person and online guests included Chip Walker, LaToya Moten, Eric Cannon, Brad Kuehl, Max Kenkel, Suzy Wilson, and others not signed in.

Chairperson Jill Pudenz called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

1. Roll Call. Roll call was taken. Four commissioners were present at roll call.

Prior to Item 2, Pudenz stated that agenda Item 5 had been pulled from the agenda.

2. Public hearing to consider a development plan request from HOA RE LLC for Honda of Altoona.

Eric Cannon (Snyder & Associates) presented the request. He explained that they recently submitted the sign package for the site, as Honda is getting ready to open. He said a monument sign was shown on the site plan along the intersection of Bass Pro Drive and Adventureland Drive. A site plan was displayed for the Commission. Cannon said two signs were shown originally on the site plan. For the signage stuff, they typically put placeholders on site plans, as signs go through a separate process for permitting. Honda is now at the point to get signage. He said with this being a C-7 district, there are some unique requirements with what's allowed. They aren't allowed to have a very tall sign at the front entrance. He said there is a precedent in the area with what was done at the Outlets of Des Moines as far as where stuff can go and how tall it can be. Cannon stated that what they are asking for is the sign square footage amendment to allow up to 100 square feet. He said he doesn't believe that's really a point of discussion at all, that it really comes down to the location of the sign. At the intersection of Adventureland and Bass Pro, the City has asked that the sign be set back a distance of 25', based on the 25' height they are asking for. He said the client is actually asking for 30'. The setback is approximately 19' currently. If they pushed it back further onto the site, it would get into the curb or drive aisle. They are asking consideration to slide it back only 1' to 2'. If they do more than that, it'll push it 60' or more away to the next island across the drive aisle, and the sign would have to turn 90 degrees. So he said the first thing they are asking is for consideration to leave the sign in that location where it was shown on the site plan, which was always the intent. He said he gets that height is part of the discussion and that the City has asked for a setback to be consistent with the height. He said they are asking for consideration on that, because if they push it back any further, it will be in the drive aisle, very far away. He said it is also a T-intersection. He said there is some precedent with the Outlets sign south of there along Bass Pro Drive, but this is at the intersection. The only lane that is adjacent to this is the southbound lane coming out of Bass Pro on the west side. It's totally different than the Outlets sign on Bass Pro. He said he knows it's a couple of feet closer, but he doesn't know that it is a huge deal given this location. It is where they have always shown it. He understands the height is a concern, but they would ask for consideration on that.

Cannon said the second thing they are asking is the height. They had asked for 30', which is a standard Honda package. It is possible that they could get a custom fabrication as far as the ACM panels. He said that is difficult and expensive when it comes to something like this. This is the second store in the country with this Gen 2 model national branding. Modifying that with Honda would be an uphill

challenge. Cannon said the vender is saying that's something that Honda probably wouldn't consider at this point, considering that this is their brand new store for modeling and packaging. The Outlets is 25'; they are asking for 30'. The Outlets sign is bigger and wider, around 260 square feet. Honda is taller but has a smaller square footage at 100 square feet. He said they are asking for a little bit of leniency to allow the standard packaging from Honda.

Cannon said the last point that Staff asked for regards the base. They are showing an 18" base at the bottom. The Outlets had a 3'8" base. He said they could go a little bit higher. He didn't know if 24" or 30" would be acceptable. He said if they get into part of that blue ACM panel that is part of the Honda branding, it is very difficult to change up their programming on their signs. There is landscaping around the base of the sign, so he's not even sure how much of the base will be seen. For the prairie theme, they are willing to do a brick that matches the brick on the building to be consistent with that look. He said since there's going to be landscaping around it, he's not sure how big of a deal it is. They are asking for flexibility in trying to fit within that national branding standard that Honda has for that location.

