



City of Oakbrook Terrace
Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting
Tuesday, January 05, 2021
Case #21-08

The Planning and Zoning meeting was called to order by Chairman Caslin at 6:00 P.M.

Chairman Caslin asked Building and Zoning / Planning and Zoning Secretary Lozano to take roll call.

Present: Chairman Caslin, Commissioners Ventura, Jackson, Freda, Donoval, Cardenas

Absent: Walberg

Also Present: Mihaela Dragan, Building and Zoning Administrator, Peter Pacione, City Attorney, Addy Lozano, Building and Zoning / Planning and Zoning Secretary

Chairman Caslin said the first order of business was to approve the minutes of November 17, 2020, Case #21-06, 17W240 22nd Street Petitioner, Shafer Ismail.

Chairman Caslin asked if there was any final discussion.

MOTION Commissioner Jackson moved and Commissioner Freda seconded the motion to approve the minutes of November 15, 2020, Case #21-06, for 17W240 22nd Street Petitioner, Shafer Ismail.

Chairman Caslin asked Building and Zoning / Planning and Zoning Secretary Lozano to take the roll call.

Ayes: Chairman Caslin, Commissioners Ventura, Donoval, Jackson, Freda, Cardenas

Nays: None

Absent: Walberg

MOTION PASSED WITH A 6-0 VOTE.

Chairman Caslin asked all those who will be speaking this evening to please stand up and be sworn in.

Fernando Orihuela, with Ameresco, and Justin Bates, REI store manager were sworn in by Addy Lozano, Building and Zoning / Planning and Zoning Secretary.

Justin Bates took the floor and stated, I am the store manager here at the Oakbrook Terrace store. I have been there for 12 years. The Oakbrook Terrace store has been in business for about 26 years. Since REI began back in 1938, we've had a commitment to sustainability and we are hoping to explore that mission and inspire other to do as well. REI fights for life outdoors, we have invested over one-hundred million in public lands to expand access to outdoor recreation. Over the last 14 years, REI has invested in sustainable business operations creating the world's first lead platinum in net zero imaging distribution center. Yet despite our many investments, we recognize there is more that needs to be done to address climate crisis, so in September 2020, REI announced its next generation of climate commitment to reduce its enterprise wide greenhouse gas footprint by 55% by 2020, from the 2019 baseline, achieve carbon mutuality from our own brands and operations in 2020 and each year after by offsetting our mission with carbon credits by embedding the cost of our carbon in our operation wall. That brings us to the store here in Oakbrook Terrace, we have operated 100% renewal energy since 2014. We recognize that generating our own electricity through outside solar rays provide free zero carbon energy for 20 years or more. We are excited to be considered for this opportunity and we hope that this will inspire others in the future.

Fernando Orihuela took the floor and stated, thank you for having us, we are excited to be here with REI. What we are doing here tonight is requesting a Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to seek approval for this roof mounted solar panels. You can see that the floor space on the roof is pretty much covered, we are using about 85% of the existing roof's surface area. The remaining area is open for existing mechanical equipment and also to take into account some shaded areas that don't work well with solar projects and are not considered usable. We plan on installing the solar modules on a racking system that is held down by ballast, structurally designed by an Illinois licensed structural engineer. It will be installed on a roof that has a parapet wall around it. The modules itself are very low, they are at a five degree angle. What assures that five degree angel is the racking system that we use to install those modules limited to a five degree

angle. A little bit about our company Ameresco, we are located in Oak Brook, we are a company out of Massachusetts. Over the years we have completed over 500 projects with a total of 400 megawatts. I would also like to take a look at the information that was provided by REI's Director of Sustainability, the first year of operations, the solar generation will result in approximately 160 metric tons of avoided carbon dioxide equivalent to emissions. This is equivalent to the annual emissions from nearly 35 passenger vehicles or 27 homes. Over 20 years, the avoided emissions benefit of 3,074 metric tons is equivalent to 664 passenger vehicles or the energy used from 355 homes. For this site specifically, the solar rays projected to generate enough power to produce about 66% of the buildings energy usage. 66% of their electrical bill will be reduced. On your packets there is a picture that shows what the modules will look like, the racking system and the ballast. The ballast will be mounted on the top of the racking system. REI has a parapet wall which means it will be less visible than the racking you see on the picture.

Commissioner Freda commented, I am glad to hear that the high end of the panels is only going to be 7 inches with the parapet wall around the building. Will there be any kind of brackets that pierce the membrane of the roof?

Fernando Orihuela answered, these are very common racking systems. REI is probably the largest producer of this racking system. They are basically steel channels that sit on the roof so there are no penetrations, then they place the concrete block, which is only a few inches thick. Depending on how the structural engineer does his final design, they determine how many blocks are needed per square foot. All of that can be removed if there was a problem with the roof.

Commissioner Freda also asked, is there a battery back-up system that goes along with these panels?

Fernando Orihuela answered, no, these panels are independent they tie directly to the utility and sink in with their power system in case there is a day that REI is not open, they are still creating electricity.

Commissioner Ventura asked, 493 solar panels sound like a lot of panels, could you verify that the roof has been determined that it can bare the weight of that many solar panels?

