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Tuesday, July 2, 2019, 6:45 am

By:

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Here are quick updates on what readers are asking us about.

Are there still only three candidates for the three Council seats open in November?

Yes, officially speaking. City Clerk Jennifer Shuster confirmed for ELi that only Erik Altmann, Mark Meadows, and Warren Stanfield have completed paperwork for candidacy. Incumbent Shanna Draheim has not yet submitted completed petitions.



But ELi has learned that Draheim and several other residents have "pulled" nominating petitions, which means we should be hearing from more candidates soon.

The deadline for filing is July 23. Read more ^[2] from ELi about how the Council race works and why it matters who is on City Council.

Is P.T. O'Malley's moving into the old Menna's Joint space?

No. Pat and Trisha Riley, who own P.T. O'Malley's (and also Harper's) in downtown East Lansing, ended their lease at 210 Abbot Road according to a co-owner of that property, Greg Ballein. The Rileys had made an application ^[3] to reopen P.T. O'Malley's at the location where Menna's Joint had been, at 115 Albert Avenue.



Concerns about the plans for the new space were raised at both Planning Commission and the Downtown Development Authority, including about the possible negative impact on Black Cat Bistro, next door. Last Tuesday, just a few hours before plans for the move were set to go back to Planning Commission, the Rileys withdrew their application [4].

Asked what was up, Pat Riley told ELi last week, "We are staying at the current location?" on Abbot Road.

Has a site plan been submitted for the Royal Vlahakis deal?

The developers Royal Properties and Vlahakis Development promised to keep making progress with the incomplete plans they submitted on June 21. If there is not a complete site plan yet, it appears that City planning staff is anticipating receipt of one soon.

We say that because Planning and Zoning Administrator David Haywood told Planning Commission last week that they should expect to do their first review of the latest proposal from the developers at a meeting on July 10, starting at 7 p.m. (Update: City staff now say it won't come to Planning Commission until probably July 24.)

ELi reported last week that a majority of the Downtown Development Authority voted to extend the deal. See our update and what we know about the plans so far. [5]

The nonprofit organization Project for Public Spaces has not yet responded to inquiries from ELi about their part in the Royal Vlahakis proposal. Representatives from Vlahakis Development told the DDA last week that Project for Public Spaces would operate the first-floor private market, but that doesn't seem to be what that Project for Public Spaces does [6].



The plans shared on June 21 included the idea of a pavilion on what is now Evergreen Avenue (see above) that could be used for the farmers' market and other outdoor events. The draft development agreement says the pavilion could also be built in another location as determined by the City.

An earlier site plan indicated the pavilion would be included in the brownfield tax increment financing (TIF) plan. This means that the developers would initially pay for the construction, but the City would forgo property taxes to pay the developers back. City Council has not discussed whether this fits into the City's financial priorities.

What's happening with the eBay land sale?

Last week, Planning Commission unanimously recommended the site plan and special use permit application for Kodiak Landarc to develop a Holiday Inn Express, marijuana provisioning center, and strip mall on the land. Read more about the plans from ELi. [7]

Just after Planning Commission's vote last week, ELi caught Jeff Yatooma (below) to ask him how he heard about the eBay land sale when so few people knew about it [8]. Yatooma was the winning bidder in the auction, which gave him the right to enter into a purchase agreement with the City for the amount he had bid: \$1,000,900.



Yatooma said he'd heard about it from a broker, but declined to specify who that was.

Next, the site plan and special use permit application go to City Council. If City Council approves the developers' plan, the City will obtain \$1,000,900 from the sale. If the Council doesn't approve it, Kodiak Landarc gets back its deposit and the contract is cancelled. Presumably that means the City can move again to sell that property.

When is Target opening?

The date we've been given is July 21. Read more in our recent report ^[9].

The City is anticipating opening the new City-owned parking garage on Albert Avenue to general use in early August. (As of now, the public garage is labeled for use by "Target employees only," as shown below).



So, expect the July opening of Target to be a "soft opening," with a grander opening in August.

What about the Center City senior rental housing above the parking garage?

East Lansing Director of Planning Tim Dempsey said last week that the expected date for the opening of Newman Lofts ^[10] is now October. Dempsey indicated there have been about 20 people interested in the 92 market-rate rental apartments for people aged 55 and up, and said that seniors want to see a finished product before they lease.



Dempsey also said that the Landmark apartments, along Grand River Avenue above Target, are doing comparatively much better, with about 90% of that building's apartments leased out starting in August. That building is aimed at students, so must open by the start of the MSU school year.

What's going on with Court Consolidation?

Mayor Mark Meadows was asked about this last week at the annual joint meeting of the Council of Neighborhood Presidents and representatives of City boards and commissions. He was asked because neighborhood presidents had been sent a series of letters ^[11] objecting to the consolidation.

Meadows told those at the meeting that the plan for consolidation continues along and that the next step is for East Lansing and Lansing to specify their needs in the matter. Meadows again said consolidation would save some money although not nearly as much as originally hoped and that administrative efficiency would result.



Meadows again dismissed speculation that consolidation would threaten the specialty courts that operate out of East Lansing's 54B District Court. The next day, he provided ELi with material showing that local judges have cooperated in creation of those courts (that cooperation is required by state law for the specialty courts to be established). He says he expects the same cooperative support of the specialty courts if consolidation occurs.

When will the Hub open, and what will be in the retail space there?

The apartments at the Hub (at the corner of Bogue Street and Grand River Avenue) will be open in August. According to the developers' attorney David Pierson, "shortly after" the apartments open, Giorgio's Pizza and 7-Eleven will open on the ground floor. No other retail tenants have been announced for that space.



A pizzeria and a convenience store with soaring ceilings? The City of East Lansing's special East Village form-based code required that design, so the developers, Giorgio's owners, and 7-Eleven have had to work with it. In the case of 7-Eleven, that hasn't been easy, because that chain's standardized interiors assume a much lower ceiling with less glass along the walls.

That 7-Eleven store was recently given permission by City Council to sell beer, wine, and liquor.

Is it true I can now recycle Styrofoam?

Yes, but not in your curbside, single-stream can. Take a ride up to the Department of Public Works to recycle your Styrofoam. Read more from ELi. ^[12] And finally . . .

What's happened with the driveway drama?

We last updated you on that dispute over a property in the Bailey neighborhood back in January ^[13]. According to the property owners' attorney Mark Grebner, since then it's been "just crickets and more crickets." In other words, the City has not made another move.

Chris Root contributed reporting.

Have a question you want us to try to answer? Contact us! ^[14]

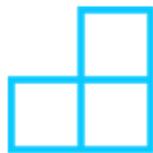
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