

INN

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that the business will be able to rent the La Grange Elementary parking lot for large weekend events.

They also plan to purchase a vehicle to act as a shuttle, allowing guests to utilize the many public parking spaces around downtown La Grange — 323 parking spots west of Highway 53, by Merrell’s count, including 66 public parking spots in the surrounding block.

Specifically regarding the zoning change, Merrell said that the funeral home property would need to have “C-2,” commercial business district zoning, as it is the only zoning class that explicitly allows hotels in the county’s regulations.

Merrell also requested a zoning change for the house behind the funeral home — located at 312 W. Main Street in La Grange — from residential to “C-N,” commercial neighborhood district zoning. He said the house will serve as an office and provide a 15-space parking lot, which the funeral home utilized when it was still operating out of the historic building.

During the public hearing regarding the zoning changes, several locals spoke in favor:

“I just think this is a great opportunity for a young gentleman to come in our community and be willing to invest in it like this ...” said Magistrate Wayne Theiss. “Don’t pass this chance.”

“The business that it will bring to town will be phenomenal ...” said La Grange Historic District Coordinator Barbara Manley Calloway. “I think it’s a wonderful reuse of a historic property.”

“I want to compliment [Merrell] for coming tonight with what I think is a legitimate parking plan to deal with the traffic,” said Joe Pierce, a nearby resident the previously voiced concerns about reliance on street parking.

“Shuttling [guests] to and from the elementary school seems like a great solve.”

No one spoke in opposition to the project.

“The Radcliffe Inn will position itself as a local leader and go-to place for nightly accommodations ...” Merrell said during his closing remarks.

“We believe this business could be catalyst that brings additional



Rendering courtesy of Nathan Merrell

A rendering showing the potential interior of The Radcliffe Inn’s event hall.

opportunity to the Main Street community, building on what Springs Park and the farmers’ market have provided to transform a space long used for mourning into a place of celebrations and new beginnings ...”

With the council’s approval, Merrell said he expects the full completion of the project in around one and a half years, not including any unexpected delays.

CONCERNS ABOUT APARTMENTS, HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The council also heard from several residents who are concerned about plans for an apartment complex on a nearly 6-acre property located at 2613 and 2615 Allen Lane in La Grange.

“We are not opposed to growth in La Grange ... What we are asking for is responsible growth,” said Alan Florence, president of the Artisan Park Subdivision HOA.

Florence said that several residents raised concerns about the development at the Sept. 16 Technical Review Committee meeting regarding emergency access and the complex being developed amid the ongoing Allen Lane realignment and railroad underpass project.

Allison Gapen, vice-president of the HOA, told the council that the property was initially approved for a zoning change almost a decade ago alongside plans for 28 townhomes. Now, SNS Investments is proposing a 94-unit apartment complex.

Due to the property’s zoning change still remaining in effect, the development will not require Planning and Zoning Commission approval, and no further public hearings will be held on the mat-

ter, according to Planning and Development Director Ryan Fischer.

Residents also addressed the council about the La Grange Historic Districts Commission, first hearing from longtime resident and local attorney Valerie Shannon, who noted that she and others were invited to speak at the meeting “because [the city is] going to be reviewing the commission guidelines in 2027.”

Shannon said that the commission is required to be transparent through public notices, and that it, in fairness, allows all sides of each application to be heard. Further, anyone can file an appeal of a commission decision with the La Grange Board of Adjustments and Appeals.

She also emphasized that the commission has discretion to interpret its guidelines flexibly and consider the applicant’s burden of costs.

“There are many myths and misconceptions that have been perpetuated throughout the community for years ... The guidelines are just what they are; they are guidelines. They are not written in stone,” said La Grange Historic Districts Coordinator Barbara Manley Calloway.

Calloway said that in the last four years, the commission has heard 85 applications. Of those 85, only two have been denied — one of which partial denial. The full denial was a request to put a 74-square-foot banner on a building.

“There are no two cookie-cutter cases with historic properties,” Calloway said, emphasizing that the commission works with property owners to find repairs that both respect historical value and fit within their budget.

