

EXCERPTS

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSIONERS MEETING

FEBRUARY 4, 2016

V) SUBDIVISIONS

Case No. 16-49

A request by THHinc-McClure Engineering Company (agent) on behalf of Columbia Public Schools (owner) for a variance from Section 25-48.1 of the City Code pertaining to sidewalk construction on property platted after 2001. The requested variance is for property located at 4303 South Providence Road (Rock Bridge High School) and seeks relief from constructing sidewalk along the property's South Providence Outer Road frontage.

MR. REICHLIN: May we have a staff report, please?

Staff report was given by Mr. Rusty Palmer of the Planning and Development Department. Staff recommends approval of the requested variance based on the following factors:

1. After reviewing the variance criteria of Section 25-20, there does appear to be an unnecessary hardship and practical difficulty which would prevent the sidewalk from being installed as required.
2. After reviewing the guidance in Council Policy Resolution 48-06A, staff believes that while the cost appears to be minimal, in relation to the overall cost of the proposed development, the remaining three contextual factors support approval of the variances.

MR. REICHLIN: Are there any questions of staff? Ms. Russell?

MS. RUSSELL: Will -- is the City responsible for creating that connection or the -- is the CPS responsible for that?

MR. PALMER: The -- well, CPS is proposing to add that as a -- as a --

MS. RUSSELL: Part of their package?

MR. PALMER: Yeah. Kind of -- it would be in -- in substitution for the full length of sidewalk.

They are proposing to add a connection from their parking area across to the -- to the trail. And, basically, it would allow a safer connection to the trail for pedestrians, and then that would allow the trail to be, in essence, their frontage sidewalk.

MS. RUSSELL: Okay. Thank you.

MR. REICHLIN: Anybody else?

MR. HARDER: Yes, I have a question.

MR. REICHLIN: Mr. Harder?

MR. HARDER: Yeah. The crossing over the access road, would there be any safety features associated with the crossing?

MR. PALMER: I believe so. And I think Mr. Trabue will probably discuss that, as well.

MR. REICHLIN: Anybody else? Seeing no one. Thank you very much, Mr. Palmer. Well, with that, this is a subdivision item and we do allow for some input with regard to items as they come up, so anybody wishing to speak on this matter at this time, feel free to approach the podium.

MR. TRABUE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Commissioners. My name is Tom Trabue with THHinc-McClure Engineering Company with offices at 1901 Pennsylvania Drive, Columbia, Missouri. We are the engineering consultants working on behalf of Columbia Public Schools for this project. I do have a slide -- the packet that you have with you is actually an exact copy of all the slides. There's quite a bit of information here, but it -- but it's a big area and we just wanted to make sure that we showed you everything that was going on there. CPS intends to make several improvements at Rock Bridge High School, which are shown on this slide, and again, this is all in your packet, as well. They're doing maintenance upgrades and renovations of the main entry plaza. That's an area of the school that hasn't been touched since the school was built back in the '70s. They're also doing accessibility improvements at the baseball and softball field, at the -- on the west side of the property, and replacing the existing football press box, grandstands, concessions, and the associated pedestrian plaza. The site improvements at the front plaza and at the baseball and softball field are really maintenance improvements and, as such, generally would not trigger the requirements for the sidewalks. The press box, grandstands, and concessions are considered accessory buildings, not new buildings, and by the ordinance also would not trigger the sidewalk requirements outlined in Chapter 24, so we have been caught by one little part of the ordinance with regard to that, and that's why we're here today. Of note, the north addition to the high school was constructed in the late 1990s. There was an expansion to the Career Center on the west side of the Career Center in 2009, and a gymnasium expansion in 2011. None of those expansions triggered this sidewalk requirement along the frontage road. But, nonetheless, we are here to ask for a variance to the ordinance requiring construction of the sidewalk. As you're aware, in 2011, the City completed the South Providence Trail which extends from Green Meadows Road to Old Plank Road. This is a paved, concrete, all-weather trail. Actually, it's an awesome trail for pedestrians and bicyclists. Connections were strategically made along the way to properties and connecting streets along the west side of South Providence outer road. Along the corridor from Green Meadows Road to Southampton Drive, every property along that corridor has already been developed. There are currently only two parcels in this corridor with sidewalks along the outer road. Because of the developments that have already occurred, we believe -- and this is our opinion -- that it's very unlikely that any of those properties will be subject to redevelopment anytime in the foreseeable future. Therefore, there will not be -- necessarily be opportunities to get sidewalks put in those parts. And so -- and to that, we don't think not putting a sidewalk here will leave a substantial gap in the pedestrian way. I have prepared some other slides and photos of the overall project to provide visuals which I think may help us with our discussion and any questions, and again the packet includes those. The first slide shows an overall view very similar to what the staff report indicated. North is to the left, Providence Road -- Providence is shown. The Providence Trail is shown weaving through there. On the outer road, the Career Center is on the -- on the left side of the picture, the high school in the middle, Southampton Drive on the -- the right side to give you

