

EAST AURORA PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING

January 17, 2012

6:30 PM

PRESENT:

Dan Castle, Chairman
Lowell Dewey, Vice Chairman
Allen Ott Jr.
Anne Redmond
Kristin Cameron
Stacy Oar
Alternate Bud Babcock

ABSENT:

Frank Mesi

Also Present:

Code Enforcement Officer, William Kramer
Catherine Wood, Deputy Village Clerk & Secretary for the Planning Commission

Others Present:

Philip J. Silvestri, Silvestri Architects, PC
John Wabick, Vice President of West Herr

**Review of Development Plan for
East Aurora Buick Pontiac GMC
535 Main Street**

Chairman, Dan Castle, opened the meeting at 6:31 PM and noted that a quorum was present for the meeting tonight.

Lowell Dewey made a motion to approve the minutes from December 6, 2011 as written, seconded by Stacy Oar with a unanimous vote to follow.

Chairman, Dan Castle asked Mr. John Wabick and Philip Silvestri to present the proposed changes in order to let everyone know where we are now at with the plans. John Wabick announced that he feels we are putting this in reverse order. He said he and Mr. Silvestri are trying to get consensus of what the planning board is looking for in regard to the final look of the building *before* going to General Motors (GM). He pointed out that GM did deny their first rendering as it was not to specification, and that GM is very strict on what they want for a look. If GM was to deny their next plan, Mr. Wabick feels that he and Mr. Silvestri will be back to East Aurora next month even if the planning commission approves a drawing. He verified that no drawings have been shown yet to corporate GM, apart from the very first one they presented to corporate which was a drawing they did not actually reveal to the planning commission. Mr. Wabick said they wanted to get a preliminary drawing to the Village Board, and that they were here tonight because they wanted to get more direction before going to GM. He said that the Village Board did not like all the white and the gray on top, and so they came back and revised it. Mr. Wabick held up a drawing and indicated that this drawing that the planning commission was looking at was something they believed they could possibly present to GM with some

reasonable percent of success. Stacy Oar asked what (GM's) reason was for declining the previous rendition; she wished to know what it was that they didn't like. Mr. Wabick confirmed that they did not have a copy of that particular version, and let the commission know that they had gone with an "all-brick" look to match what was in the village, which GM did not accept because it was out of prototype. He said we needed to get closer to the prototype. Dan Castle indicated that what the commission was trying to do was to counteract the corporate branding as compared to what is seen on Southwestern or Transit Road, in order to make it more contextually sensitive.

John Wabick reiterated that they were here tonight to get feedback, input and direction for something that the Village Board has to approve. Chairman, Dan Castle confirmed that yes, the Village Board had to approve it and that the planning commission is simply an advisory board. Chairman, Dan Castle then questioned about the drawing, pointing out that it looks to him as though you are looking across a parking lot on the drawing, but really that the foreground is Main Street. Mr. Wabick confirmed. Dan Castle indicated that his concern was that the cars in the drawing would basically be parked right up on the curb, which is unrealistic, and he does not wish for GM to approve a drawing that has any misconceptions. Mr. Wabick replied that they were trying to get the panoramic view with what currently exists with the front row of the used car lot. Stacy Oar then looked for clarification that this was on the opposite side and Mr. Wabick agreed that he was speaking of the opposite side. Mr. Wabick said that the canopy is coming down, and in that space there will be room for three or four cars. He ensured that they are not going to encroach any further into the right of way or the sidewalk. He said they would have a little green space at the curb. Dan Castle pointed out the landscaping and the bushes in the front, concerned that the drawing was not accurately representing what they were proposing. Mr. Wabick confirmed that they wanted to bring the greenery back. Dan Castle pointed out that this was in the Department of Transportation's right of way, so they would have to approve it. Mr. Wabick responded that this was right up next to the building between the sidewalk and the building. Chairman Dan Castle stressed that he wanted to ensure that the drawings are *really* what it is going to look like. Stacy Oar asked if we would still have a driveway and if it would be two way. Mr. Wabick confirmed yes there would be a driveway, yes a two way, but no, not a two way on the other side. He said that the footprint would not be changing; only the awning. Mr. Phil Silvestri asked if there was any more detail. He said that substantial changes won't sell, but asked if there was any other detail the commission would like to see. Chairman, Dan Castle explained that the mid-Main area is on the National Register of Historic Places, and that architecturally this is really very different from anything else on Main Street. John Wabick said that they understand, but pointed out that this was not their decision, but it is driven by the manufacturer. Mr. Wabick pointed out that there was a timeline to this as well, and we have only until about November 30, 2012, and that they have four of these projects going right now. This project needs to be completed by the deadline or otherwise be in violation and they could be subject to termination. Corporate GM could also say that East Aurora is no longer a dealer. Dan Castle said he doesn't think that will happen, but of course we do not want to hold this up. Mr. Wabick pointed out that all of the manufacturers are reducing the amount of dealers that they have, and he doesn't want East Aurora to end up being one of the "too many" locations. Dan Castle agreed and stated that no, the commission does not want that either. Allen Ott brought up the possibility of a mahogany entrance, and how it could make it look really nice. He said it was not needed however if it holds things up. Mr. Wabick said he would have to speculate, and that his thoughts were that he would guess GM would not approve it, but he was not opposed to submitting it if we reached that consensus. Alternate Bud Babcock brought up that at the last meeting he thought we came to the conclusion that we most members were concerned about the