“Some of you may not realize a historic district can only be created through a whole lot of work and diligence ...” said Oldham County History Center Executive Director Nancy Theiss. “Most small towns would die to have a historic district in their town because it draws in so much tourism ...

“I remember when La Grange was truly a ghost town. And it wasn’t until that historic district was developed that La Grange started becoming a viable town ... Instead of making the historic district smaller, I think we should make it bigger.”

PLANS FOR A PARKING GARAGE

Later in the meeting, during a report from the city’s Economic Development and Long-Range Planning Committee, Councilor Jason Kinser said that preliminary plans are being put together to build a parking garage to help alleviate parking concerns throughout downtown La Grange.

Kinser said that one of the potential locations discussed at the committee’s recent meeting was the 2-acre property right next to Springs Park that the city bought in 2023 — located at 400 Kentucky Street — where a historic home currently sits.

Kinser also said that Judge Executive David Voegle told the committee that approximately \$4 million remains from the Oldham County Courthouse project bonds to address the limited courthouse parking.

Though Kinser mentioned a \$1.7 million price tag for building a parking garage underneath the CityPlace Expo Center parking lot, Voegle later told the Era that the price tag for that specific idea would be closer to the \$4 million range and above.

Voegle also told the Era that he has recently conducted appraisals of “every conceivable property” near the courthouse where a parking garage could be built, but none of the property owners have expressed a desire to sell their properties for the appraisal prices.

Further, Voegle said that he broached the idea of the city purchasing CityPlace from the Rawlings Foundation Board of Directors, but acknowledged that such a measure would also be dependent on the board’s wishes.

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CASE

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Hawkins had worked as a waitress at One Nineteen West Main before she passed.

“We will always love them,” shared Tammy Doane, Austin Doane’s mother. “They probably would have ended up a couple because Austin was happier than he had been in a long time, and I’ve heard the same thing about Holly ... I didn’t get to meet her, but the stories I’ve heard she was an amazing woman.

“Paula has become next of kin now; we’re just soul sisters — so much to talk about, tears, laughter, everything. We’re here [tonight] to support our children, to let them know we love them and we’ll see them again one day.”

Paula Hawkins, mother of Holly Hawkins, shared similar sentiments. “We want to thank everybody for coming and showing support. Each and every one of us remember Austin and Holly in different ways. We all share different memories ... we can take those memories with us until we get to see them again one day.

“We’re trying to make a new normal. It will never be normal like it was with them. I’m so thankful that [Holly] met Austin and was beginning to enjoy life and have someone to treat her the way she needed to be treated. Just so thankful that they both were happy and spent the day together ...

“They were doing what they both enjoyed,” Paula Hawkins said, referencing what her daughter and Austin Doane had been doing that day. “They went to the ballgame, they went to the fairgrounds, they were riding the motorcycle. Even though they both [lost] their lives that night they were enjoying life and that’s what life is all about. We have to try to make the most of it.”

Following the Oct. 14 hearing, Tammy Doane expressed her gratitude to the prosecutors. “We pray the Commonwealth’s Attorneys Office will continue to stand up for them like she did at the suppression hearing. I was so impressed with [Commonwealth Attorney Courtney Baxter’s] office ...”

Look for updates in future editions of the Era.



PET OF THE WEEK
Meet Celeste!

At seven months old, Celeste has some of the most beautiful, shiny, and unbelievably SOFT black fur you'll ever touch! Her life didn't start out easy. Rescued from a hoarding situation, Celeste is now thriving in foster care and finally learning what it means to be a happy, carefree kitten!

Her foster family describes her as a curious little explorer with a bit of middle child energy! Celeste isn't one to fight for attention in a crowd. She's a little more introverted than her siblings, but give her a smaller, quieter setting and she's ALL about the cuddles!

Celeste would LOVE a forever home with another cat, preferably an older, big, handsome boy who might appreciate her flirtatious ways. This sweet girl doesn't need to be the center of attention. She just needs a family who appreciates her gentle personality, playful spirit, and affectionate side.

If you are interested in meeting Celeste, please go to our website, humanesocietyoldhamcounty.com to the "Adopt" page and fill out an application.



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