

**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**  
CITY OF ROELAND PARK, KANSAS  
4600 W 51<sup>st</sup> Street, Roeland Park, KS 66205  
June 21, 2023, 6:00 P.M.

The Roeland Park Planning Commission met on June 21, 2023.

Commissioners Present: Matthew Lero  
Haile Sims  
Darren Nielsen  
Macrina Abdouch

Commissioners Absent: Lisa Brunner  
Josey Shaw  
Mark Kohles

Staff: Keith Moody, City Administrator  
Wade Holtkamp  
Steve Mauer, City Attorney

**I. ROLL CALL**

Mr. Holtkamp called the meeting to order. Commissioners Lero, Sims, Nielsen, and Abdouch were present. Commissioners Brunner, Shaw, and Kohles were absent.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

*There were no minutes for approval.*

**III. Public Hearing**

**1. Southridge Church Rezoning**

Wade Holtkamp said the Planning Commission is being asked to provide a recommendation to the Governing Body regarding a zoning application change for 5015 Buena Vista, previously Southridge Church, from R-1 residential to CP-1, Planned Restricted Business District. The impetus is The Barn Players Community Theater would like to purchase and convert the vacant church into a performing arts theater. After approval, they would seek to renovate the space, leaving the exterior, but doing some minor renovations to the interior of the building and set it up as a theater to provide performances. It would bring in approximately 60 to 100 patrons per performance. There is an understanding with Roesland School to provide overflow parking so as not to overburden on-street parking. The existing west side parking would be reserved for cast, staff, and orchestra. The music provided would not be a nuisance to the neighborhood and not exceed 60 decibels to the property line. The Barn Players would also like to have a summer camp for children on the site. Mr. Holtkamp reviewed The Barn Players' mission statement and their planned 2023 season.

As part of the application process, a development plan is attached. There is a survey attached to the report. Staff contacted the City Engineer to see if a traffic study was warranted, and the engineer indicated during the times the theater is in operation it would cause no undue nuisance to the neighborhood. Performances would be in the evenings with a Sunday matinee and most shows over by 10:30-11:00 p.m. The Barn Players would also be amenable to renting some space for meetings to Roeland Park residents.

The notification process included neighbors within 200 feet of the property. Certified mail notices were sent out and notice was published in the newspaper of the public hearing.

Concerns were indicated by staff for the rezoning. Rezoning would create a single-family zoning adjacent to commercial zoning without any kind of buffer. There are currently some residential properties that do directly abut a commercially zoned property. Another possible concern is the event parking could have an impact on street parking. Patrons would more than likely park close to the venue and not utilize the overflow parking. Most homes in the area have a limited amount of street parking. Other possible concerns could be noise levels, alcohol consumption, and trash. Other issues to take into consideration is for the site plan approval to include specific conditions to avoid conflicts of use. The school, for example, is more intense and has a high volume even though it is zoned R-1. It is recommended that they contemplate these situations for rezoning to Commercial in a residential area and its connection with residents and visitors.

**MOTION:** COMMISSIONER NIELSEN MOVED AND COMMISSIONER SIMS SECONDED TO OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING. (MOTION CARRIED 4-0)

Vida Bikales, Board President of The Barn Players, said their desire is to purchase the church to bring their community to the Roeland Park community. They are the oldest area theater and in their 68<sup>th</sup> season. It is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. The theater performs Broadway shows and musicals as well as offering a three-week summer session called Barn Kids. They would like to bring new life to the vacant church building that is starting to show decline and has had issues with vandalism. They want to create a community partnership with the City. Ms. Bikales also reviewed The Barn Players' operations, what they do, and what the volunteers do.

Commissioner Nielsen asked how much parking would be available. Ms. Bikales said there are 28 spots in the lot for their use with overflow parking across the street at Roeland Elementary. The agreement they would have would be similar to that of the church.