Pudenz asked Shaw if the setbacks were for visibility at the intersection. Shaw said the C-7 district has requirements for their sign. They are allowed a monument sign 10' high that can be set back as close as 10' from the property line and can be 80 square feet in area. Through a development amendment, they are asking for a height requirement of 30', a setback of a little over 19', and area of 100 square feet. That is just their standard Honda sign with no prairie elements shown on their design that are required by the DCM. Staff suggests that if they are allowed to go to a higher height, the setback should match the height. This is consistent with all types of signs city-wide. Interstate high rise signs can be up to 50' high with a 50' setback. A 25' tall sign would have a 25' setback. That was brought up and approved by the Outlets, and Shaw said it should apply to this as well. If they want to be closer, they can bring the height down to 20'. He said this is a pole sign. There is a cabinet on top of a pole with a blue skirting around it. If they want to drop the height down, they can take out one of the blue panels, which are just under 5' in height each. He added that they can bring down the height and scoot the sign back just a little bit to give at least a flavor of compliance. He said they need to provide some kind of architectural elements within the sign to comply with the Prairie Crossing Development Plan. That has been consistent throughout the development, especially in allowing the Outlets to modify their sign regulations. The Outlets substantially complied with the design elements, not only in the freestanding signs, but the building signs as well. Shaw suggested that instead of the bottom, smaller cabinet, it should be a substantially-sized base about 4' high or so, and that should be done using prescribed materials out of the DCM, a combination of brick and stone. They could also do something architecturally with those to give it that feeling the rest of the development is complying with, which they were asked to do on their site. Shaw said that is the bare minimum.

Pudenz asked Walker what they did on the building for the prairie design. Walker, who appeared virtually, thanked them for the meeting. He addressed the stone across the bottom front between the service drives as something Honda approved to add to the original design. He said he had a call with Honda today, and they indicated they would allow the same style aesthetics of the stone on the building to go around the branding sign for the entry. They would also be willing to raise that up a bit. He said the Outlet Crossing is 30" to 32", and they could do something in that neighborhood. They'd have to see how it would work out proportionally, but they could definitely increase it from the 18" in height and incorporate similar stone from the front of the building to tie the two things together. Pudenz asked if it were an option to reduce the number of blue panels if they were to go with a taller base and go with two blue panels for a height of 25'. They could go with a 3' base and 10' of blue panels and 10' of the Honda sign. Walker said Honda makes standard sign packages. This is the sign that is associated with this sized building. It comes through national accounts. It is nothing they set up or designed. It is Honda's sign package, including the style of the font, how and where

they are hung from the building, and this is the sign associated with a building of that square footage and type of access from the public right-of-way.

Henry asked if they have an interstate sign. Shaw stated they want to focus on getting this sign up first. Henry asked if there possibly could be. Shaw said all over the world they do all different types of signs and asked Walker if they only have 30' tall signs. Walker said the sign height and style is associated with the size of the building. There are other signs available, but this one is reflective to how the building sits for visibility. It is all done by their national sign company. Pudenz asked if it were possible to do something more like an interstate sign somewhere else on the property and do a lower monument sign along the roadway. Walker said this would be the entry sign. If they get to an integrated site sign, perhaps when there is second development south of this one, maybe they would tie those together. He doesn't know, and he said he was not speaking for the property owners. He was just reflecting on how Honda's national program works. He said this was what was submitted originally, but unfortunately through a series of errors, this sign was pulled out of the original sign submission package, so this is the sign that was submitted with the building signs, service entry signs, and the Altoona lettering. Shaw asked if they do make smaller, lower-sitting signs. Walker said they make signs in all different sizes. They have their standard sizes. He wasn't sure of the next size down, but he said he knows a 25' sign is not in their standard offerings. He said yes, it could be done as a custom-built sign that would be an additional expense to the client. He said this is a brand-new image product for Honda. It is the second one vertical in North America, so they have been very protective of this brand-new image. It is called Blue Stage or Generation 4. They are very reluctant to make any changes or edits. It takes about seven years to develop these image programs. Like other national brands such as Toyota, Mercedes, Nissan, they are all protective of their signature elements, and this is certainly a signature element. They did a lot of work with Staff in going back to Honda for incorporation of the stone, which is not one of their image materials at all. Honda bent the rules for them on that, and they would be willing to allow similar stone around the base of the sign. Walker said they really didn't think they'd get the stone approved, to be honest. They are grateful, and this is a brand-new open point, and Honda is excited about it. Staff there have been training and preparing for opening day, which is Friday [December 1]. This is the last piece of the puzzle they need to put together. Pudenz said she understands the branding packages, but these aren't brand-new requirements and it should have been considered from the beginning. She recommends a compromise to see if there's a way to find a lower height. Moving it back to the other island isn't the best decision, but staying within reasonable accommodations to the Code/Ordinances and what's been already accepted through the Prairie Crossing Outlets signage.

