

As the Chairman, I normally do not make comments, but in this case, I feel the need to do so. First, I need to be clear that the Planning and Zoning Commission does not want to get involved in Frontenac politics and elections. However, when candidates for alderman mischaracterize what we do, and/or have done, then we owe it to the residents to respond. That is the case with some of the comments that have been made in letters and promotional pieces with respect to the aldermanic race that I have seen. It is unfortunate that we have to participate in this dialogue, but we are an independent body and want to keep it that way. There were statements in some of the letters that would lead people to believe that the Planning and Zoning Commission is nothing more than a shell or lackey of the Board of Aldermen. This is not true.

I have followed the progression of the analysis of what to do with the properties at Lindbergh and Clayton and Clayton and Spoede as best I can. It is my understanding that the Board of Aldermen first looked at the Lindbergh and Clayton property and, because the Comprehensive Plan dictated that the whole block be considered together, they started looking at the Clayton and Spoede property as well. At that time, again, it is my understanding, that in order to analyze what could or should be done with those properties, an expert was retained. That expert was not picked by the Board of Aldermen but rather by the City and then approved by the Board of Aldermen. At around the same time, the Board of Aldermen asked the Planning and Zoning Commission to start working on a planned development ordinance that would dictate to the future users or developers of those properties what can or should be done. At that time, the Planning and Zoning Commission started working on the planned development proposal and spent months doing so. During the interim, a six-month moratorium was recommended and accepted, keeping anyone from applying for any development proposals while the analysis by the expert and the work of the Planning and Zoning Commission was on-going. Revenue was never an issue in the work the Planning and Zoning Commission was doing with respect to the plan development ordinance, nor did the Commission receive any instructions from the Board of Aldermen that revenue should be an issue or that the properties in question should be commercially or residentially zoned.

As the Planning and Zoning Commission moved forward with its work on the planned development ordinance, it was determined that what we were doing might conflict with the Comprehensive Plan. We, therefore, looked at that Plan and found some conflicting language in it. Not wanting to do anything that would conflict with the Comprehensive Plan and knowing that any changes in the Comprehensive Plan would require a public hearing, a decision was made to have that public hearing which was conducted in January.

At the public hearing, we obviously concentrated on the property at Clayton and Spoede Roads. Nothing was before us or the City to consider, but we had received a promotional advertisement during the course of our deliberations showing the Sansone Company wanted to buy the property and use it for commercial purposes. I tried to make it clear at the time of the public hearing that there had been no applications submitted to redevelop the property by anyone and none were before the Commission or the City for consideration. Based upon some of the promotional

material that I have seen from some of the candidates for alderman, either that was not made plain enough, was misunderstood or has been mischaracterized. In any event, it was very clear that the residents wanted to keep the property zoned for residential use, so we decided that we would not recommend any changes to the Comprehensive Plan.

As I see it, throughout this process, everyone was trying to do his or her job. As I understand the Board of Aldermen processes, they tried to do what they needed to do to study the development of the properties and in order to get the matter in the hands of the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Commission spent countless hours trying to achieve what was expected of it, and I certainly felt no pressure from the Board of Aldermen to consider revenue as a criteria. Furthermore, there are statements being made that our decision “puts one proposal related to the LEC on hold”. That statement suggests that there was a proposal before us and we will consider it again, or that there are proposals to be considered. The Commission did not put anything “on hold” and if there are other proposals for consideration, we are not aware of their existence. As we stated at the public hearing, there was, and is, nothing before us. It is wrong to imply that there is anything sinister or underhanded about the process.

Phil Kaplan
Chairman, City of Frontenac Planning & Zoning Commission