Commissioner Lero asked if they worked on a certain season or on a year-round schedule. Ms. Bikales said they currently have a season. If they were able to own the building, they would be able to offer year-round classes. Commissioner Lero asked if the existing parking would be sufficient, and Ms. Bikales said that it would be. She added that she has been amazed at the outpouring of communication from the residents in support of them being there. She noted that a lot of people are worried it would be torn down and multi-family going in and many are emotionally tied to the spot and are excited about being able to come back again.

The Barn Players Board Member Ile Haggins said that fears were assuaged with the residents when they realized all of their performances were inside as some had envisioned it to be similar to Theater in the Park. This will not be an outdoor venue.

Commissioner Sims inquired if they rented space would they maintain the hours to close. Ms. Bikales said they would, and a technical staff person would be on site to lock up and resolve any issues that might arise.

Commissioner Lero wanted to make certain that anyone holding meetings they would be sure to adhere to any regulations in place.

Commissioner Nielsen asked what they anticipate being the latest The Barn Players would be on site. Ms. Bikales said most performances are over by 10:00 to 10:15 and would expect the latest people would leave would be by 11:00 or so.

Commissioner Nielsen also wanted to know if there were plans for any exterior modifications to the building. Ms. Bikales said they would work on the marquee sign and noticed some cement work, but nothing that would change appearance of the building. She said they would also like to simplify some of the property landscaping.

Commissioner Nielsen noted there was a mention of serving alcohol and asked what those plans are. Ms. Bikales stated they do not sell it. It is usually a part of the ticket price when they have a special event or for a donation. They will not acquire a liquor license and only serve it sporadically at special events. It is only wine and no hard liquor.

Commissioner Nielsen then asked from where The Barn Players are relocating. Ms. Bikales replied that currently they are performing at the Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center, but there is no place to build sets or store items. All of their possessions are stored in an underground facility. They have to rehearse at Prairie Baptist Church in Prairie Village and hold their kids camp at Bishop Miege. They hold Zoom meetings or if they need to meet in person, they do that at the Corinth Library. The facility they rented previously closed due to COVID and now they are unable to do the big shows, sets, and costuming that they used to do.

Commissioner Nielsen asked if there were any other plans for other parts of the building and a possible sublet. Ms. Bikales said they will need to construct a green room on the lower level, a place for actors to stay while waiting to go on stage and a place to change costumes. The kitchen will also be converted into bathrooms.

Ms. Haggins said they are in conversations with the Kansas City Actors Theater who is interested in utilizing the building for rehearsal space. They currently perform at Union Station, but they are not able to rehearse there. There will also be meeting spaces available as well as storage and office space for the theater.

Ms. Bikales added that other theater companies are interested in sharing the space.

***Public Comment:***

**Kelsey Strube** (5020 Clark) Ms. Strube said she shares a property line with the church property. She asked if there were plans to remove the lead paint as that may impact her family. Barb Nichols, Board Vice President of The Barn Players, said that an inspection had been done and noted some mold issues and asbestos wrapped around pipes. She said they hoped to be able to address those issues, but did not see anything about lead paint and would be happy to share the report.

Ms. Strube asked about on-street parking and whether they would fully utilize the parking available at Roesland. She was concerned that theater patrons would block their driveways. She also wanted to make sure that after the shows, people would get in their cars and go and not congregate outside. Ms. Haggins responded and said they will be out there acting as crossing guards and directing traffic as they do not want to cause issues or concerns for the neighbors. Additionally, a majority of the people who come to their performances or are in them are working adults and it is not a place to hang out. It will be the responsibility of their house manager to make certain that people are leaving. The Barn Players will do everything they can to be exceptionally good neighbors.

**Meg Hilburn** (5004 Buena Vista) Ms. Hilburn said they never had a traffic problem when the daycare was there, and she is thrilled to have the theater in this location rather than a multiplex.

**Susan Carr-Dowell** (4930 Clark) Ms. Carr-Dowell said there has been parking along Clark Drive when there have been events, and it has never been an issue. She added that she wants to support this project.