Cannon said the one thing he'd say about the Outlets is that it is a stand-alone facility. They have the ability to write their own rules, and that sign is much bigger. It's 14' wide versus 10' wide. That is 25' tall, and this is 30' tall. He doesn't think the Outlets were asking for 30' tall; they were asking for 25', so they wrote the rules at that point. There is a precedent that was set by the Outlets, but there's also a lot of other ground out there. He said each site is going to stand alone on its own merit based on the proximity of the sign, where it sits next to the roadway, how it functions on the site. There should be consideration given to the orientation of this sign at the T-intersection and how that looks and feels relative to just a sign on the side of the road that you drive by. He said it's a little bit different area. He again asked for consideration and said that just because it was done for the Outlets doesn't mean it is gospel for everything. Shaw said what is gospel for the site is already written into the sign code. The exception has been through the development plan process. The Outlet area is substantially larger with substantially more businesses advertising and doing business there versus one company being Honda. Also, where this is set back, the sidewalk is actually an easement on the property. Usually sidewalks are in the right-of-way, so perspective from that sidewalk in front of that sign is only about 13' or so. It will feel very close to the road and the pedestrian way through there. It is substantially higher than anything normally allowed. Cannon stated that the sidewalk sits on private property in front of the Outlets in the exact same area that this does. Shaw said it was for a perspective

of proximity. If the sidewalk was in the right-of-way, and the right-of-way was wider, it would feel like it was 18' or 19' feet away versus much closer. Pudenz asked Walker if he had all the options on the signage. Walker affirmed. Pudenz asked if there was something shorter that is a standard. Walker said there is not a 25' sign, if that's the question. He said he is sure one could be made, but it is not in the standard package that dealers get to choose from and that the contractor has in inventory. They are a single-source supplier for all Honda stores. All sign packages come out of one manufacturing plant in South Carolina. Dove asked how big the bottom panel is. The Commissioners discussed how dropping the bottom panel might not get them to the 25' height. Shaw said they could remove one of the middle panels and remove the smaller blue base, and that becomes the stone with a cap that matches the material on the building.

Pudenz opened the public hearing. With no comments, Pudenz closed the public hearing.

Motion by Henry, seconded by Dove, to deny the 30' height but approve the 25' height with prairie elements at the bottom approved by Staff and to be set back as far as they can, even if it is only 1' or 2'.

Votes: Yes – Henry, Dove, Pudenz, Chase. No – None. Abstain – None. Motion approved, 4-0-0.

3. Public hearing to consider a request from Newblood Development LLC to amend the Altoona Zoning Map to change 1.5 acres from Conditional C-2 (General Commercial) to Conditional C-2 (General Commercial) permitting the use of Automotive Service Stations.

Brad Kuehl (Bishop Engineering) presented the request. They would like to locate one of their Christian Brothers Automotive stores on Lot 1 Eastpointe Parkway Plat 6 at 1250 1st Avenue N.

