

EXCERPTS
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
COLUMBIA CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER
701 EAST BROADWAY, COLUMBIA, MO
MAY 5, 2022

Case Number 138-2022

A request by Veterans United Home Loans for approval to rename State Farm Parkway and E. Southampton Road to Veterans United Parkway and Veterans United Drive, respectively. The street name change would affect State Farm Parkway from Grindstone Parkway south to the roundabout and E. Southampton Drive from Providence Boulevard east to the roundabout.

MS. LOE: May we have a staff report, please.

Staff report was given by Mr. Pat Zenner of the Planning and Development Department. Staff recommends pursuant to the staff's technical review, a recommendation of denial is offered for the proposed change of E. Southampton Drive to Veterans United Drive based on the following:

1. Would create a street name (Veterans United Drive) that duplicates another street name (proposed Veterans United Parkway) thereby potentially impacting the delivery of emergency services. This condition is less severe when the two roadway names are connected and in proximity, as in the nearby examples of Grindstone Parkway and Grindstone Plaza Drive.
2. Requested name conflicts with City of Columbia and Boone County ordinances that prohibits street names from duplicating or sounding like any established business in Boone County.
3. Doesn't include the entire length of Southampton Road and disrupts street name continuity.

The arguments against the proposed renaming of State Farm Parkway to Veterans United Parkway are the same as the first two above, as well as the following:

1. Would create a street name (Veterans United Parkway) that sounds like another street name (proposed Veterans United Drive) thereby potentially impacting the delivery of emergency services.
2. Requested name conflicts with City and Boone County ordinances that prohibits street names from duplicating or sounding like any established business in Boone County. In this case, the existing street name was named after a business (State Farm).

MS. LOE: Thank you, Mr. Zenner. Before we ask any staff questions, I would like to ask any Commissioner who has had any ex parte related to this case to please share that with the Commission so

all Commissioners have the same information on the case in front of us. I see none. Are there any questions of staff? Commissioner Burns?

MS. BURNS: Thank you. Mr. Zenner, could you please go back to the slide where the Forum Road location, and I just want to make sure I'm understanding staff correctly. I think you -- and I'm not sure if this is it, but you indicated that the name had been changed at the Forum Road location to reflect Veterans United; is that correct -- because they had offices there?

MR. ZENNER: Yes. So this used to be -- if many of you recall, this used to be a gym. And so when Veterans United took over that suite space within the Forum Shopping Center, a request was made to have the driveway that is here that runs north-south and comes back out to Forum renamed. That was done. And in so doing that, the -- this building in -- was, in essence, or the suite that is occupied by Veterans United, and there's a suite up here on the upper level, if I recall correctly, that is also -- that was readdressed. Those addresses are reverting back to the Forum -- the 1400 Forum address with the appropriate suite numbers, which is what the address is of the Forum Shopping Center.

MS. BURNS: And to follow up, if I may. So Veterans United no longer occupies those offices?

MR. ZENNER: Well, they do occupy them, but --

MS. BURNS: They do occupy those offices.

MR. ZENNER: -- as part of this request to signify their shift to their -- their -- what we would consider their flagship location --

MS. BURNS: Okay.

MR. ZENNER: -- the State Farm facilities -- former State Farm facilities, they are willing to give up this -- this honorary designation of a drive aisle in relationship to having a -- a permanent public street bear their -- bear the name.

MS. BURNS: Thank you. I guess my concern is that what if a new location is built in the future, will we have a third renaming of a street? And I'm not asking you to answer that question. It's just something that I'm turning over in my mind. And when we go back to the Rice Road renaming, I think because of some perceptions, right or wrong, about negativity with the name of Rice Road, that was a big consideration in that renaming. But my understanding is there is no negativity with the name that's being changed from the Forum location now to the State Farm location? It's simply way finding.

MR. ZENNER: And so no negativity associated with the street -- the streets that surround the former State Farm location.

MS. BURNS: I'm just looking at precedents for the Rice Road decision.

MR. ZENNER: Yeah. There -- and there is no negativity to the name of -- of the parking drive aisle -- the parking lot drive aisle that we're aware of for Veterans United. But we typically within the City of Columbia don't name parking lot drive aisles; and therefore, giving up the drive aisle name and accepting the original 1400 Forum Boulevard, Suite whatever, for their satellite office operation is acceptable to them, as we understand it. And they would prefer to have a principal public street addressed -- a publicly -- a property off of a public street addressed with Veterans United.

MS. BURNS: And if I may, just one last quick question. Are you aware of any other renamings that have then been rescinded to take the name to a future location?

