

**BELLE PLAINE PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION  
REGULAR SESSION  
SEPTEMBER 14, 2009**

**1. CALL TO ORDER. 1.1. Roll Call.**

The Planning and Zoning Commission met in Regular Session on Monday, September 14, 2009 in the Government Center at 218 North Meridian Street, Belle Plaine, MN. Chair Henry Pressley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with Commissioners Bob Chaussee, Scott Schneider and Chris Potter present. Commissioner Daniel Tix was not present. Also present were Community Development Director Trisha Rosenfeld and Council Liaison Gary Trost.

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA.**

MOTION by Commissioner Chaussee, second by Commissioner Schneider, to approve the agenda as presented. ALL VOTED AYE. MOTION CARRIED.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.**

**3.1. Regular Session Minutes of July 13, 2009.**

MOTION by Commissioner Schneider, second by Commissioner Potter, to approve the Regular Session minutes of July 13, 2009 as presented. ALL VOTED AYE. MOTION CARRIED.

**4. PUBLIC HEARINGS.**

**4.1. Conditional Use Permit. The Planning and Zoning Commission will accept public comment on a request by Prairie Oaks Institute, a non-profit organization, for a conditional use permit to allow the operation of Harvest House, education/leadership development, retreat/renewal and environmental sustainability, at 1200 West South Street, in the A-2, Rural Residential District.**

Chair Pressley referenced a memo dated September 14, 2009 from Community Development Director Rosenfeld regarding a Conditional Use Permit at 1100/1200 West South Street as requested by Prairie Oaks Institute.

Community Development Director Rosenfeld explained that the co-owners of 1100 and 1200 West South Street have submitted an application for a Conditional Use Permit to allow the lease of the facilities and residences on both properties. The home looking to be leased is referred to as the "Harvest House", formerly known as the Bud Devine residence. Prairie Oaks Institute (POI) has been formed as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. POI will have limited access to the 200-acre century farm, including the recreational shelter located on a bluff overlooking Robert Creek within the 160-acre portion of the farm that lies outside Belle Plaine city limits in Blakely Township. POI will utilize the site and facilities to host and conduct programs connected to its threefold mission of education/leadership development, retreat/renewal, and environmental sustainability. This property is comprised of a forty (40) acre homestead, which is within Belle Plaine city limits, and a one-hundred-sixty (160) acre farm, which is in Blakely Township. There are currently two homesteads on the property. With the new ordinance amendment to allow for this type of use, current zoning regulations require a Conditional Use Permit for POI to host and conduct programs of education/leadership development, retreat/renewal, and environmental sustainability in this location. The current Comprehensive Plan update indicates the forty (40) acre homestead portion of the property is to be zoned for single family residential in the future. The one hundred sixty (160) acre portion of the property is to remain rural residential. This needs to be changed to reflect both properties being guided as A-2, Rural-Residential, as this is what was agreed upon by the Planning Commission during a Comprehensive Plan workshop. The current zoning classification indicated for this property is A-2, Rural-Residential. Presently the former homestead, referred to as the "Harvest House", a recreational shelter, referred to as "The Granary", and a farmhouse with farm-related structures, referred to as "The Farm at Prairie Oaks", located on the southeastern

portion of the property. There will be no changes made to any of the existing structures or layout of the property. The applicant has indicated the amount of traffic will be no greater than if there were a family permanently living in the house. The property is accessed from South Street. All vehicles will be required to park on-site. The applicant has indicated there will be no on-street parking. Due to the change in occupancy type, in accordance with the MN State Building Code, it is required to have an inspection of the property in order to change the occupancy type. Staff recommends approval of this request, with the following conditions: 1. A separate sign permit shall be required for all signs proposed within the property, and 2. The City's Building Official will need to make sure the property is compliant with the Building Code.

Chair Pressley opened the public hearing at 7:06 p.m. and asked for public comment.

