

MINUTES

CARBONDALE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

Thursday June 22, 2023

Commissioners Present:

Jay Engstrom, Chair
Nicholas DiFrank, Vice-Chair
Kim Magee
Nick Miscione
Kade Gianinetti
Jarrett Mork
Jess Robison (Alternate)
Cindy Suplizio (Alternate)

Staff Present:

Jared Barnes, Planning Director
Kelley Amdur, Planner
Kae McDonald, Planning Technician

Commissioners Absent:

Jeff Davlyn

Guests and Attendees:

Angela Loughry (Confluence Architecture, Applicant for Little Blue Preschool)
Patrick Carpenter (Little Blue Lake Preschool)
Michelle Oger (Director, Blue Lake Preschool)
Drew Sorenson (On-Site Director, Little Blue Preschool)
Riley Soderquist, Carbondale Center Place, LLC

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Jay Engstrom.

June 8, 2023 Minutes:

Jarrett ***moved*** to approve the June 8, 2023, meeting minutes. Jess ***seconded the motion***, and it was ***unanimously approved***.

Yes: Jay, Nicholas, Kim, Nick, Kade, Jarrett, Jess

No: none

Public Comment – Persons Present Not on the Agenda

There were no persons present to speak on a non-agenda item.

PUBLIC HEARING: 55 N. 7th Street – Little Blue Preschool Expansion Combined Application: Administrative Site Plan Review, Subdivision Exemption, Special Use Permit and Rezoning

Applicant: Angela Loughry, Confluence Architecture

Location: 55 N. 7th Street

Staff Presentation

Kelley briefly summarized the discussions from the May 25th meeting, noting that all members acknowledged the need for childcare. She added that at that meeting there were those commission members expressed support for the expansion and the rezoning, while others had concerns. She noted that some commission members supported the Commercial/Transitional zoning and expressed concerns about the intensity and impacts of the proposed use, while others expressed support for the Historic Commercial Core zoning which aligns with the Comprehensive Plan's "Downtown" future land use category. She added that some commission members also spoke of the need for children to be safe while using the sidewalk and getting into or out of parked cars during drop off and pick up and expressed support for raised curbs. Kelley noted that the correct site plan for review at this evening's meeting is dated June 13, 2023, and in keeping with the desired HCC zoning, depicts two on-site employee parking spots, nine head-in parking spots along 7th Street, and raised curbs at the new sidewalk and bulb-outs, and the new sidewalk that has been shifted west to correspond with the front property line. Kelley also reminded the commission members that, although the decision was made to continue the hearing to this meeting, commission members again expressed concerns about traffic congestion during drop off and pick up of the expanded facility resulting in the applicant conducting traffic studies on June 9, 12th and 13th and provided a report which is included in the meeting packet.

Kelley explained Staff recommends approval of a project that rezones the smaller lot from Residential/Medium Density to C/T and merges the two lots with C/T zoning for the entire parcel. She pointed out that they supported four on-site parking spaces and an alternate compliance proposal to lease five spaces from Colorado Mountain College. Kelley noted that the C/T zoning would require the building to be set back five feet from the property line and the requirement of four on-site parking spaces would reduce the size of the playground and the proposed building footprint expansion, but the number of classrooms and the number of children served would remain the same. She added that the preferred site plan depicts the two extra parking spaces located in the alley to the left (or west) of the infant expansion. Kelley explains that Staff's recommendation is based upon:

1. The recognized need for more childcare;
2. C/T zoning is the dominant zoning to the west and south of the property whereas HCC zoning would be a spot zoning in the subject block
3. Based upon the Preschool's traffic and circulation plan it is likely that three or four teachers out the proposed 11 would continue to commute by walking, biking, using transit or carpooling, thereby reducing the need for off-street parking, and the remaining teachers could take advantage of off-street parking or parking across the street at CMC.

4. The additional on-street parking would mitigate the traffic created by the expansion, and the applicant has agreed to Condition #9 in the Special Use Permit that requires the Preschool to act if there appears to be competition for parking in front of the building or congestion in the street.
5. Blue Lake Preschool is an established business with no documented negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.

