

MINUTES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING REGARDING THE REZONING APPLICATION FOR 400 E. HIGHLAND DRIVE, JONESBORO, ARKANSAS

Location of the Meeting: Farmers & Merchants Bank
400 E. Highland Drive
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Time of the Meeting: 5:30 p.m. until 6:30 p.m.

Present at the Meeting: James F. Gramling, Jr, Anthony Ditta, Ashley Ditta, Vic Ditta, Gary Childers, Jeffrey Pittman, Russell Shewmaker, Rory Pomerantz, Trina Huckaby, Joel King, Barbara Wood, Vernon Wood, Shirl Strauser, Jean Strauser, Greg Cowles, Mark Zimmer, Shirley Park, Jack Havdala, Patrick Graham; Ron/Janet Gehring

Jim Gramling introduced himself and the Dittas (Anthony, Ashley and Vic) and talked about the process of rezoning. He said the first step, though not a requirement, is the neighborhood meeting. He mentioned that the rezoning application requires people within a 200 feet radius be notified of the application, but that he sent letters to everyone in a 400 feet radius because he and the Dittas want to get as many people involved as possible. He said that the steps of the rezoning process, after the neighborhood meeting, are filing the application, the evaluation by the city planning commission, a hearing with the MAPC and three City Council readings.

Anthony Ditta introduced himself and explained that they are wanting to purchase the land to put in a retail hardware store. He showed a picture giving a rough idea of what the store would look like as well as a sketch of the land and boundaries. He talked about how the business will be local and family owned. He said that he and his family live in Jonesboro and their children attend school in Jonesboro. He talked about how he wants everyone to like and use the store. He mentioned that it will have things like power tools and an outdoor garden center. He said they anticipate the store will be 10,000 to 12,000 square feet and that they plan for it to be very nice and well-manicured. He said they plan for it to be open 7 days a week from 7-7. He then talked about how they want to be good neighbors and they want the people who live near the store to use it and to be happy with it. He then opened the floor for questions.

A question was asked regarding the storage of outdoor equipment. Ditta stated that it may be stored but will adhere to all city codes and regulations. Gramling added that additional buffering would be provided. A concern was raised regarding the prior ordinance when the bank was built. Ditta again stated that he would work with all involved for sufficient buffering that is acceptable. A question was asked regarding how much of the lot would be purchased, and Ditta responded that it would be the entire lot; no subdivision would be possible or planned.

A question was raised about access to Wofford. Ditta stated that they would like to have access on Wofford but were open to not having that access. Much discussion followed regarding traffic on Wofford and in general, and the general consensus was that the neighbors did not want access on Wofford. A question was asked regarding access to Rains across the back of the lot, and Ditta responded that they had not addressed that issue yet but are willing to compromise and do what's best for all concerned.

Gramling stated that the goal of zoning is the highest and best use of the land, and this land has been vacant for 12 years. A concern was raised again regarding the prior ordinance when the bank was built and they thought the land would never be developed. Ditta said they are willing to do whatever it takes to provide buffers and whatever else they can to make everyone comfortable.

A question was raised about who can come to the council meeting, and Gramling responded that anyone can come and present their views. A question was asked about sidewalks and Ditta indicated that the existing ordinance would be complied with. Ditta stated that there would be no new roads; access to the property would be from Highland Drive. A question was asked about the lot on the other side of Rains, but Ditta stated that lot would be more difficult to develop.

A question was asked whether a restaurant could go in if the hardware store did not, and Gramling stated that they would propose a limited use overlay to prohibit a restaurant. A question was asked regarding putting a gazebo or park on Wofford, and Ditta stated he is open to considering anything.

Gramling reminded those in attendance that they have his contact information to call with any questions. Gary Childers from Farmers & Merchants Bank spoke about how the bank was very selective in the kinds of businesses they would be willing to sell to and have as next-door neighbors. He said that the Dittas are about the best fit you could hope for because they live in Jonesboro and they have integrity. The Dittas are also willing to work with the neighborhood.

Vic Ditta spoke about how they want the business of the people in the neighborhood, not just their approval to build. He said the Dittas want to provide convenience and improve the neighborhood.

At approximately 6:30 p.m., Jim Gramling adjourned the meeting

MINUTES OF THE 2nd NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING REGARDING THE REZONING APPLICATION FOR 400 E. HIGHLAND DRIVE, JONESBORO, ARKANSAS

Location of the Meeting: Farmers & Merchants Bank
400 E. Highland Drive
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Time of the Meeting: 5:30 p.m. until 6:00 p.m., January 15, 2020

Present at the Meeting: James F. Gramling, Jr, Anthony Ditta, Ashley Ditta, Vic Ditta, Gary Childers, Joel King, Barbara Wood, Shirl Strauser, Jean Strauser, Jeff Prestige, June Findley, David Rogers, Barbara Wood

Jim Gramling told the group that the purpose of this meeting was to show a revised rendering of the proposed project, showing more green space and buffering. A question was raised regarding the orientation of the building, and Ditta said it would face Highland Drive. A bus stop was added to the rendering. No storage will be behind the hardware store, only green space. Ditta said that the only entrance will be off Highland and there will be sidewalks per city code. Gramling advised that after the application is filed, all documents will be available for review on Legistar.

A comment was made regarding the project being a good compromise between other possible uses of the property that might be more objectionable to the neighbors, and Gramling reiterated that a limited-use overlay would be part of the application.

Meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.