MR. ZENNER: The drive aisle was not processed through the standard street-naming process because it was not a public road. It was designated as an honorary -- it was designated, if my recollection serves me correctly, at the request and direction of City Council to staff to put up a street sign in this particular location and formally change the address within the addressing system.

MS. BURNS: Thank you.

MS. LOE: Commissioner MacMann?

MR. MACMANN: Thank you. Thank you very much. Mr. Zenner, I'm going to repeat something I said when we turned down the Rice Road naming. I think it's high time we integrate elements, at least, of the county's naming protocols so we're on the same page, because we will continue to have these issues, and this will continue to be not a technical decision, which it could very well be, but a political decision, which it will very quickly become -- just like Rice Road. So that's -- I'm putting it out there again. Thanks.

MS. LOE: Commissioner Stanton?

MR. STANTON: I concur with Mr. MacMann on the Rice Road situation, but, with this one, if I was VU, I would say, well, this is State Farm. Were they able to name State Farm prior to that ruling, or was that ruling in place when State Farm Road was named; do you know?

MR. ZENNER: I believe State Farm was named -- our provisions in the appendix have not changed any. I think we have historically held in place that a naming of a roadway typically is not after a generally living individual, or that of a business. There's exceptions to the rule in any community, and we're not, you know, immune to that here in Columbia.

MR. STANTON: I'd like to follow. So I generally didn't have a problem with it until we thought about the safety and fire issue. Number two, setting precedents again, so love you to death, they're great corporate citizens of Columbia, what if they move? What if they go global and, hey, I want to go move my headquarters to New York, we're so big, you know, Columbia is not big enough for us. Then we start a precedent of every time a big company comes in, they want to rename the name. And I know VU is probably not trying to be insensitive, but this means address changes, changes to the computer systems, all of that over and over. And you're doing it twice because you've to change the names at Veterans United Drive on Forum back to what it originally was, then change this name, change those addresses. It's sticky.

MS. LOE: Commissioner MacMann?

MR. MACMANN: I forgot to ask one question. You stated that one of the reasons this wasn't automatically granted is that at least one property owner who abuts this road did not approve, like this name change. Is that a correct statement?

MR. ZENNER: Based on the information that was provided to us, it would appear that the property owned by the University of Missouri is the only correspondence we received. The applicant is present this evening. They can address what efforts they made to contact other owners. We do not have

any other information, other than that the curators of the University of Missouri do not object to the renaming and the impact that it will create to their medical facility.

MR. MACMANN: Okay. So my amended question, you don't know if the property owner to the agricultural property directly to the east thinks about this?

MR. ZENNER: No. Because they have not --

MR. MACMANN: You have received no feedback?

MR. ZENNER: We have received no feedback.

MR. MACMANN: All right. Thank you very much.

MS. LOE: Any additional questions for staff? Seeing none. We're going to open up the public hearing portion on this case.

PUBLIC HEARING OPENED

MS. LOE: If anyone has any public comments they would like to share, please come up to the podium. We will need your name and address for the record. We do limit you to three minutes. We allow you to have six minutes if you're speaking for a group.

MR. STEINHOFF: Good evening, Commissioners, and thank you for the opportunity to be here this evening, and thanks for serving. My name is Greg Steinhoff, 4003 Copperstone Creek Drive in Columbia. I'm with Veterans United, and we --was involved with making this application. A little background and, first of all, I also want to thank Mr. Zenner and his staff have been really good to work with on this process, and actually think we're going to do some things here that might help quite a bit. If you could put the map up -- well, just with the green and the -- the yellow or the -- yeah. That one there. So a little bit about Veterans United, and you guys will, I'm sure, know people that have been involved there. But we have -- we're a good Columbia story, up or over 5,000 employees nationwide, but about 2,800 of them live here in Columbia. And so we've experience tremendous growth. We're in 18 different buildings in town. And so, Commissioner Burns, when you asked about Veterans United Drive and Forum, that was our headquarters location, which is a few years back. And our headquarters location has to be designated such so that we -- when we have -- we're licensed in 50 states, and so every one of those states licenses us with our home address at our headquarters, and your headquarters being Veterans United Drive certainly helps with being able to designate where our stuff goes to each state. So it's a big -- it matters a lot to us to have an address that has Veterans United Drive in it for business purposes and regulatory purposes. So we've grown and we have -- we now have leased the entire State Farm building, and we'll have close to 2,000 employees there. And that's simply growth. I mean, we -- we've added over 2,000 people in the last five years. And so this facility is large, lots of green space. It -- we've invested a lot into the building, and it's important for us to take the Veterans United Drive, which was our previous headquarters, which was not a public thoroughfare. In other words, we're not changing an address that people use on a daily basis, simply a driveway that was converted to our address, so taking that back and doing away with that. And really what will help with this is the change that I would propose to the application where we would not ask for State Farm Parkway to be renamed. We would

