

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2019 PLANNING & ZONING MEETING

- *3-b ZON19-00440 District 2.** 1728 South Greenfield Road. Located south of the US 60 Superstition Freeway and west of Greenfield Road. (7.2± acres). Rezone from Light Industrial (LI) with a Council Use Permit (CUP) to Limited Commercial (LC) with a Council Use Permit for a pawn shop; and Site Plan Review. This request will allow a pawn shop within an existing group commercial center. RKAA Architects, applicant; HH-Greenfield Gateway LLC, owner.

Planner: Lisa Davis

Staff Recommendation: Approval with conditions

Summary: Principal Planner, Tom Ellsworth presented case ZON19-00440 to the Board. Mr. Ellsworth stated the request is for rezoning, site plan review and a Council Use Permit for a pawn shop in a portion of an existing retail center. He stated this request conforms to the standards of development and read the criteria required for a Council Use Permit for a pawn shop.

Applicant Neil Feaser, 2233 E. Thomas Road, stated the rezoning request is to change the existing zoning to the correct zoning for the center, and a Council Use Permit for the pawn shop. Mr. Feaser stated the pawn shop is a retail use which conforms to the uses in the center. He feels the businesses opposed to the requested use work well together with a pawn shop and provides an additional resource for residents when turned away from the credit union. Mr. Feaser explained this is a family owned business and there is not another pawn shop within seven miles of this center. The facility is currently operated in another location and has high standards within the community.

Owner Michael Cox, 40975 N. Ironwood Drive, spoke to the Board. Mr. Cox stated he is not surprised at the perception that the image of a pawn shop brings down the area due to how they are portrayed in movies and on TV. He stated he is sensitive to this and feels the surrounding businesses will not relocate if the pawn shop is approved. Mr. Cox has reached out to these businesses and offered that they visit his existing shop and see how it is run. He explained the requirements of supplying police reports daily to all law enforcement facilities across the country. His desire is to come into Mesa because it is more densely populated and will generate more business.

Boardmember Crockett asked Mr. Cox to explain what differentiates his family owned pawn shop with other pawn shops. Mr. Cox replied he cares because this is his business and money. They are more involved with the daily business than other pawn shops that hire employees to work that are not as concerned with helping customers.

Christine Ramos, 4212 E. Juanita is the branch manager of Navy Federal Credit Union and is opposed to the Council Use Permit for the pawn shop. She stated they have over 24,000 members and feels they would see a reduction in membership if a pawn shop comes to the center. Ms. Ramos stated the credit union would consider a different location if this business is allowed to locate to the center. She stated there is an abundance of pawn shops and check cashing businesses in Mesa and there is a check cashing business located in the next shopping center to the south.

Boardmember Boyle inquired where the check cashing facility is located near this location. Ms. Cox replied it is in the shopping center to the south across from Juanita Street.

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Chair Dahlke stated it would be a large endeavor for a business like the Credit Union to move. Ms. Ramos stated other locations of the credit union have relocated and are opening new locations on the west side and have actively looked for other locations in the past.

Boardmember Allen stated she understands this site meets the minimum requirements for rezoning and that the CUP is a discretionary decision to be considered for approval. Ms. Allen feels although it is acceptable for Mesa to have its share, she feels the quantity of pawn shops in Mesa is extreme. Ms. Allen feels this pawn shop would be detrimental to the surrounding businesses and the City as a whole as it will add to the quantity of pawn shops in Mesa.

Boardmember Villanueva-Saucedo reiterated her concern for how Mesa will attract the type of economic development we want as a whole in the City. She stated the approval of a CUP is discretionary and it is within the Board's purview to approve or deny. Ms. Villanueva-Saucedo stated we need to attract a high standard of business and approval of this request will give a negative perception.

Boardmember Boyle stated he has shopped at pawn shops and agrees that Mesa has their share but most of them are west of Gilbert Road. Mr. Boyle stated he focuses on balance within the city and questions if a pawn shop in this location would balance the amount on the west side of Mesa. He stated when there are too many pawn shops close together, they do start to have a negative effect on the area. Mr. Boyle is considering if this request is approved, would it balance the amount on the west side.

Boardmember Crockett stated he feels the perception may not be fair but creates the potential of having a negative effect on the existing businesses in the shopping center. It troubles him that we work hard to bring in businesses and maintain them and this makes it hard for him to support the request.

Chris Hinkson, 5050 N. 40th Street is the owner of the shopping center. Mr. Hinkson stated he recently purchased the center and the original developer sold a piece of the property to Navy Federal Credit Union and Sportsman's Warehouse. They are important tenants to the center and the last thing he wants to do is bring in a tenant that would be detrimental to the center. Mr. Hinkson agrees there is a point when there can be too many pawn shops in an area but feels this would be a good location. Mr. Boyle confirmed that there was a payday loan business in the center at the same time Navy Federal Credit Union was there.

Boardmember Allen motioned to deny case ZON19-00440. The motion was seconded by Boardmember Villanueva-Saucedo.

Vote: 3-3 (Boardmember Sarkissian, absent)

Upon tabulation of vote, it showed:

AYES – Dahlke, Astle, Boyle

NAYS – Allen, Crockett and Villanueva-Saucedo

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Note: *Audio recordings of the Planning & Zoning Board Meetings are available in the Planning Division Office for review. They are also “live broadcasted” through the City of Mesa’s website at www.mesaaz.gov*