Kelley pointed out that, based upon feedback from commission members at the May 25th and June 8th meetings, draft motions were prepared for both C/T and HCC zoning alternatives to allow action at tonight's meeting. She noted that the findings vary between the two zoning options, but the conditions of approval are the same. Kelley reminded the Commission of the actions to be considered at tonight's meeting:

- The Commission should approve or disapprove the Subdivision Exemption and Special Use Permit for childcare.
- The Commission should make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees for the Major Site Plan Review and Rezoning.

Questions for Staff

Nicholas asked for clarification that the narrative included in the meeting packet is what is referred to as the Parking Study.

Kelley answered in the affirmative, noting that there is also a table attached to the narration. She pointed out that Little Blue Preschool staff completed the study.

Applicant Presentation

Angela reminded the commission members of Little Blue representatives that were attending the meeting, noting that Drew Sorenson is the On-site Director of Little Blue Preschool. Angela shared her screen to show the Preferred Site Plan dated June 13, 2023, highlighting some of the changes that have been made to accommodate commission member concerns:

- On the south side of the property the sidewalk has been moved to abut the property line
- The sidewalk is raised with concrete curbing
- Proposing gravel parking spaces rather than paved to promote drainage. Angela noted that the Public Works Director would like to see the engineering before approving the plans
- There is accommodation for an ADA accessibility parking space
- There is a guy wire over sidewalk – it only serves as tension for the fiber optic line crossing the street and a representative from Ting said it can be modified.

Angela pointed out the initial cost estimate from April that is also included in the meeting packet, noting that the sidewalk estimate was based on a flush versus a raised sidewalk and that the ADA parking accommodation and landscaping are not included in the estimate. Angela explained that the improvements are an investment that Little Blue wants to make because it not only improves access to the building, but it also increases available parking, and creates better connectivity between Main Street and Colorado Avenue – which is key for the HCC zoning. Angela emphasized that the public

improvements are 10% of the overall construction budget and reiterated that it is an investment Little Blue is willing to make.

Angela explained the parking and circulation study, noting that there is currently an even flow of drop-off and pick-up during the first and last 90 minutes of each day with a couple of isolated peaks within those time periods. She noted that the current enrollment of 35 children represents 24 families that need to be accommodated during those drop-off/pick-up times and at no point in their observation were there more than five parents parked at any time – she acknowledged that during the parking study there were several absences, so they corrected the estimated maximum number of parked cars to six. Angela pointed out that only a few Little Blue staff uses the on-site parking, and most prefer to parallel park across the street. She added that although there currently isn't a 3:00 pm drop-off, one bus will deliver all the students for the afterschool program, and the $\frac{3}{4}$ -day program will be limited to 20 students, so there will still be sufficient parking at that time.

Angela related that, based on numbers from Blue Lake Preschool at El Jebel, there is an anticipated doubling of car trips with the proposed expansion resulting in approximately 12 cars parked for a span of 10 to 15 minutes during peak times. She pointed out that there are currently 37 existing parking spaces in that North 7th Street block and with five added spaces it would bring the total to 42. Angela reiterated that the parking along that block is rarely full.

Angela noted that for those cars traveling from the north, they most frequently utilize the existing parallel parking in front of Little Blue and for cars traveling from the south they utilize available head-in parking. She added that no U-turns or double parking were observed. She wasn't sure how directionality would be affected if the parallel spaces were re-oriented to head-in parking.

Angela acknowledged Staff's support of the C/T zoning, but stated that rezoning to the HCC is supported by the Future Land Use Map included with the Comprehensive Plan and the DT zoning depicted on the FLUM closely aligns with HCC while also including the North 7th Street block encompassing Little Blue. She added that several locations rezoned from C/T to HCC in the 100 Block of Main and stated that it is an issue of fairness not to allow Little Blue to pursue that same type of zoning. Angela also pointed out that HCC includes the eastern side of North 7th Street.

Angela explained that the HCC zoning is attractive because no alternative compliance for parking will need to be considered. She pointed out that they have laid out a clear path to accommodate public improvements during the project and their plans for expansion won't be impacted by the need to create on-site parking. She explained that despite a more significant cost for public improvements compared to the cost of renting spaces from CMC, they prefer to invest in making the streetscape better rather than undertaking a continual cost to rent "air." She urged the Commission to approve the HCC draft motion and honor the conversations with previous staff, reiterating that the proposed Preferred Site Plan will enhance childcare at Little Blue while C/T zoning will add cost, extend the time for review, and encumber the school with a perpetual cost.