Kim Devine-Johnson explained that it is important that everyone understand what POI is trying to accomplish. Ms. Johnson stated that the Devine family has been working with the DNR to restore the natural prairie grasses. The intent is to have passive educational and recreational activities for area school children and possibly retreats for individuals, such as authors. Ms. Johnson explained that no new buildings are proposed. The traffic will be similar to that of a typical family and all parking will be on-site. Ms. Johnson commented that the Harvest House will be an asset for the Belle Plaine community.

Dr. Mary Weddle, Associate Professor, St. Catherine University, St. Paul, MN, supported the conditional use permit request by Prairie Oaks Institute. She explained that POI wishes to carry out a mission to cultivate ways of living and leading that affirm the interdependence of all living things and connect self, spirit, community and earth for a resilient, renewed future. The mission of POI honors the heritage of the Devine family farm.

Ben Parr, 515 West St. Paul Street, St. Peter, MN, addressed the Planning Commission. He explained that he grew up in Kansas, moved to California and attended graduate school at a seminary where he studied globalization and social issues. Mr. Parr stated he is very familiar with the farming aspect and supported the concept proposed by the Devine family.

Patty Burns, 1009 Prairie Oak Drive, stated she researched Prairie Oaks Institute and has learned that it is associated with Open Arms food source and questioned whether Harvest House will be a facility for those individuals enrolled in Open Arms. Ms. Johnson explained that the family that rented the Devine farm was associated with Open Arms and had supplied organic products. She said it is not the intent of Harvest House to provide housing for people afflicted with illnesses such as AIDS.

Bob Thompson, 1005 Prairie Oak Drive, asked whether offenders will be allowed to stay at Harvest House. He requested assurance that it will not be a half-way house for offenders. Ms. Johnson stated that it is not the intent to provide housing for the disadvantaged or offenders and commented that the State has strict guidelines on such housing requirements.

Antusa Bryant, 105 Robert Circle, supported the mission and concept of Harvest House and asked the the Planning Commission to consider approval of the conditional use permit.

MOTION by Commissioner Chaussee, second by Commissioner Schneider, to close the public hearing at 7:32 p.m. ALL VOTED AYE. MOTION CARRIED.

#### **4.1.1. Resolution PZ-09-012 Recommending Approval of a Conditional Use Permit to Allow the Operation of Harvest House at 1200 West South Street.**

Commissioner Chaussee inquired about the possibility of housing offenders at Harvest House. Community Development Director Rosenfeld explained that half-way houses would need approval by the City. Commissioner Potter inquired about the hosting of seminars. Ms. Johnson explained that the

number of persons attending a meeting or seminar would be limited by the accommodations of the existing homes. Ms. Johnson reiterated that the amount of traffic generated would not be greater than that of a family gathering.

Council Liaison Trost asked whether the conditional use permit would be null and void in the event the non-profit organization under the rules of State Statute 501(c) would no longer operate Harvest House. Ms. Devine answered that she understood that the conditional use permit is tied to Harvest House, and therefore, a CUP would be valid only under their ownership. Community Development Director Rosenfeld stated she will check with the City's legal counsel on this issue. Commissioner Schneider noted that any changes in the use as proposed by Prairie Oaks Institute would necessitate review of the conditional use permit.

MOTION by Commissioner Schneider, second by Commissioner Chaussee, to approve Resolution PZ-09-012 Recommending Approval of a Conditional Use Permit to Allow the Operation of Harvest House at 1200 West South Street. ALL VOTED AYE. MOTION CARRIED.

## **5. BUSINESS.**

### **5.1. None scheduled.**

Chair Pressley explained that no business items have been scheduled.

## **6. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS.**

### **6.1. Upcoming Meetings.**

#### **1. Next Regular Session, 7:00 p.m., Monday, October 12, 2009.**

The Commissioners were reminded of the upcoming meeting as listed.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT.**

MOTION by Commissioner Chaussee, second by Schneider, to adjourn at 7:48 p.m. ALL VOTED AYE. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Krings  
Recording Secretary