white box along the top. He said that we thought if that was the corporate way of doing it, that perhaps we could put the black along the top with a lighter color underneath which would make it look a lot different. Mr. Babcock said that what they brought in tonight just tones down the white with gray still being on the top. Mr. Wabick confirmed that they softened it and went to the gray in the hopes that this would be the best opportunity to settle it on both sides. Chairman, Dan Castle pointed out that they also extended the gray out a little bit and that it's not flat, and Mr. Silvestri confirmed, saying that it steps out. Mr. Wabick said that they are teetering on both sides and trying to come up with a plan that gets root. Bud Babcock said that in our previous meeting, he believed we had discussed that the entrance was a big thing, and mentioned that he thought that in maintaining the corporate entrance for Cadillac, the Commission hoped to then have more input on the rest of the design. However Mr. Babcock's concern was that the only thing he sees different on the drawing is the incorporation of an overhang and the white being changed to gray. Philip Silvestri said that architecturally, he doesn't see corporate GM approving what the Commission is proposing to do with the rest of the building.

Chairman, Dan Castle asked if it would be possible to put the corporate entrance on the West side so that the primary commercial entrance would be facing Noco, but John Wabick advised that no, we would not want to do that. He pointed out that any business would want their image and corporate branding up to be up front facing Main. Bud Babcock wondered if we could somehow tone down the ten foot high windows, and Dan Castle asked if he meant doing fewer windows. Bud Babcock said no, just perhaps break them up a little bit or put some lines in them maybe. Mr. Wabick said they would not want to do less glass, but perhaps he was on to something with a minor change to fit into the Roycroft look of mid-main. Dan Castle stressed that the look is residential, not necessarily a "Roycroft" look. Mr. Wabick said that in being attentive to observing the signs up and down Main Street, that perhaps we could find some leeway in the signage. Stacy Oar pointed out that since apparently we could manipulate the outside of the building to achieve what we are all looking for, perhaps we could put some light fixtures in that would tie into the look of East Aurora. She said she was not talking about gooseneck lights, but maybe some carriage lights. She also wanted to know if the designers could possibly change and soften the script on the sign. Allen Ott suggested an arts and crafts style of writing. Dan Castle said we don't need everything to like Roycroft, and Stacy said we were looking for something to bring this home. Dan Castle brought up the Commission's work with Noco, and how the design was able to add dormers and windows with shutters in order to give the building a residential feel without being "Roycrofty". He said he wasn't sure if shortening the windows in front could be it, to which John Wabick said that they wanted as much glass as they could get. Bud Babcock said that he understands street side you want to be able to see cars, but right now the majority is salesman offices and you can't see a car. John Wabick said that the east side toward the church will actually become an indoor two-bay delivery module and they could actually drive the vehicle out of the showroom. It will not be offices. There was some discussion on the doors, and Kristin Cameron pointed out that this drawing really did not seem to be to scale.

Chairman, Dan Castle said that he understands they are trying to meet us in the middle, but that he is not sure that the commission could really pinpoint exactly what it is we would want to see to make it acceptable. Mr. Wabick said that he thinks they needed to get something to the Planning Commission that the members, either all or majority, would agree to recommend to the Village Board. Dan Castle explained that they needed something that GM would approve. He said he is not comfortable with voting unless they know the GM would approve. Mr. Wabick said, however, if he takes something to GM and they approve, that they will no longer budge

after that. Dan Castle said that then there is also the issue of whether the Village Board would then approve. Mr. Wabick said they can change the script/font on the sign, put a couple of lights on the building and play with the glass and then submit to General Motors. He continued that he believes he could get on East Aurora's agenda for next month, and come back with GM's either approval or disapproval. Bud Babcock said they needed to be aware that the Planning Commission is not the approving body, to which John Wabick and Dan Castle agreed that typically, if a planning commission recommends a plan, then typically the Village Board is more likely to approve.

