



**Meeting Minutes
Planning and Zoning Commission**

Tuesday, May 13, 2025

5:00 PM

Council Chamber

4:30 - 5:00 PM - Work Session for Agenda Review

Chairman Blair Mercer opened the work session at 4:29 p.m.

City Planner Jessica Rees presented Case PZ 25-002 via PowerPoint. Applicant Laura Lee Gunn, with Masterplan, representing deBoulle Diamonds requesting the creation of a Planned Development District with a detailed site plan for the property at 6821 Preston Road.

Mrs. Rees addressed the outstanding issues that staff and the planning and zoning commissioners have with the case including, the building height, the rear setback and the parking.

Call to Order

Chairman Blair Mercer called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

Introduction of Commission Members

Present: (8) Chairman Blair Mercer, James Bristow, Duncan Fulton, Brian Smoot, Thomas Russell, Rusty Goff, Steve Hudson and Ben Biddle

Seated: (5) Chairman Blair Mercer, James Bristow, Duncan Fulton, Brian Smoot and Thomas Russell

Excused: (2) John Walsh and David Delorenzo

City Council Liaison: (1) Melissa Rieman

Staff in Attendance

Jessica Rees, City Planner
Mary Oates, Community Development Technician
Rob Dillard, City Attorney

[PZ 25-002](#)

PZ 25-002: Applicant Laura Lee Gunn, with Masterplan, representing DeBoulle Diamonds requesting the creation of a Planned Development District with a detailed site plan for the property located at 6821 Preston Road.

Chairman Mercer read Case PZ 25-002. Applicant Laura Lee Gunn, with

Masterplan, representing deBoule Diamonds requesting the creation of a Planned Development District with a detailed site plan for the property at 6821 Preston Road.

City Planner Jessica Rees began with stating that this is the third meeting for this item. She stated that we have had time to look at some renderings, talk to the applicants and get some community input.

Staff did not do the mailings of the notices again since this item has been tabled for the past few meetings.

The three outstanding issues that we have been talking about for the last three (3) months are, height, rear setback and parking.

Height. The current zoning ordinance for this zoning district talks about a maximum height of forty (40) feet. For a PD you can request different changes which is what is being done for this item. The original proposal had about forty-nine (49) feet. The actual height of the existing structure is fifty (50) feet tall. Based on the talks at the meetings and staff talks with the applicant, they have reduced that height to forty-six (46) feet eleven (11) inches. So that is the proposed maximum height for the structure.

The second issue that we have discussed throughout this process is the rear setback. The current zoning requires it to be at twelve (12) foot six (6) inches rear setback from the rear property line. The original proposal had a two (2) foot setback, the second proposal had a five (5) foot setback and this new proposal has a two (2) foot six (6) inch rear set back and that is for the building itself.

They are wanting to add some screening to the back area so that way the cars are more secure in there. They are proposing to have the building at two and half (2 1/2) feet and then the screening fence would be on the property line in the rear area.

Parking. Parking is something we talk about with everything we do with the city. The building itself has onsite parking. That parking back there is not all uniform in space dimensions and such. With this new addition that they are proposing, and with re striping those parking spaces, they have about eighteen (18) onsite now and with these modifications, they will go down to thirteen (13) close to official 9X18 parking spaces back there on private property. There are some parking spaces that are along Grassmere and Preston and those are considered public parking spaces because they are located half in the public right of way so they are not fully on private property. Which we have talked about that as well.

Those are the three outstanding things we have been talking about through this whole planned development creation process. Staff recommends that the Planning and Zoning Commission conduct a Public Hearing for the creation of the Planned Development district to listen to public comments and forward a recommendation to City Council.

Tipp Housewright with Omniplan Architects as the design firm working with

the Boule family for this project spoke to the commissioners. He stated that after many years, it is time to expand the business, freshen up the store and provide a space for the new boutique for Patek watches. Mr. Housewright presented the proposal via PowerPoint to the commissioners.

Dallas Cothrum addressed the commissioners with information regarding the deBoule business. He states that they went out and asked for support for the proposal. Dallas provided a list of people in the community that are in support of the proposal. He shows that from where the screen on the building is, there is two and a half (2 1/2) feet from the property line. Then there is fifteen (15) feet of right of way to the neighbor's property line and the neighbor's landscaping is shown in part of the right of way too. He states that there's certainly more than twelve and a half (12 1/2) feet of separation between the two so they are not technically meeting code but they are certainly meeting it more than the spirit of what the adjacency is to it. Dallas shows other business that are setback very close to neighboring multifamily buildings throughout the city.

Chairman Mercer opened up the public hearing for anyone in favor of the proposal to speak.

David Projabian, property owner of 6619 Snider Plaza and is also the chairman of the Snider Plaza Parking Task Force spoke in favor of the proposal. He states that this is a company that adds a lot to University Park and he would hate to see them go somewhere else for a number of reasons.