Fernando Orihuela answered, the solar panels are much lighter than the rest of the system. Panels in general are sheets of glass with a real thin fill

of solar cells that connect to create the energy. I don't know the total weight of all the solar panels. A structural engineer will determine that. They take into consideration the rain, snow, existing structures, and the weight of someone walking on the roof. If needed, it can be modified.

Commissioner Ventura then asked, have you seen problems where the weight has been too much?

Fernando Orihuela answered, no, I can't think of an example when it has, especially because these are so low. In some cases when we put the them up at a higher angel you have much more wind-blown and you need more ballast.

Commissioner Ventura also asked, any problems with the panels blowing off into the parking lot?

Fernando Orihuela answered, no, that's exactly what the structural engineer looks at.

Commissioner Ventura commented, I don't think I have realized that these solar panels eliminate carbon monoxide in the air.

Fernando Orihuela added, they don't consume it, they eliminate the need for it to be generated somewhere else.

Commissioner Ventura added, congratulations to REI for being the first commercial use in Oakbrook Terrace with solar panels.

Commissioner Jackson directed his questions to Building and Zoning Administrator Dragan, the Text Amendment is just for this application?

Building and Zoning Administrator Dragan answered, it was discussed during the Zoning Committee meetings, that solar panels subject to be installed on commercial buildings are not allowed as a permitted use nor as a Special Use. A public hearing is required, and we discussed that each request would be reviewed and determination would be made on a case by case basis. At this time, the Petitioner is seeking approval for a Text Amendment to allow roof-mounted solar panels as a Special Use in the B-3 District and to approve a Special Use for a roof-mounted private solar collection panels to be installed on the roof of the REI building located at 17W160 22nd Street. In the future, if the City receives similar requests from

other commercial property owners, they will have to apply for a public hearing. In this situation, the hardship is, the proposed solar panels will be installed on the rooftop which is surrounded by a parapet wall which is over 4 feet tall. This results in visibly hidden equipment from the surrounding ground elevation so it does not affect the neighborhood.

Commissioner Jackson also asked, the next person still has to come for a public hearing?

Building and Zoning Administrator Dragan answered, yes, for similar requests in the commercial districts.

Commissioner Jackson then asked, you talked about a 66% reduction in the electrical bill, this is not a time for the City to be excited about getting less taxes. How much less will you be paying in taxes to ComEd, the state of Illinois, and Oakbrook Terrace?

Fernando Orihuela answered, I don't know what the tax rate is on the utility cost.

Justin Bates added, I don't know, we don't pay directly from the store. That is handled through headquarters.

Commissioner Jackson also asked, but whatever it is, the City of Oakbrook Terrace is getting a third of that?

Fernando Orihuela answered, right.

Building and Zoning Administrator Dragan added, I don't think it's a Planning and Zoning Commission issue to discuss this, however, I believe REI is number one in sales tax revenue to the City.

Commissioner Jackson added, in today's world, the City of Oakbrook Terrace would like to have recaptured all the revenue it used to have.

Commissioner Cardenas added, everything seems pretty clear based on your presentation and information provided.

Commissioner Donoval asked, you say the engineer looks at all this and approves it, can you provide a letter of recommendation that the engineer

guarantees that it will be done correctly? And also does REI own the building?

Justin Bates answered, we own the building.

Fernando Orihuela answered, we go through a process of developing the design, at this point its conceptual. Like I said, we have done over 500 projects. We have the expertise to put the conceptual design together and the next step would be to begin the final design that will go through different phases. Once we get the 100% approved designs, they get stamped by an electrical and structural engineer. Illinois is one of the more stricter states, so we make sure we have an Illinois structural engineer.

Building and Zoning Administrator Dragan added, under the motion for the Special Use you may consider approval contingent on submittal of stamped structural engineer drawings prior to issuance of building permit.

Chairman Caslin added, two motions will be required, one for the Special Use and one for the Text Amendment.

Commissioner Freda asked, on the Text Amendment, we are setting it up to allow a Special Use of having these solar panels, but each one has to be individually reviewed?

Building and Zoning Administrator Dagan answered, correct, a public hearing will be required.

MOTION Commissioner Jackson moved and Commissioner Freda seconded to approve a Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance for Case #21-08.

Chairman Caslin asked Building and Zoning / Planning and Zoning Secretary Lozano to take the roll call.

Ayes: Chairman Caslin, Commissioners Ventura, Freda, Jackson, Cardenas, Donoval

Nays: None

Absent: Walberg

MOTION PASSED WITH A 6-0 VOTE.

MOTION Commissioner Freda moved and Commissioner Jackson seconded to approve a Special Use, contingent of submittal of structural engineer drawings for Case #21-08.

Chairman Caslin asked Building and Zoning / Planning and Zoning Secretary Lozano to take the roll call.

Ayes: Chairman Caslin, Commissioners Ventura, Freda, Jackson, Cardenas, Donoval

Nays: None

Absent: Walberg

MOTION PASSED WITH A 6-0 VOTE.

Building and Zoning Administrator Dragan added, the Letter of Recommendation will be placed on the Agenda for the January 12, 2021, City Council meeting.

MOTION Commissioner Jackson moved and Commissioner Ventura seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY THROUGH A VOICE VOTE OF 6-0.

Chairman Caslin adjourned the meeting at 6:27 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by,

Addy Lozano

Building and Zoning / Planning and Zoning Secretary