just -- we would be okay if East Southampton was just named Veterans United Drive. That does several things. First of all, we became aware of the potential extension of State Farm Parkway to Gans Road, and then that presents complications if that happens, and we hope that that happens someday. And then it also reduces or it does away with the -- the duplication that emergency services was concerned about. There's only one road now in town that has Veterans United in it. And that, of course, we're interested in the safety and response times of our employees, so that's important to us. So the amendment we would make is just to take the yellow portion of the map there, East Southampton Drive, and make that Veterans United Drive. I can go through the hundreds of millions of dollars that Veterans United has invested in this community, and the impact that we have, and the fact that we're intertwined with this community. So, Commission Stanton, I -- I think -- you never know what could happen, but I don't know of another company that is more intertwined with their city than Veterans United is. So the prospect of us leaving is - it's -- it's the notion that I would give very little weight to, but it is always possible, and you should think of that. But we're very tied to this community. We made major investments here, and look forward to a long future here and, hopefully, will continue our record of -- of community involvement and community service.

MS. LOE: Thank you, Mr. Steinhoff. Are you ready -- would you prefer -- like any questions?

MR. STEINHOFF: If they would like -- if people have questions, absolutely.

MS. LOE: Mr. MacMann?

MR. MACMANN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Steinhoff, I have an idea. Mr. Zenner has communicated the concern and the expense that a variety of agencies, local and maybe not local, will accrue, name-changing and stuff like that. Would you all be open to picking up that tab?

MR. STEINHOFF: Well, I think we'd pick up the tab in the tens and hundreds of millions of dollars we invest in this community.

MR. MACMANN: That's -- I just -- you understood why I asked that question.

MR. STEINHOFF: I think it's just a -- you know, look, it's -- it's -- we're asking for a street to be renamed and that's it. It's minimal in terms of -- of the -- what we do for this community. And I can go through what we do for this community.

MR. MACMANN: No. I am quite aware, actually.

MR. STEINHOFF: So I don't know that, you know. We're just interested in asking you all to consider the name change.

MR. MACMANN: All right. Thank you, Mr. Steinhoff.

MR. STEINHOFF: We've paid for that many times.

MS. LOE: Any additional questions for this speaker?

MR. STEINHOFF: Yes, Sir. Mr. Stanton?

MS. LOE: Commissioner Stanton?

MR. STANTON: We'd like to thank you for what you've done for the community. Hopefully, it was done in earnest, so not as a future payback for this decision.

MR. STEINHOFF: Oh, absolutely. Appreciate your comments. Yeah.

MR. STANTON: But State Farm was here for a really, really --

MR. STEINHOFF: Right.

MR. STANTON: -- really long time, too. So kind of where our concern is --

MR. STEINHOFF: I guess I would just --

MR. STANTON: -- you might like your proposal, but --

MR. STEINHOFF: I think it's wise. I think you have to look even at State Farm and say does the fact that State Farm had an enormous impact on this community for many, many, many years, changed lives, provided for families for decades. And so the value of that versus the pain of renaming a road, put it into proportion would be all that I would ask. Someday we may have 20,000 employees, and we may have another location. We may have to change the name again. I mean, is that really a super huge aggravation to a lot of people? In my mind, relative to the impact that that has, I think it's a reasonable request. That's my opinion, of course, and I'm a little biased, so --

MS. LOE: You should be biased about where you work, and I'm glad you value your workplace. I find the interchange from Nifong to State Farm Parkway to Nifong very confusing. And I find the name changes along Columbia streets continually confused. So -- and I've lived here over 13 years now, so I'm -- I'm -- I guess I'm still a newcomer, but it's not something I would like to perpetuate, so I'm not in favor of changing a segment of a road to a new name, especially in this area where we already have some name changes. There's quite an extensive internal road on this site, and I'm wondering if you would be open to doing another internal United Veterans Drive?

MR. STEINHOFF: No. I think it's -- you know, we're interested in the road that fronts our 2,000 employees to be still Veterans United Drive. And I think internal roads are, you know -- I guess I would just say we're a substantial employer now and would want the road that faces our building to be that name as opposed to an innocuous name that has no connection. So just like when State Farm was here for all those years, they had a State Farm. When you go to any city that has a major employer, they're oftentimes they're on a road that's named for that employer. We are the largest private employer by far in the city and we -- you know, I think we're in a spot where it's very reasonable for us to ask for this. I don't -- I understand where you've coming. I've been for 60 years, and I understand the confusion, but you live here, you know, that's a road that people don't travel a ton to get from one part of the city to the other part of the city. Who goes there are people that work at Veterans United, and that's -- you know, that's the way we kind of view it. We obviously can agree to disagree, but I don't believe that there'll be much confusion because of a name from East Southampton Drive to Veterans United Drive, personally.