Michelle added that if the C/T zoning is supported and the playground and classroom sizes are smaller to accommodate on-site parking, the school administration would reduce the proposed number of kids served to retain a quality experience. She pointed out that that would also translate into a loss of income for the preschool. She reiterated that parking has not been an issue to date, and they don't want to sacrifice 500 sq feet of playground for on-site parking. She stated that they would be willing to work with a recommendation to alleviate any parking issues if it becomes a problem, but they don't want to spend money on a problem that hasn't been proven to exist.

Drew noted that he completed the parking and circulation study and pointed out that what isn't translated on the table is the number of empty parking spaces represented. He added that the parking along Colorado Avenue was available during the study and parking spaces were only occupied for very short periods of time.

Questions for Applicant

Jay expressed appreciation to the applicant for listening to the Commission's concerns and modifying the site plan accordingly.

Jarrett asked if the parking study was conducted on consecutive days.

Drew replied that Angela had originally designed it to encompass five days, but it was shortened to three to ensure it was included in the meeting packet. He added that the study was conducted on a Friday, Monday, and Tuesday and the number of cars traveling on 7th Street were counted every 15 minutes. He explained that the number of all drop-offs and a survey of the entire block was taken at 8:15 AM, 3:15 PM and 5:00 PM.

Jarrett asked if the six parking spots mentioned previously included employee parking.

Angela reminded the Commission that the highest number of cars parked was five, but it was rounded to six to capture those staff/families that were on vacation during the parking study. She noted that that number did not include staff, but the maximum number of staff that drove was four, so that brings the total number of spaces occupied to nine.

Commission Discussion

Jay thanked Staff for providing motions for both C/T and HCC options. He asked each commission member to explain whether they preferred the C/T or HCC option.

Kade commented that he preferred the HCC rezoning because it is in keeping with transition zoning and Little Blue adds vitality to the block. He appreciated the update to the building's façade and the proposed public parking. He noted that, in his opinion, the safety concerns are better addressed with stop signs.

Jarrett commented that he preferred the findings for C/T zoning but thought there was room for a "deal" regarding the required parking.

Kelley replied that at the Commission's direction she developed findings that represent a defensible option for C/T and the impacts of the expansion on the surrounding neighbors. She explained that two on-site parking spots was the least impactful, but when a fourth parking spot is added it triggers an added ADA-compatible space. She added that 11 parking spaces are required, but allowances could be made based on the demonstrated behavior of teachers not driving. She agreed that there currently is clearly no competition for parking, but the challenge is to ensure the findings are also not impacting the surrounding neighbors. She noted that the strategy was to "share" the parking burden by requiring 1/3 be on-site parking, 1/3 be space rental from CMC, and 1/3 commuting other ways.

Jarrett noted the key word "defensible" and wondered if it would be beneficial to have two parking spots instead of four.

Jay asked if the van was always parked on-site.

Michelle replied that Blue Lake owns four minibuses, but they aren't generally left overnight at Little Blue. She added that one of the minibuses might be parked overnight at Little Blue in the summer months because of back-to-back field trips, and that might also change once an afterschool program is initiated.

Jay asked if the bus fits in a parking space.

Drew answered in the affirmative.

Nicholas asked if more than one minibus would be parked on-site.

Michelle replied that there wouldn't be – only 14 children can fit on one bus and there will only be 14 children in the afterschool program.

Jess commented that she is leaning towards the HCC rezoning because the need for quality childcare overrides the parking requirement and there haven't been any parking issues to date. She pointed out that the HCC zoning ends on the east side North 7th Street -- so it doesn't feel like spot zoning -- the Comprehensive Plan FLUM supports it, and there is precedent on the 100 block of Main Street. She thought that 11 parking spaces was a lot to require for one business and she expressed her opinion that there should be less parking overall.

Kim commented that she supported the HCC rezoning. She agreed with Jess that it is supported by the Comprehensive Plan FLUM.