an overall feel. Right now, there are three trail connections that serve the high school property. There is a trail connection immediately to the north adjacent to the north Career Center entrance. There is a trail connection that serves the main entrance to the high school, and I have some photos of some of these as well. And then there is a trail connection between the South Providence Trail and the Southampton Road sidewalks as well, completing that pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. We think that's very important. We've kind of done some blowups to give you a little bit better feel for it. Most of you are probably familiar with the area anyway. This is the north end of the project where the Career Center is that shows in a little bit higher detail the trail connection that exists there. Of particular note, and those of you that are familiar with this will -- will identify with it very quickly -- is the crest of the roadway that's noted there is right at the -- the north entrance to the -- the north high school parking lot. The trail connection that is immediately north and at the north end of the high school -- or the Career Center property is actually over the crest of the hill and it's not a very good location for pedestrians to cross. And so as the staff report indicated, and I'll get to at the end, as we have proposed an alternative connection which we think will greatly enhance the connectivity between the -- the South Providence Trail and the Career Center. This slide just shows, you know, coming on down south. This is adjacent to the north addition of the high school, and then if you're familiar with that, the rain garden that's there. And then this is the main entrance to the -- to the high school. And so you can see there's a major trail connection there that connects to the sidewalks that are -- that go from the high school -- right to the high school front door and front-door plaza. And then is the southeast corner of the property, the south parking lot, if you will, and showing Southampton Drive. The staff report indicated that there is a drainage ditch there in that corner, and I've got some photos to show you a little bit more detail about that, but that's about a 15-foot-deep ditch with pretty substantial slopes up to the outer road and also up to Southampton, a very, very difficult area to build sidewalks without some pretty significant cost. And so we'll just zip through these photos real quick in deference to your time, but certainly they're available to us if -- if you have questions about any part of it. And I've tried to be very complete in this. I haven't left out areas that show that sidewalks could be built easily. I'm not just showing you the bad places. I'm showing you all the places. So some of these, you're going to look at and say there's no problem putting a sidewalk there, and that's fine. We just want to be complete and fair with you. So this is the north end. You can barely see the -- the trail connection and the orange barricade fence is there is an area that the City repairing on that trail connection, but not a really a very good place for a connection. This is moving a little bit farther south and all of these photos will be taken in this -- in this manner, and so that shows the area. The right-of-way, for reference, is about two foot behind the power poles. Normally, we would put sidewalk on the -- the City's -- the street side of the right-of-way. In this particular case, that would be very difficult to do. And as we go up and down the way, you'll see for some topographic concerns, where we're concerned about that. So what that leaves us is, if we do construct a sidewalk along here, it would need to go on the backside of the power poles. Therein lies a little bit of a problem as you can barely see it in the photo, but we have utility guide wires guiding those poles back. And so, obviously, we can't put a sidewalk between the guide wire and the pole, and so that creates -- you know, these are things that aren't insurmountable, but they are difficulties in putting the

sidewalk in and we're not sure that it -- it makes good sense overall. Another view going back. This is getting closer to the crest of the hill. Here, this is the north parking lot entrance, and this is where we would be proposing to put the -- the additional connection, and again I'll show a better photo of that later. Moving south of there, we actually have another utility guide wire there. This is adjacent to the north parking lot falling down in this case. And this shows again, we would probably be needing to put the sidewalk on the -- the school side of the property line, but we do have some landscaping enhancements there that make that a little bit more difficult, as well. I promise I'll zip through these a little faster; okay. Going down through here, this is -- you can -- the power pole is very prominent in this photo, but just beyond that and to the left of it, you see the outlet pipes from the rain garden, and so we would have to address those, as well. This is the entrance connector from the high school's main entrance over to the trail, and so that's pretty typical of what we would be looking at the -- at the crest of the hill and the enhancement we're looking at. This is actually a very nice connector and it is one of the places that I do see pedestrians using. Then moving south of there, it kind of gives you an idea of the topography. Again, the topography starts to get a little bit more difficult. The outer road is an unimproved asphalt roadway, no curbs, open ditches. And this is the north entrance to the south parking lot. And -- and then this is where we start getting closer to the southeast corner on down towards Southampton. As you can see, we really don't have any room on the -- adjacent to the roadway to feasibly put a sidewalk. The ditch just gets deeper from there. So in this case, the sidewalk would need to go out onto to the west side of the power pole. Because of the fills we would have to put in we're going to have to move it extremely far west because we can't put fills coming down on the power pole and some telephone utility boxes that are there directly adjacent to that. And again it's about a 15-foot hole, and so not only would we have to put in, you know, a reasonably good sized drainage pipe across there and fill that, what I call, a water quality feature in that corner, but we would have pretty extensive fill slopes, as well, in order to be able to get the sidewalk to come back up to Southampton Drive at a reasonable grade that meets accessibility standards. This is a -- you know, going back, this is there in the southeast corner looking due north. This photo is looking to the west down Southampton Road, so that gives you a lot better feel for what the depth of that drainageway is. And that drainageway continues all the way over to the -- the drive entrance into the parking area, probably about 150 feet past that bus pedestal. And then this is looking -- going back down and looking east along Southampton Road up to at the intersection. You know, by the nature of our audience and customers, CPS, you know, are -- are very much supporters of providing appropriate pedestrian access in our community. We believe in sidewalks. Construction of sidewalk along this frontage though is going to be difficult and costly. There's not a reasonable solution for the southern connection. We do not believe the construction of this sidewalk will add value to the community. We believe that granting this variance makes sense for several reasons. We believe, first of all, that this is a unique situation. The South Providence Trail provides adequate north-south pedestrian and cyclist connectivity for this property and beyond. Connection points were strategically installed along with the trail construction. Constructing a parallel sidewalk on the west side of the outer road would seem to be redundant and unnecessary in this situation. We believe that the connectivity from the school site to the

