



**Planning Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
September 7, 2023
6:30 PM**

North St. Paul City Hall – Council Chambers
2400 Margaret Street

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Patrick Blees called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

COMMISSION

Patrick Blees, Chair
Andrew Wise, Vice-Chair
Erik Brenna, Commissioner
Cameron Muhic, Commissioner
Jim Rathe, Commissioner
Jason Nordby, City Council Liaison Present via Zoom

STAFF

Brandy Howe, Community Development Director

III. ADOPT AGENDA

Blees asked for a motion to adopt the 09-07-2023 meeting agenda.
M/Brenna, S/Rathe.
Motion carried 5-0.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of August 3, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Blees asked for a motion to approve the August 3, 2023 meeting minutes contingent on the removal of the word "Special" under Section I and Section IV Item A.
M/Muhic, S/Wise.
Motion carried 5-0.

V. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

John Schmahl, 2750 Chisholm Avenue, recommended the Planning Commission confer with Code Enforcement to ensure that any updates made to the zoning ordinance can be properly enforced. Mr. Schmahl gave examples of RV parking, screening, driveways, and garbage containers as items appearing to lack proper code enforcement in the City.

VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no public hearings scheduled.

VII. COMMISSION BUSINESS, ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Discussion: Zoning Ordinance Update – Residential Land Uses

Howe asked the Planning Commission their thoughts on when site plans should be required for zoning permits. Blees stated there should be some leeway when projects are clearly away from minimum setbacks. However, a site plan should be required when a project is within a certain amount of distance to the minimum setback. The Planning Commission discussed a variety of instances when a site plan would be required for a project. This topic will be revisited at a future meeting. Muhic recommended staff ask the Code Enforcement team what specific problems they have been seeing throughout the City and take that into consideration as the zoning code goes through updates.

The Planning Commission discussed the Residential Land Use Regulations. Blees stated that the definition of “Apartment Building” should be removed and incorporated by the definition of “Multiple Family Dwelling.” Blees discussed the similar nature between the definitions of “Duplex” and “Townhouse.” Rathe inquired which definition would include condos. Blees stated that condos could be any structure defined in the ordinance. Muhic asked whether cooperative housing is legal in Minnesota. Howe stated that cooperative housing exists in Minneapolis, and might be worth looking into those types of living situations.

Muhic questioned tiny houses as a residential use in the City and if they should be permitted. Howe stated that the minimum floor area of a single-story single-family dwelling is currently regulated at 900 square feet. Blees asked why the City limits certain square footages of housing. Howe responded that historically it has been to limit low-income housing, but the world is evolving and people now look for smaller housing. Muhic recommended considerably decreasing the minimum square footage for housing and to use the average size of tiny houses as a baseline. Blees stated quality of materials and design is more important than the size of a dwelling. Rathe stated that most development in the City deals with expansion of existing buildings rather than retraction and that it may be beneficial to keep the square footage limits the same. Muhic stated if tiny houses are not allowed in the zoning code, people are less likely to attempt to go through the variance process. Rathe asked if there would be any loopholes with lowering the minimum floor area size. Wise stated that there are still regulations on what is allowed on particular lots, so finding loopholes would be difficult.

The Planning Commission discussed the various subjective terms in the zoning ordinance such as the use of “quality materials,” “quality design” and “superior development plan.” Blees stated that the definition of “Two-Family Dwelling” should be carefully looked at. Howe asked whether the City should allow the construction of more than one dwelling on a lot. Rathe suggested discussing manufactured homes, modular buildings and prefabricated buildings at the next meeting.

VIII. REPORTS

Brenna stated that the Minnesota Water Resources Conference will be October 17-18. Brenna serves as the MnDOT representative on the Planning Committee. Interested water-minded folks are welcome to attend.

Rathe stated that the Fall Roundup Parade will be Thursday, September 16 at 6:00 PM in downtown North St. Paul.

Howe stated that the City has begun soliciting applications for the 2 vacant seats on the Planning Commission.

IX. ADJOURNMENT



Blees asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 PM.
M/Rathe, S/Muhic.
Motion carried 5-0.

The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting is Thursday, November 2, 2023 at 6:30 PM.

Members, please notify any planned absences to:

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