Liz Farley at 3200 Greenbrier also spoke in favor of the proposal. She states how elegant and beautiful the design is and doesn't want the city to loose the business over two (2) feet in the back or the middle of the building being too tall. She also stated that Patek Phillippe will create tax revenue for the city that she wishes we could find in many more stores throughout the city. When you look at the financials of the city in the next five (5) years, more revenue is needed and the state is making it more difficult. She thinks it's a wonderful partnership with a great city and an incredible brand. She thinks we should be working towards a solution to welcome them and be grateful to have a building like this in the city. She has found that serving on the council, that gifts that have been brought to the city and offered, they will go elsewhere and other cities nearby will benefit.

Dr. Pete Dicer that has lived in University Park on Centenary for thirty-eight (38) years also spoke in favor of the proposal. He states that he thinks this will help raise the bar and set an example for future development. He thinks there is a strong economic rational to do this and is in total support of what they are proposing.

Chairman Mercer asked if anyone wanted to speak that is opposed to the proposal.

William Cravens is the property owner of 4515 Grassmere. He has owned the property since 1996. He has three (3) units in the building and rent those units

to three (3) different families currently. He states that the tenants will be highly impacted by these modifications. Mr. Cravens states that this is classified as a jewelry store and jewelry stores are residential uses and remain residential uses no matter who owns them. It would be very difficult to come up with a plan of designated uses in the future if it were to come down to that. His second concern would be that there is eighteen thousand (18000) square feet of space of what is anticipated with these improvements and at that many square feet, if you are running a retail operation, the parking ratio is 1:200. 1:200 would lead you to believe that there should be ninety-two (92) parking places for this improved space. The tenant has currently fifteen (15) or sixteen (16) parking places and is planning to drop down to thirteen (13) or fourteen (14). In the past he has used the spaces on Grassmere and Preston Road for exclusive use with signs out in place state that people would be towed if they parked in those public parking spaces. If the commission creates a setback line of two (2) feet as the applicant is requesting, this will then set a precedence for all the rest of the properties up and down Preston and where then would they park. He states that this is just bad planning for this particular location at this particular format. If the applicant is required to have ninety-one (91) parking spaces and they have tried to reduce that by somewhat claiming that a goodly portion of the building is office space, but they do not want to setback as office space, because office space is one (1) setback foot for every two (2) feet of height which would put it in the twenty-four (24) to twenty-six (26) range of setback from the rear. He states that it's inappropriate for someone to try to get this parking problem solved both ways and they can't have it both ways. If you are going to have an office building then you need to have parking for an office building or if you are going to have a retail store, have parking for a retail. The building that they are proposing creates such shade that Mr. Cravens building cannot get six and a half (6 1/2) hours of sunlight to grow St. Augustine grass. The overriding concern that Mr. Cravens has is one of traffic, parking and safety. He states that it is a very dangerous spot for garbage trucks to come from that alley onto Glenwick. In addition to the fact that there are telephone poles right up against the alley on the West side of the property which are closer to the alley than his bushes. Mr. Cravens states that he does not think it is a safe situation, it does not make sense from a planning stand point and it has an effect on the surrounding properties. He hopes that Mr. Boulle can make his project work and it would be excellent for the city. But, Mr. Cravens cannot let Mr. Boulle do it when it has a detrimental effect on his property.

Dallas Colthum approached the commissioners again stating that if the changes were made for the Planned Development, anything changed would be a code issue and citations and/or warnings would be issued from the code enforcement officers. In regards to traffic, safety and parking, it is already a dense area and deBoules is not contributing to those issues. He also states that they did the shade study and there wasn't much time of shading the neighboring building.

Commissioner Russell states that he drives by the property multiple times a day and has never had trouble finding a parking spot in front of deBoules or had trouble finding a parking spot in front of the CVS pharmacy so parking is not an issue in his concern.

Commissioner Fulton states that his issue with the proposition is a safety issue. He states that he would not have an issue with the project if they could achieve the twelve (12) foot setback. He states that reluctantly he will not be able to support this proposal despite the fact that the Boule family is an important part of the community and has an excellent business.

Commissioner Smoot states that the parking is very disturbing to him. He does not feel he can support this unless this space be specifically designated so that it could not change in the future.

Commissioner Bristow states that he is concerned with the parking but suggested that the business have a license with the city to use the public parking spots.

Dallas suggested that the PD be created specifically as a high end jewelry store and that it would have to stay a jewelry store.

Chairman Mercer states that there is already a parking issue with the current structure the way it sits and there isn't any proposal that will fix that.

Jessica Rees addressed the commissioners stating that they could recommend that the space be limited to office and jewelry and limit the space used for each for this specific location for future uses.

Chairman Mercer reminds the commissioners that they are here to send a recommendation to City Council, not to officially approve or deny the proposal.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bristow, seconded by Commissioner Russell that the proposal be sent to City Council with encouragement that they consider the comments that the Planning and Zoning Commission had including the consideration of a land use limitation for the retail and office purposes of the property. This motion was carried by a three (3) to two (2) vote in favor of the motion.

Consider the previous meeting minutes with or without corrections:

[25-107](#)

P&Z Meeting Minutes - 04.08.25

A motion was made by Commissioner Fulton, seconded by Commissioner Smoot, that the minutes be approved. The motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

ADJOURNMENT: With there being no further business before the Commissioners, Chairman Mercer adjourned the meeting at 5:53 p.m.

Approved by:

Chairman, Blair Mercer

Date