**George Reichman** (5215 Clark) Mr. Reichman said he supports this use, and it is an improvement over recent alternatives. He said the church is a part of Roeland Park history. He does understand the concerns about parking and asked what the use would be for the church lot and noted space on Parish for overflow for Roesland. Ms. Bikales said the church lot is for the cast and musicians and is about 20-30 people. She said they will need to train their patrons on where to appropriately park. Ms. Haggins said that training will go in the media they publish with a map on where to park and additionally, people will be out directing cars. They will also get an idea of how many people are coming from ticket sales as not many people buy tickets at the door. Mr. Reichman said in regards to the rezoning, if their venture does not work, as a commercial use there is a potential for a different type of business.

Mr. Holtkamp said the building could be demolished and something else put in. By rezoning the property, they are taking a chance that something could change.

**James Hilburn** (5004 Buena Vista) Mr. Hilburn said the opportunity of having The Barn Players is akin to a thriving theatrical enterprise in the City. They are of very good quality and would be a treasure to the community. He said this is a wonderful match for Roeland Park. He also noted that Roesland has overflow parking across the street. He thanked them for considering Roeland Park as a place to bring their theater.

Ms. Bikales said she hopes the Roeland Park citizens will just walk on over with no need to bring their cars.

**UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER** (3510 West 47<sup>th</sup> Terrace) The speaker said that the Barn Players have not had a home for over 50 years, and they couldn't think of a more appropriate place than Roeland Park, which is committed to the arts, to be their permanent home.

**Michelle Daugharthy** (4146 Buena Vista) Ms. Daugharthy said the area is packed with families and children. She said the children are very active in the area and expressed concerns about increased traffic. Ms. Bikales said training their patrons will stress the need to leave when the production is over and there will not be a lot of verbal chit chat outside. She also said they have a lighter schedule in the summer and hopefully will be able to get the neighborhood children involved.

It was asked how long a production runs and Ms. Bikales said it is typically a two weekend run of eight performances all in the evening with the exception of the Sunday matinee.

**Hope Meador** (4012 Elledge) Ms. Meador said she feels good about the group being there and is excited about this opportunity.

Ms. Nichols said their season includes four musicals and a play. When they are in rehearsal it is just the case and that would not cause any traffic issues.

**Elizabeth Daniel** (5136 Catalina) Ms. Daniel asked if The Barn Players had the funding for the renovations. She also wanted to know if they left the site, would it revert back to R-1 residential. She also inquired about serving alcohol without a liquor license and how it was determined a traffic study was not warranted.

Commissioner Nielsen stated that if The Barn Players left, the zoning would not automatically revert back to R-1 and an action would need to be taken for that to happen.

Mr. Holtkamp stated the engineer said there were no high traffic generators during the weekend and there was nothing extraordinary about the use. He said this is not a high volume road in the neighborhood when compared to those such as Roe Boulevard and Mission Road.

(Audience and Commission back and forth discussion away from the microphones)

Ms. Bikales said they have a financial committee and a commitment from their board members and local matching grants for the renovations. They first would renovate the bathrooms and get the theater/church area up and running. If they sublet to other artists and theaters, they would be under the same umbrella, rules and requirements as The Barn Players group. Regarding serving wine, they do that on opening night as a welcome in a plastic cup. They do not do that with every performance, and they do not sell it. She said that Mr. Holtkamp or the City's legal staff can look into that further.

**Linda Gardner** (5220 Clark) Ms. Gardner expressed concern regarding changing the zoning from R-1 to Commercial. She lives on Clark and disagrees with the engineer and that studies do need to happen on Buena Vista and Clark. She noted that Roeland is open after hours to the community and many people go there.

Someone in the audience wondered what would happen next. Commissioner Nielsen responded they are being asked to make a recommendation to the Governing Body, but further approvals are still needed. A survey must be completed along with finalizing a more detailed development plan and a public notice is required by law to be published.

Ms. Bikales said their hope is this would be finalized this summer as they need to plan for their 2024 season. They would like to be in place by February 2024.