Billy Green, Jr. (Christian Brothers Automotive Corporation, Houston, TX) explained that Christian Brothers Automotive is a light automotive repair facility that has been around for over 40 years. They are in 30 states and have 280 locations. They've got three top 10% performing stores in Clive, Grimes, and Ankeny, and they handle mainly brakes, shocks, tune-ups, oil changes, alignments, A/C services, and other things considered light automotive repair. They don't do any major noise generators, no body repair, no tire recapping, no muffler repair, and no painting. They are open Monday through Friday from 7:00AM to 6:00PM. They have modified hours on Saturdays only up to 180 days. After 180 days, every store of the 280 is closed on the weekends. Green, Jr. explained that they do utilize a shuttle car. If someone drops their car off for repair, the shuttle service will take them back home, and they'll pick them up when the repair is done. He said there was a comment in the staff report about noise. He said they are located next to daycares, schools, and residential neighborhoods all over the country. In Clive, they are directly adjacent to a daycare. There is no beating and banging. They are not taking engines apart and rebuilding them. Pudenz asked if this would be for just the lot or for the whole area. Shaw stated just that lot. Pudenz opened the public hearing.

Max Kenkel (204 11th St NW) said he had three questions to start. He asked about the light pollution situation in the evenings. Green, Jr. said there are only lights on the building. There is never light pollution, and you can't see the lights past the property lines. Kenkel said his next question was about noise pollution. They will be using impact wrenches and asked if the bays were closed in the summer when they are doing work. Green, Jr. responded not during the summer but during the winter. He said he took a measurement on Google Earth, and the distance to the closest house is over 300' and that it would be hard for sound to travel 300' due to their operations. Kenkel said they underestimate how soundproof their houses are in that neighborhood. He said a lot of them work from home, which is why it is a cause for concern. There is a direct line to his office window. He then said his third question was about smells and pollution. He asked about the storage of the chemicals they would be using. Green, Jr. said that is governed by federal and state law. He's never had a complaint about odor and

said most of their chemicals are stored safely due to federal law. He's never even been asked about odors. Kenkel said he's in favor of Altoona growing and new businesses coming in, but he's also protective about property values. If someone could assure him and everyone else that they won't be impacted, then that might be a good conversation. If this opens the door to other things coming in there that will bring smell or light pollution, they'd be pretty concerned as a neighborhood. He said that it's felt like a constant bait and switch in the neighborhood on what's been going in. It would be good to have some consistency.

Suzy Wilson (209 11th St NW) said she just wanted the Commission to know she cares about what goes into that development. She asked questions of Bishop Engineering and got all the answers satisfactorily. There is no concern with that specific business. She said she just wanted clarification that the amendment would be just for the location of that business, as her biggest concern was that it would open the door for other automotive repair businesses to go into the entire development behind their homes. She said it is an attractive looking building for a repair site. She said it isn't directly behind her house. She wanted them to know they are a neighborhood that cares what goes in and they are watching. Henry asked Shaw if they had received comments through letters or anything. Jacobson said they have not received any direct letters or phone calls regarding this item.

Brad Kuehl said they had a neighborhood meeting about this. They only had one person show up. It was held in the middle of the afternoon, which is a tough time. That person was outside of the notification area, but he seemed to be satisfied with the answers that he got. Kuehl said this project won't generate a lot of traffic. The area is changing and continuing to change, but they won't impact that very much.

Pudenz closed the public hearing. She asked Shaw if there was a way to limit automotive service stations to light service rather than body shop work if it ever changes hands. Shaw didn't think body repair was even allowed in the C-2 district. Pudenz asked if it was a completely different category. Shaw said that it's a light industrial-type use, an M-1. Pudenz asked if there would be anything in that automotive service stations category that would be louder. Shaw said it was a matter of what they were working on, how much they would use their air wrenches. What the Commission would be doing would be taking off that restriction, so basically any business in the C-2 district that is automotive service of some sort would be permitted on the site, regardless of who is coming before them today. If Christian Brothers builds it, and they're there for a while, and then they sell the location, someone else could come in, like a Midas shop, a Goodyear, a self-employed person. They would be allowed to operate an automotive service in the C-2. He said he wasn't sure if there was a way to put a restriction on it that only pigeonholes what Christian Brothers's business plan is versus anything else, and he wasn't sure any impact of that would be noticeable. Pudenz told Kuehl that Bishop sounds like they've been very responsive to questions and thanked them for doing that.