Chairman, Dan Castle asked if everyone had seen the page of the Village Board minutes where John Wabick and Philip Silvestri had presented, and then went on to read that some Village Board members were pleased with the third drawing, while two others preferred the first drawing. So Dan Castle wished to point out that two of the board members actually preferred the original white at the top of the building. Mr. Wabick explained that in regards to height, it was a third off the top, and Code Enforcement Officer Bill Kramer asked if it would follow the block building in the back or if it was lower than the block building in the back. Mr. Wabick said that it was raised a little bit above the block building, but not much. Dan Castle asked if it was going to be higher than Bruce's Automotive across the street. Bill Kramer mentioned that he did not think it would be. Dan Castle said he felt that what was significant was how the awning, which made it look like a much wider building, would be gone.

John Wabick said that regardless, this was going to be an improved appearance, no matter where we go with this plan. He said that what is being done is something that will "wow" people as the improvement shows GM's commitment to the community and franchise. He explained that we are taking a forty year old building that is worn out and this will be an enhancement. Mr. Wabick further commented that West-Herr brings a lot of revenue to East Aurora. He said that the dealership services forty cars a day, predominately from customers who do not live here in East Aurora, and pointed out that these people may shop, make a stop at Vidlers etc, while they are waiting to have their car serviced. Mr. Wabick said he does not want to end up in a situation where that is taken away. Dan Castle agreed and said no one questioned that, explaining that the planning commission is only trying to get to a point of being comfortable. Dan Castle asked the commission which of the very specific changes it was that they were looking for, and the gray color was agreed upon. Dan Castle said the trees won't get approved, and asked if they could show a small flowerbed instead right up front by the building. He asked for some lights perhaps facing down over the overhang. Mr. Wabick pointed out that there was a comment about flipping the black and the gray, and looked for further comment, to which Philip Silvestri again said that architecturally he did not think that would work. Dan Castle agreed with Mr. Silvestri. Dan Castle then asked if they could draw the windows more to scale, showing the height of the windows to scale with the people, and also being more accurate to Main Street rather than the look of being across the parking lot. Dan Castle also pointed out that the Village Board would probably want to see a view from the west to the east. Bud Babcock additionally said that if the doorway was going to accommodate automobiles, then they would need to change that, because as is, it looks like a "people" door.

Mr. Wabick asked if there was a final date for when they could get on the agenda, and Bill Kramer said he thought it was the week before the meeting. However, it was confirmed the designers wished to come back to the planning commission first, not directly to the Village Board. Bill Kramer said that we would simply plan on Mr. Wabick and Mr. Silvestri attending the next planning commission meeting. Mr. Wabick said they would not come back until after

they get an answer from GM. Mr. Wabick concluded said that they would make these tweaks, email the drawing to the planning commission, give it a few days for any response from the planning commission, and then submit the drawing to GM. The hearing was then tabled until next month for Phil Silvestri and John Wabick to come back with revised drawings.

**Review of Proposed Parking Lot Development Plan for
John Apgar
Corner of Boies Alley and Hamburg Street**

Chairman, Dan Castle opened the discussion for the parking lot development plan located on the corner of Boies Alley and Hamburg Street, and introduced John Apgar to present his proposal. Mr. Apgar said he was looking to install a 60 x 100 square foot paved area as a parking area for Goodyear. He said he wants to secure good parking for the future and for Goodyear's employees and any overflow parking.

Chairman, Dan Castle said he wished to understand Mr. Apgar's drawing, and asked how far back the parking lot is from Hamburg Street. Mr. Apgar responded that 60 feet is left in there. Dan Castle wanted to know if that was for some future building, and Mr. Apgar replied that it was for a 32 x 24 square foot building that Pasquale's asked him to move, should it ever come to pass with Board approval.