(Further conversation between the Commissioners and the audience)

**Christi Brunner** (5005 Buena Vista) Ms. Brunner asked if was possible to give them access and not zone it Commercial. Commissioner Nielsen said that is one of the things they need to deliberate. He also said they need to determine what restrictions are most appropriate for the request being made and restrictions on use is one method.

Ms. Daugharty asked if the school was willing to put into writing an agreement or are they hoping for the best. Mr. Holtkamp said use of the parking lot was communicated to them. Ms. Bikales said the approval is coming from the Shawnee Mission School District. If they do not get use of the parking lot, the project will not happen. The same thing for the zoning too.

Commissioner Nielsen closed the public comment section of the meeting.

Commissioner Sims said he would like to see the number of parking spaces at Roesland in their preliminary development plan.

Commissioner Abdouch inquired about the capacity for performances. Ms. Bikales said it would be approximately 150 people maximum. They need to build out the stage and construct a tech booth in the back which would cut down on seating space. They would also remove the pews and replace them with theater seating.

Commissioner Lero said this is a great opportunity for the City. He does understand the expressed concerns with parking and traffic, and noted there is danger with the property sitting vacant. He is looking forward to more details once they are further along in the process. If The Barn Players do leave, the property will need to come back before Planning Commission for a new use.

Commissioner Sims asked what they can do to make sure that someone doesn't put in a Dollar General on the site. Mr. Holtkamp said they can make a list for legal to see what they can and cannot do with the rezoning.

Commissioner Lero suggested a special use option. Mr. Holtkamp said a special use permit would need to renew annually and is not a permanent situation for them when they are committed to acquiring the entire property.

Commissioner Sims said this is a great addition to the City with the appropriate restrictions. He also appreciates their desire to be good neighbors and that means a lot. He said the

Planning Commissioners want them to continue to listen to the concerns of the neighborhoods. Ms. Bikales said their mission statement is they perform for the community and by the community. They want the Roeland Park community to utilize the space and to also be a part of it.

Commissioner Nielsen said he loves the fact an investment is coming back to City on the arts side of things, and he wants to be thoughtful on how they proceed. He said their dialogue tonight has been transparent and it gives them things to think about.

The commercial broker representing The Barn Players said they are on a timeline with the current owners. If they do not close in July or by August 1<sup>st</sup>, they cannot make the timeline and the owners are talking about redeveloping into townhomes.

Mr. Holtkamp said they can make a recommendation without restrictions to the Governing Body.

Commissioner Sims stated he is concerned about making that type of a commercial recommendation without restrictions.

Commissioner Nielsen suggested they make a recommendation for approval to the Council and then individually contact them with any restrictions they would like to make.

(Off Record Comments from the Audience. )

Commissioner Sims encouraged the neighbors to also share their suggestions with the Governing Body.

Mayor Poppa attended the meeting and made comments that were not picked up by the microphones. Commissioner Nielsen reiterated the Commissioners and residents need to with the Council what restrictions they would like.

**MOTION:** COMMISSIONER LERO MOVED AND COMMISSIONER NIELSEN SECONDED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL BY THE GOVERNING BODY A REZONING OF 5015 BUENA VISTA STREET FROM R-1 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL TO CP-1, PLANNED RESTRICTED BUSINESS DISTRICT WITH CONDITIONS TO BE SUBMITTED PRIOR TO ACTION BY THE GOVERNING BODY. (MOTION CARRIED 4-0.)

#### **IV. Action Items**

*No Action Items were presented.*

#### **V. Discussion Items**

*No Discussion Items were presented.*

#### **VI. Other Matters Before the Planning Commission**

*No other matters were brought before the Planning Commission.*

## **VII. Adjournment**

**MOTION:** COMMISSIONER NIELSEN MOVED AND COMMISSIONER SIMS SECONDED TO  
ADJOURN. (THE MOTION CARRIED 4-0.)

(Roeland Park Planning Commission Meeting Adjourned at 7:35 p.m.)