Motion by Dove, seconded by Chase, for recommendation to amend the Altoona Zoning Map to change 1.5 acres from Conditional C-2 (General Commercial) to Conditional C-2 (General Commercial) permitting the use of Automotive Service Stations.

Votes: Yes – Dove, Chase, Pudenz. No – Henry. Abstain – None. Motion approved, 3-1-0.

4. Consideration and recommendation of the Christian Brothers Automotive Site Plan.

Shaw encouraged the neighbors to stay, as the site plan was next on the agenda.

Brad Kuehl (Bishop Engineering) presented the request. The site plan was displayed. Kuehl explained it was a single-side, 9-bay store with 5,100 square feet of a small office on one end. It has a nice brick exterior that is very residential-looking in nature. It will fit into most neighborhoods. There is an

ingress/egress easement through the site. They will be providing a 26' wide shared access drive that will connect the property to the north to the private drive to the south. There will be no access from their property to 1st Avenue N. Orientation has been set so that the bay doors are away from the public right-of-way, as they understand that is not desired in Altoona. The parking and the main drive out for the business itself is on the backside. They have 30-plus parking stalls. Kuehl said as far as storm water, there is regional detention for this area. They are managing their storm water on-site, and it will be directed to the south where it will be picked up by a storm sewer and directed to the regional storm basin on the south end. They will have sanitary sewer and water service to the site. There will be landscaping around the property as well. Chase asked about the deficiencies. Kuehl said they have been working with Staff. They need to work out fire suppression for the building. Typically, they don't have that in most locations, so they need to work that out. There is also an extension of the sanitary sewer through this site, which needs to have the details worked out. The current lineup will have a lot of conflicts with utilities, so they are looking at an alternate around the other side of the building. Chase asked to display page P-1 for the lighting to address the neighbors' concerns about light pollution. Shaw said they are required to be dark sky compliant with their lighting, so the lighting has to be downcast and is not allowed to bleed off of their site. Pudenz said it looks like there is a good buffer. Shaw added that they are not allowed to store anything outside, that everything has to be enclosed. They have a dumpster enclosure for their refuse. Dove asked the neighbors if they understood what the numbers on P-1 meant. The neighbors said no. Pudenz said the important thing is the zero. Dove said there is no light past the property line. Kuehl said the lighting would be on the building. Henry asked Shaw how it was decided how much parking they need. He said the reason he is asking is because he works by the Christian Brothers in Ankeny, and there are cars everywhere. Jacobson said they are required to have one stall for every 200 square feet. They are providing 29 parking stalls, which meets the parking requirement for this property. Shaw said that doesn't include the bays. Henry said he didn't know if that's good, bad, or indifferent, but what he sees at the Christian Brothers in Ankeny is a disaster. Pudenz asked if there were any intentions of parking along the drive on the east side. Shaw said it isn't wide enough. Green, Jr. said they tried to maximize the parking at this location, and he wasn't sure they could add more than that. Keuhl said there are 35 shown and 28 required. Henry said it seems like enough. Green, Jr. said they have been very successful in this area, probably more successful than they may have thought. They are pretty full in Grimes as well. Henry said not to take his "no" vote as that he doesn't want them here in town. He wants them in town, just not at this spot.

Max Kenkel (204 11th St NW) said he would ask the Council to mandate a higher greenbelt on the east side. He said if the doors are open, and if there are impact wrenches going to remove tires, that sound will funnel right through the houses into his front door when he has it open in the spring and summer and fall while he is working in his office. He said if the business goes in, as it sounds like it was approved, if they could do something to cut down the sound from traveling south into their neighborhood, that would be good. He said they satisfied his question on the lighting. Pudenz asked if he was talking about the south side. Kenkel showed the area on the display. He would like some pine trees that would close in together and absorb the sound. Pudenz asked what they were showing on the plan. Jacobson said on the south side was a mixture of shrubs. On the west was a variation of a honey locust tree and a Kentucky toffee tree. Pudenz asked if there was a height on the south shrubs. Jacobson said it says what a minimum size would be, not a full-grown size. Most get 2' to 3' in height. Shaw said they'll usually be up to 4' tall. He explained that those along the south are for headlight screening. Dove explained that they can't be overly tall, as they have to be able to see to drive around the corners. Kenkel said maybe they could put something on the berm that is between that development and their houses. He said there was supposed to be a bigger berm originally, but they put it further down. He said he works from home three days a week, so anything they can do to cut down the sound would help. Shaw asked Kenkel which house was his. Kenkel showed it on the display. He said the sound would shotgun right down into his front drive. He said sound does travel, because they heard the sound from Metronet as they worked around the area. He said if they have