South Providence Trail is adequate except for the one addition that we're planning to -- to propose. Due to the grades along the outer roadway, constructing an appropriate sidewalk will require a fair amount of excavation and cutting in many places in an already established utility corridor resulting in displaced utilities and the associated costs. The deep drainage ditch and overall topography of the property and right-of-way at the outer road and Southampton intersection preclude a reasonable construction of a sidewalk. We believe that the appropriate sidewalk solution along this outer roadway, if done, should be done correctly with the utmost safety for students and visitors. We believe that that roadway, if we're going to build a sidewalk along there, it should be part of an overall roadway improvement that considers on-street parking, curb and gutter, and storm drainage improvements to address many of the things that we showed in the photos. Based on the approval of the past building additions under the same ordinance, CPS was pretty confident that the sidewalks along this frontage were kind of a nonissue, and we didn't budget for what is now anticipated to be an \$80,000 to \$100,000 cost to put these in. While we believe that a sidewalk is not required along the frontage, as part of the request, as indicated, we've carefully reviewed the function of the South Providence Trail as it relates to the connectivity to the school and most notably at the Career Center. So in this slide, we show what we're proposing as a new trail connection in blue, and so we -- on the east side of the outer roadway, we would make that connection to the -- the South Providence Trail. And to complete the connection to the Career Center entrance is we would complete sidewalk on the -- on the high school property as shown in blue, as well. And so that -- that's what we're proposing as an alternative to building a sidewalk along the -- the south outer frontage road. I'd be glad to clarify any points or any --answer any questions that you might have. I appreciate your consideration and, you know, I saw the thumbs up to start the meeting. I'd love to have a thumbs up, so I'm --

MR. REICHLIN: Any questions of this speaker? Ms. Burns?

MS. BURNS: I -- if you could go back to slide -- the overall site plan, please, Mr. Trabue? I appreciate that.

MR. TRABUE: The very beginning. Uh-huh.

MS. BURNS: I'm looking at the parking of cars and it -- I don't know where parking is allowed. In almost all of your photos, if you're looking at the second quadrant, not the furthest south, but the second to the south, there are almost always cars parked along there, and I'm assuming they're -- I've parked there for football games and whatnot.

MR. TRABUE: I see.

MS. BURNS: And I've seen younger family members and older family members really have difficulty getting to the north and south driveway entrances to attend a football game or a band concert or something like that. That's my only thought. If we allow parking there, we're unfortunately allowing someone to park there and then not having a safe track for them to get -- if they're unsteady or whatever -- to get to one of the legs to get into the football game, the band concert, the graduation ceremony, whatever.

MR. TRABUE: Right. We certainly concur with that, and we've looked at that pretty carefully.

Where we would have to put the sidewalk would be far enough off the roadway that it would be pretty treacherous getting from those parking areas to the sidewalk, as well. And that's why when we looked at it, and -- and Charlie Oestreich with the facilities for the schools is here, as well, and can again speak to that. We really feel like the -- the most appropriate solution would be a sidewalk that would be directly adjacent to the back of curb. In this case, we don't have any curbs there, but we believe that that would be the right design solution for sidewalks in that area to address exactly what you're talking about. If we -- if we allow parking along the street there and we still have a grass parkway that people have to traverse and, in this case, without a significant amount of grading, that sidewalk will be sitting, you know, three foot or more higher than where their cars are parking and they would still have to cross a ditch.

MS. BURNS: And, no. I agree with you. I think it's --

MR. TRABUE: And -- and -- so we concur completely and -- and, you know, again, we're not opposed to sidewalks, we're just not sure that it's ready for one to be here.