MS. LOE: Any additional questions for this speaker? I see none. Thank you.

MR. STEINHOFF: Thank you very much.

MS. LOE: Any additional speakers on this case? I see none. I'm going to close public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED

MS. LOE: Commissioner comment? Commissioner Rushing?

MS. RUSHING: I think I agree with you. What we're seeing here tonight is a perfect example of why you don't name streets after companies because when the company moves, then if there were addresses along here, which there may well be in the future if that land develops, then Veterans United sells to another company, are we going to have that company coming in and wanting the name changed again? And I think the option that you suggested was exactly what I was thinking of. They have the two -- particular, they have two entrances to the property, and then they have the circular drive, and any one of those could be named after their company.

MS. LOE: Commissioner Stanton?

MR. STANTON: I'm entertaining the proposal presented by the owner of this property, so I'm looking at a -- if it was just the Southampton part, I'm kind of with that. I don't -- you know. But overall, yeah. I mean, we're setting precedents, and I don't know if this is going to -- State Farm, I thought would never leave. So I'm -- I'm still stuck with that same situation there.

MS. LOE: Commissioner Burns?

MS. BURNS: Thank you. And again, I agree with my fellow Commissioners in that making changes, we need to consider that with tremendous consideration because it's not easy to go back and it's not easy to ask people to readdress. And when Mr. Steinhaus [sic] couldn't -- and no one can guarantee that Veterans United will be here forever, but there would be a possibility that this wouldn't be their headquarters forever, that gives me pause to make a change that we might have to reconsider in the coming years.

MS. LOE: Commissioner MacMann?

MR. MACMANN: I'm close to making a motion along the lines of what Mr. Steinhoff suggested, just the East Southampton portion, and then we could vote that up or down. Does anyone have anything else to offer at this juncture? Seeing none. Mr. Zenner, could you return the -- go back one page from where we are right now? Where was I -- as the salient one that has the salient information --

MR. ZENNER: Oh. You want --

MR. PALMER: You want the names on it?

MR. MACMANN: Yeah. The one -- the one with the names on it. Thank you. That'll -- that'll work. Okay. No -- okay. In the matter of Case 138-2022, name change of Southampton and State Farm -- Southampton Drive East and State Farm Parkway -- I'm going to pause and ask legal a question. Do I have to state it as is and then amend it, or amend it as I speak it? As advertised; do you see what I'm saying?

MS. THOMPSON: I do. I think either is fine.

MR. MACMANN: Okay. I'm going to move forward then. In the matter of Case 138-2022, the matter of name change for Southampton Drive Southeast, I move to rename Southampton Drive Southeast or Southampton Drive East to Veterans United Drive.

MR. STANTON: Second.

MS. LOE: Moved by Commissioner MacMann, seconded by Commission Stanton. We have a

motion on the floor. Any discussion on this motion? Seeing none. Commissioner Carroll, may we have roll call, please.

Roll Call Vote (Voting "yes" is to recommend approval.) Voting Yes: Mr. Stanton, Mr. MacMann. Voting No: Ms. Carroll, Ms. Loe, Ms. Burns, Ms. Rushing, Ms. Placier. Motion fails 5-2.

MS. CARROLL: We have five no votes and two yes. That motion is denied.

MS. LOE: Recommendation will be forwarded to City Council.

MS. THOMPSON: My -- and my recommendation also would be to go ahead and also take a motion on the second name change, as well, so that that recommendation can be forwarded to Council, as well.

MS. LOE: Thank you.

MS. THOMPSON: Yeah.

MR. MACMANN: Noted. Madam Chair, may I make that motion? In the matter of Case 138-2022, the renaming of State Farm Parkway to Veterans United Parkway, I move to approve.

MR. STANTON: Second.

MS. LOE: Moved by Commissioner MacMann, seconded by Commissioner Stanton. We have a second motion on the floor in this case. Any discussion on this motion? Seeing none, Commissioner Carroll, may we have roll call.

Roll Call Vote: (Voting "yes" is to recommend approval.) Voting No: Ms. Carroll, Ms. Loe, Mr. Stanton, Ms. Burns, Ms. Rushing, Mr. MacMann, Ms. Placier. Motion fails 7-0.

MS. CARROLL: We have seven no votes. The motion is defeated.

MS. LOE: Thank you. And that recommendation will also be forwarded to City Council.