five impact wrenches going at once, it will be loud. Pudenz clarified that the Commission is a recommendation board, and City Council will actually make the final decision.

Suzy Wilson (209 11th St NW) addressed the berm. She said she has pretty good foliage right behind her home, but their neighbors do not. It is kind of empty there with a big gap. She felt pine trees could help block the light and noise. Dove stated he agreed and asked if Green, Jr. could talk to the owner of that land. Pudenz asked about the owner of the pond lot. Shaw said the developer who sold this land to Grubb, who sold it to Christian Brothers, still owns that property. He thinks they'd be willing to work with them.

Kenkel said that when they installed the berm, they were told it would go from the street all the way down. Instead, it tapers off and then it's basically flush with the height of the pond the rest of the way down the street. Pudenz asked if there were original plans they could see to make sure it complies. Shaw said when they developed this and zoned it as a part of the condition when they did the original C-5 zoning, they would put a berm and plantings there. He imagines that over time, some of those trees have not made it. Henry said we can't hold Christian Brothers accountable for that. Shaw said if the applicant agrees to look into it, he's sure that the original property owner would be amenable to allowing them to put trees there. Pudenz asked Green, Jr. and Kuehl if that was something they would look into. Kuehl said they will consider beefing up the landscaping they could do on their own property and the entrance drive. Obviously they don't have control of the property to the south, but they can have that conversation with the developer/owner of the property and see what they'd be willing to work out with Christian Brothers. Green, Jr. asked if the Commission were asking about a condition of them enhancing the landscaping off-site. Pudenz clarified, asking if he'd be willing to work with the other property owner to plant some additional evergreens there to provide screening. Henry added they'd like him to look into it. Green, Jr. said he'd be open to it. Henry said it's not mandatory. Pudenz added that it is not a condition.

Motion by Dove, seconded by Chase, for recommendation of the Christian Brothers Automotive Site Plan, subject to deficiencies.

Votes: Yes – Dove, Chase, Pudenz. No – Henry. Abstain – None. Motion approved, 3-1-0.

5. Consideration and recommendation of the Glencoe Heights Site Plan.

Pudenz stated that this item was requested to be removed. Shaw said they are still working through details of getting the right-of-way for the street extension, because they are working with two other property owners.

Motion by Henry, seconded by Dove, to defer action on the Glencoe Heights Site Plan.

Votes: Yes – Henry, Dove, Pudenz, Chase. No – None. Abstain – None. Motion approved, 4-0-0.

6. Minutes of the October 31, 2023 meeting.

Motion by Pudenz, seconded by Chase, to approve the minutes.

Votes: Yes – Pudenz, Chase, Henry. No – None. Abstain – Dove. Motion approved, 3-0-1.

7. Minutes of the November 15, 2023 special meeting.

Motion by Pudenz, seconded by Henry, to approve the minutes.

Votes: Yes – Pudenz, Henry, Dove, Chase. No – None. Abstain – None. Motion approved, 4-0-0.

Old/New Business

Henry was happy that the pond by B-Bops was cleaned up.

Motion by Henry, seconded by Dove, to adjourn.

Votes: Yes – Henry, Dove, Pudenz, Chase. No – None. Abstain – Henry. Motion approved, 4-0-0.

Meeting adjourned 7:27 p.m. Next regular meeting is December 19, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Naylor
Office Assistant