MS. BURNS: I wish there was a way that it didn't have to go so far to the west because that really is an issue. I've seen people stumble and try to get to the school heading to the west if they're, as I say, going to the football stadium or into the main building.

MR. TRABUE: Yeah. I -- we -- we certainly have a challenge with parking at this site, especially when we have events. But even every day, it's a challenge with the parking as the whole area has developed.

MS. BURNS: Thank you. Yes, sir?

MR. REICHLIN: Mr. Stanton?

MR. STANTON: My colleague had mentioned pedestrian signage, any kind of pedestrian signaling. Is that part of your proposed new connections or --

MR. TRABUE: No. We're not proposing that at this time. The -- the connection that connects to the main entrance, the one photo I showed you there, there is some signage identifying that as a crossing, and it -- and we would -- the other crossing is not striped at all. We would anticipate striping this one, but we're certainly not looking at flashing lights or anything like that at this location.

MR. STANTON: Would you be open to -- I wouldn't say flashing lights, either, but maybe striping that? I mean, if -- if this is where I'm at. I'm pretty much in support, but if I'm going to save you \$100,000 -- \$80,000, can you give me some stripes on front entrances?

MR. TRABUE: Absolutely. I -- I think what we would do, I'm -- I'm certainly very open to that. I think it would be very appropriate. What we would like to do is work with the City traffic staff and make sure that we do it in accordance with what they -- their regulations are. But I -- yes. I think it would be very appropriate to stripe that crossing. And that's one of the reasons we've looked at this and chosen to put it right at the crest of the hill because, again, there's some real sight-distance problems if you go down over the crest. We looked at some other alternatives that just did not feel as good that were actually cheaper for the school, but just didn't feel like they would really serve the pedestrian needs in the area.

MR. PALMER: I would just like to point out real quickly that the main entrance crosswalk that you showed earlier has a raised crosswalk, which is actually just a traffic-calming device more than anything. I

think that might be one alternative to -- a safety feature that -- that could be added there that -- that might be of benefit.

MR. TRABUE: We -- we can talk with the traffic folks about that. We would not recommend that at this particular location because it's at the crest of the hill and right adjacent to an entrance and we think that could be very problematic, but we -- we certainly would consider that.

MR. REICHLIN: Any other questions of this speaker? Seeing no one. Thank you so much, sir. I'm going to make the assumption that there is not anybody else wishing to speak on this matter; is that correct? Okay. Thank you. So, now, I'll turn it over to members of the Commission for their thoughts and comments. Ms. Russell?

MS. RUSSELL: You know, when I first saw this no sidewalks in front of a school, I was panic stricken, and I did actually drive down there. And I will support it subject to a well-marked crosswalk there at that north entrance. I mean, that -- it is so scary with all those kids and all those cars, and I'm not even opposed to -- to raising it a little bit, but well-marked and signage is what I would like to see.

MR. REICHLIN: Anybody else? Ms. Rushing?

MS. RUSHING: Yeah. Yeah. I, too, drove down there and looked around. I'm sure everybody here did. But -- and I will support it. I think encouraging people to use the trail is in the best interest of pedestrians in that area. I also looked at it and if we required sidewalks further north, and there are so many driveway entrances there along that area and I -- I do think it's in the best interest of pedestrians to encourage use of that trail, and I like the proposal for that crossing. I like that a lot. So I would support it, also.

MR. REICHLIN: Mr. Strodman?

MR. STRODTMAN: I would like to go ahead and made a motion if there's no further discussion. Is that okay?

MR. REICHLIN: That's fine with me.

MR. STRODTMAN: Case 16-49, Rock Bridge High School, I recommend a motion for the sidewalk -- to approve the sidewalk variance subject to the inclusion of a new connection from the north parking lot.

MS. RUSSELL: Could I amend that?

MR. REICHLIN: Go right ahead, Ms. Russell.

MS. RUSSELL: The inclusion of a well-marked crosswalk at the north parking lot.

MR. REICHLIN: Are you comfortable with that, Mr. Strodman or are we going to have to vote on this one?

MR. STRODTMAN: Would you be inclined to -- subject to the inclusion of a new connection per the City's road department or street department?

MS. RUSSELL: Yes.

MS. RUSHING: Second.

MR. REICHLIN: Okay. So we have a motion and a second. May we have the roll call, please?

MR. STRODTMAN: Yes, sir.

Roll Call Vote (Voting "yes" is to recommend approval.) Voting Yes: Mr. Strodman, Ms. Rushing, Ms. Russell, Mr. Toohey, Ms. Burns, Mr. Harder, Mr. Reichlin, Mr. Stanton. Motion carries 8-0.

MR. STRODTMAN: Motion has been -- is approved and will be forwarded to City Council for their consideration.

MR. REICHLIN: Thank you.