Nick stated he was in favor of the HCC rezoning.

Nicholas commented that he remained in favor of retaining the C/T zoning. He stated that he didn't think North 7th Street was a comparative to the HCC rezoning of the 100 Block of Main Street and that he wasn't sure whether he agreed with the

Comprehensive Plan FLUM. He agreed with Jarrett that playground space shouldn't be traded for parking spaces, and he also appreciated Angela's point regarding "dead money" being spent on the CMC parking space rental. He wondered if that money could be earmarked for converting the parallel spaces in front of CMC to head-in parking. Nicholas noted that he was not in favor of gravel parking spots because seasonal maintenance is more challenging.

Cindy noted that while she would be abstaining from the decision, she supported the HCC rezoning.

Jay commented that he has wavered between the two motions and asked if the HCC rezoning might include a condition of approval like that of C/T's #9 which would monitor the Special Use Permit and if parking issues develop, mitigation measures will need to be instituted.

Nicholas replied that he wouldn't burden the applicant in that way, and it would be up to Staff to monitor the situation.

Kade reminded the commission members of past conversations regarding limiting parking in the HCC and thought the topic would come up if it were an issue.

Jared pointed out that there is no parking requirement attached to HCC zoning, so a condition of approval regarding long-term monitoring couldn't be attached to the motion. He added that it would be easier to go the opposite direction and waive parking requirements with alternate mitigation. He stated that if the HCC is approved and there are future parking issues, and if the Special Use Permit were brought up for re-review, there might be alternate methods for mitigation such as provision of bus passes or participation in a parking district.

Jay commented that he is leaning towards C/T zoning and lessen the parking requirement.

Kade stated that mitigation should be undertaken by the Town, not a private business.

Jay asked if public schools were required to follow Town zoning requirements.

Jared stated that generally schools are permitted and regulated by the State and are not required to adhere to Town zoning. He pointed out that public schools provide a lot of parking.

Motion

Motion Passed: Kade ***moved*** to recommend to the Board of Trustees approval of the Rezoning and Site Plan Review with the following conditions and findings of fact, to rezone Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4, Block 21 of the Original Townsite from Commercial/Transitional (C/T) and the southern 15 feet of Lots 1-5, Block 7 of the Weavers Addition from Residential/Medium Density (R/MD) to Historic Commercial Core (HCC) and to permit Little Blue Preschool to expand their facility from approximately 2,500 square feet to

approximately 4,700 square feet, increasing their capacity from 36 to 70 children, and to make improvements to the 7th Street right-of-way. Jess **seconded the motion** and it was **approved by a majority**.

Yes: Kade, Jess, Jay, Kim, Nick
No: Nicholas, Jarrett

Motion Passed: Jess **moved** to approve the Subdivision Exemption and Special Use Permit including 5 years of vested rights with the following conditions and findings and to direct Staff to bring back the necessary approval documents for the Planning and Zoning Commissions consideration to combine Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4, Block 21 of the Original Townsite and the southern 15 feet of Lots 1-5, Block 7 of the Weavers Addition into a single lot and to allow Little Blue Preschool to expand their facility from approximately 2,500 square feet to approximately 4,700 square feet and increase capacity from 36 to 70 children. Nick **seconded the motion** and it was **approved by a majority**.

Yes: Kade, Jess, Jay, Kim, Nick, Jarrett
No: Nicholas

900/920 Highway 133 Carbondale Center Place Amendment to Landscape Plan

Jared reminded the commission members that at last month's meeting, they had briefly discussed significant deviations from the Carbondale Center Place observed by Staff during inspections for the temporary certificate of occupancy with a few punch list items and conditions prior to being granted a Certificate of Occupancy. He noted that one of the punch list items was completion of the landscaping and completion of the active play area, both of which were included on the landscape plan sheet. He explained that during the Planning inspection, they noticed the application of gravel to the north side of the building and informed the developer and landscaper that that wasn't per plans, which then led to additional conversations about options they could pursue to meet the goals of water conservation, substituting materials on the north side of the building where turf grass was unlikely to thrive and playground substitutions that will meet their fall zone limitations. Jared commented that the plans in the meeting packet reflect those conversations which include allowing the gravel on the north side of the building to remain, the installation of turf along Highway 133 and allowing the substitution of a similar, but enhanced, play station.