Lowell Dewey said that he believed the commission should not be considering this until there is more detail. He said that in every other community he deals with there is a requirement for a survey and engineer's drawings to be submitted. Bill Kramer said that they had gone through the checklist on the application, and pointed out that this was an issue of whether or not to spend the additional money on engineering, risking a financial loss without knowing if it would be approved or not. Dan Castle said it should be Goodyear who pays for the engineer drawings, but Mr. Apgar said that Goodyear would not be paying for engineering. Bill Kramer said that Mr. Apgar does have the drainage going out to Quaker Road and that Audiology has a twelve inch drain on a similar size parking lot. Lowell Dewey then said the Department of Transportation would not accept this as a plan, but rather they would require an engineer's drawing, and that no community he has ever dealt with has ever accepted a plan like this. He said that you can't just look at a checklist and hope that it works, but rather, you need more. Chairman, Dan Castle agreed, and said that there is another issue he has with this, that was discussed previously when taking down the house. He said that in other projects, in setting a precedent on Main Street and in the Village, that in knocking down a structure and putting a parking lot there – that is just not good planning. Mr. Castle pointed out that the City of Buffalo tears down houses and structures and puts up parking lots, but that the Village of East Aurora, in the process of considering other places, did not let it happen elsewhere, as in the case of the Thomas's. Dan Castle said he could not speak for the Village, but said that he cannot see putting a parking lot into a site that they believed was to be opened up for commercial development. He pointed out that once a parking lot is there, it is never going away, and that he does not think that is a precedent that they want to allow. Mr. Apgar said that there is a gravel area for ten to twelve cars to park there now. Dan Castle pointed out though, that this was parking for an apartment building. He said that if Mr. Apgar wanted to put up an apartment building, then they would likely allow him to put a parking lot up in the back. However he believes that putting up surface parking for nothing to do with this site kind of puts a hole on the main street corridor. He went on to say that Lowell is right,

and there is probably not a town in Erie County that you could submit this drawing for and have it be approved with this level of detail. Mr. Castle said that they were not sticklers for all the detail, but in talking about surface drainage and runoff to Main Street in a developed corridor area, that he believed there would need to be more detail, and he hoped the Village Board would want that too. Lowell Dewey agreed that he did not see how they could approve just a parking lot on a main commercial street. He said that even if Mr. Apgar came back with engineered drawings for the parking lot, he would still recommend not approving only a parking lot without a proposal for a building to be constructed there as well. He said that “future building” was not enough. Chairman, Dan Castle pointed out that he would want to make money from new construction on the property, and that he’s not going to make much from just a parking lot. John Apgar said that they were willing to lease it. Mr. Castle said that they should be willing to do the engineering drawings then. Mr. Apgar said that the property’s been for sale for a long period of time, and that he likes the fact that since he’s the owner, if he can put in a parking lot and he’s leasing it, then that works for him. He continued to say that the parking lot *is* set back from Hamburg Street. Allen Ott then voiced his opinion that he is also opposed to having another parking lot. He said there is a big parking lot across the street and he doesn’t think this parking lot is going to do us any good. Mr. Ott also said he would rather see some building there. Dan Castle pointed out that this was a more valuable piece of commercial property than a parking lot. He said that from a village planning standpoint, there should be a structure there with parking. Anne Redmond then said that parking is an accessory, not a main use of property. Allen Ott pointed out that Goodyear moved there knowing that it would be a tight spot anyway. Dan Castle added that people can park in the plaza across the street. He said that even the Friday after Thanksgiving there is still space across the street. He said he didn’t know why Goodyear would want to pay Mr. Apgar for parking when they can park in the plaza for free, except for when the Farmer’s Market comes. Dan Castle did not think that made sense.

Chairman, Dan Castle asked if anyone had any other thoughts. Anne Redmond said that it’s hard to approve a site plan that doesn’t have a plan, other than some ambiguous future use. Bud Babcock said to Mr. Apgar that the efforts he proposed are admirable and it made sense from a business perspective to try to make a buck on a property that he’s been stuck with for a while. Mr. Babcock said that’s all well and good, but the Planning Commission is obligated to look at things long-term – what’s going to happen in the next twenty or thirty years for that parcel. Mr. Babcock said that from that perspective, it should be developed in some way with a structure. Dan Castle suggested an apartment building with two or three apartment units and parking in the back. Mr. Apgar said that was not feasible because it was an area that was primarily business.

Chairman, Dan Castle asked the planning commission if they wished to take a vote. He pointed out that the Village Board has the final say.

Lowell Dewey made a motion that the Planning Commission deny the site plan as submitted to the Village Board. The motion was seconded by Stacy Oar with a unanimous vote to follow.

Dan Castle advised John Apgar that this recommendation would go to the Village Board, and he should be in attendance for that hearing at a work session, per Bill Kramer, on the first Monday of February.

Chairman, Dan Castle said he believed Bob Corby is not going to arrive. Bill Kramer said that Bryan (Gazda) emailed Mr. Corby but that Mr. Gazda got a reply from a person in Scotland who

said it was the wrong email address. Dan Castle said that Mr. Corby said he would be here, and also that Al Kasprzak spoke with him in regards to being in attendance at the meeting.

Lowell Dewey made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 PM, to be re-opened if Mr. Corby was to show up in the following five minutes, seconded by Kristin Cameron and approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Wood, Deputy Clerk
Secretary, Planning Commission