Jarrett asked for confirmation that this was only for the apartments and not for the storage unit.

Jared answered in the affirmative.

Riley explained that during past conversations with John Plano and Janet Buck, there were conversations surrounding added REBP points for less water use. He admitted that those conversations weren't accurately translated on the plan sheets. Riley shared his screen and walked the Commission through what has already been installed, explaining that the north side of the building wouldn't get much sun through the year which would make maintenance of grass challenging. He pointed out that the entire

length of Highway 133 frontage will be turf, except for the extreme northwest corner that is now covered with gravel. Riley stated that he wants the property to look nice and will do what is necessary to maintain it.

Jay asked if the commission members approved of the planned changes and substitutions.

Nicholas explained that there wasn't enough room for vertical play equipment.

Riley replied that their goal was to create a space for free play and acknowledged that what they intended and what was depicted are two different things. He explained that they have enlarged the play space but was seeking suggestions from the commission members.

Jay asked if the commission members were comfortable with what was depicted or were there alternative suggestions.

Nicholas disclosed that he had worked with Riley on a separate project and was willing to recuse himself if needed.

Jay took a poll of the commission members, and all were comfortable with Nicholas participating.

Nicholas expressed his appreciation for their attempts to open the play space up but stated that he preferred natural materials over plastic stumps.

Riley explained that there wasn't a lot of choices for a play area of this size, and it was between a single piece of equipment such as a slide or landscaping and a fall-attenuated surface.

Jay stated that he preferred a cool slide over a series of boulders and stumps.

Nicholas explained that open space is the current paradigm for creative play.

Kade commented that he appreciated the expanded space and asked that it be made "cool" and "fun" for the kids.

Nick suggested a splash pad.

With regards to the north side of the building, Nicholas conceded that there were good reasons to choose the gravel mulch but pointed out that there will be challenges such as invasive weeds that need to be considered.

Riley reiterated that there is a lot of turf along Highway 133 and there is no exit on the north side of the building. He agreed that they will need to remain vigilant regarding weeds.

Jess asked if the current landscape plans satisfied the Unified Development Code.

Jared replied that there is a requirement for the first ten feet adjacent to Highway 133 be turf and that 60% of landscaping must be live materials, otherwise the UDC doesn't provide much clarity on the remaining 40% of landscaping. He pointed out that Staff pushed back on plans for gravel covering much of the outdoor area.

Jay stated that it was a great space with a lot of opportunity, and the gravel strip looks out of place. He suggested an inlay of sod leading to a bench with various tall grasses to break up the gravel expanse.

Kade agreed that more work needs to be done to make it look like a transitional area.

Nicholas suggested removing the gravel and installing turf in the ten feet along Highway 133 and then utilizing tall ornamental grasses for the next 20 feet to block the view of the gravel.

Jess stated that the turf should be required and the ornamental grasses a suggestion.

Jared asked if the Commission was comfortable allowing Staff to make the final decision based on tonight's recommendations.

The commission members agreed that Staff should be allowed to make the final decision.

Staff Update

Jared reported that the vines have been planted for the living wall at Sopris Storage. He noted that the Multi-Modal Mobility and Access Plan (M3AP) has been kicked off and they are considering rebranding the project, but "Connect Carbondale" has already been taken. He added that they are seeking participants for the stakeholder group and would like a representative from the Planning and Zoning Commission, explaining that it would be an approximate nine-month long commitment consisting of one meeting per month, review of documents and be available to assist with public outreach events. He noted that the Bike, Pedestrian and Trails Commission will be doing most of the project review.

Jared reminded the commission members that they had opted to cancel the July 27th meeting because it was the day before Mountain Fair. He explained that there could be a public hearing on an ADU, if the commission members were interested in scheduling a meeting for that day.

Based upon responses from the commission members, Jay was unsure there would be a quorum and suggested scheduling the public hearing for one of the meetings in August.

Commissioner Comments

There were no Commissioner comments.

Motion to Adjourn

A motion was made by Nicholas to adjourn, Jarrett seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:11 p.m.