



**Planning Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 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

Arrived at 6:32 PM.

STAFF

Brandy Howe, Community Development Director

III. ADOPT AGENDA

Blees asked for a motion to adopt the December 7, 2023 meeting agenda.

M/Brenna, S/Wise.

Motion carried 4-0.

IV. PRESENTATION

Blees presented a certificate of appreciation to Erik Brenna for his 3 years of dedicated service to the North St. Paul Planning Commission.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of November 2, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Blees asked for a motion to approve the November 2, 2023 meeting minutes.

M/Rathe, S/Muhic.

Motion carried 5-0.

VI. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

There were no public comments.

VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. Consideration of an Amendment to the Sign Ordinance

Howe recalled that the Planning Commission, at their last meeting, considered a variance request to allow a wall mounted electronic message center (EMC) sign in the downtown district. Although the variance was recommended for denial, the Commission directed staff to prepare a draft ordinance for review that would allow wall mounted EMCs. The proposed ordinance eliminates the restriction stating that EMCs are not permitted wall signs and clarifies that EMCs must meet the standards of the type of sign that it is mounted as. There is an additional section that lays out the procedures for amending the sign ordinance.

Blees opened the public hearing at 6:38 PM.

There were no comments.

Blees closed the public hearing at 6:39 PM.

Wise asked if a conditional use permit can be used to grant an EMC wall sign. Blees stated he believes that conditional use permits are related to land use, and not structures or signs. Muhic asked if the sign ordinance amendment should be placed on hold due to the question of the conditional use permit. Howe confirmed that conditional use relates to land use and recommended continuing with the ordinance. Blees agreed that he would like to proceed with the ordinance.

Blees asked for a motion to recommend to City Council approval of the sign ordinance as amended.
M/Muhic, S/Rathe.
Motion carried 5-0.

b. Consideration of an Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance

Howe stated that staff received a request for an assisted living facility to come into a residential single-family district. The zoning ordinance prohibits such use; however, state statute preempts local authority as it relates to state licensed residential facilities. The City Attorney prepared a draft ordinance modifying the land use table to permit state licensed residential facilities in residential districts. Assisted Living and/or Memory Care Facility serving six or fewer persons has been added as a permitted use in the residential districts and a conditional use in the MU-3: Corridor Mixed-Use District. Facilities serving seven or more are a conditional use in the R-3: Multiple Family Residential District and MU-3: Corridor Mixed-Use District.

Blees recommended a minor word change in the staff report as it moves forward to City Council and clarified that a statute is created via legislation and a rule is something that a government body or department creates to supplement the statutory regulation.

Blees opened the public hearing at 6:53 PM.

There were no comments.

Blees closed the public hearing at 6:54 PM.

Blees asked for a motion to recommend to City Council approval of the zoning ordinance as amended.
M/Brenna, S/Rathe.
Motion carried 5-0.

c. Consideration of a Preliminary Plat for Margaret Street Commons



Howe stated that the preliminary plat for Margaret Street Commons is due to interest from the Economic Development Authority and the City Council. The goal of the project is to prepare the site for sale to a potential developer. The site includes 2375 Margaret St N through 2395 Margaret St N, and includes the parking lot to the southwest. The development site is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ acre. According to the appraiser, the replat must be done before an appraisal. The zoning is MU-1: Downtown Mixed-Use for the area along Margaret St N. The parking lot is zoned MU-3: Corridor Mixed-Use. In general, water, sewer and electric run north to south on the west side of the lot. There will be drainage and utility easements established. There is a bus shelter on the site, and that easement will need to be established. The entire parking area will be separated from the redevelopment site.

Blees questioned the split zoning in Lot 2 and asked how to proceed. Howe stated that split zoning is not an ideal situation, but it is not uncommon. Howe stated that as the Planning Commission considers rezoning in upcoming meetings, the split zoning occurring in the lot can be fixed. Muhic suggested it may be worth discussing with Metropolitan Council if the bus stop can be moved to make the site more attractive for development. Nordby stated on the north side of the parking lot there is a small triangle parcel and asked what the intent of it is. Howe stated she is not sure what the triangle parcel is, but it is privately owned and recognized by Ramsey County. Blees asked if there is an easement that is 10 feet on either side of the storm sewer line. Howe confirmed.

Blees opened the public hearing at 7:13 PM.

There were no comments.

Blees closed the public hearing at 7:14 PM.

Blees asked for a motion to recommend to City Council approval of the preliminary plat for Margaret Street Commons.

M/Rathe, S/Muhic.

Motion carried 5-0.

VIII. COMMISSION BUSINESS, ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

a. Consideration of a Resolution to Deny a Sign Variance

Howe reported that this resolution is a follow up to the variance request at 2678 7th Ave E to allow an EMC as a wall sign. Based on Planning Commission discussion at the previous meeting, staff were directed to draft a resolution for denial. Blees and Wise recommended a fix to a grammatical error on the resolution.

Blees asked for a motion to recommend approval to City Council of the resolution to deny a sign variance at 2678 7th Ave E contingent on the grammatical changes to the resolution.

M/Wise, S/Brenna.

Motion carried 5-0.

IX. REPORTS

Howe stated the Planning Commission will hear two presentations related to the city-owned lot on Delaware Ave and 17th Ave E. at the January 2024 meeting. The Planning Commission will hear two proposals for the lot and make a recommendation to City Council. In January, the Planning Commission will elect officers for 2024. There will be three new commissioners set to start by the January meeting.

Brenna thanked fellow Commissioners and City Staff for his time on the Planning Commission. Wise, Rathe and Nordby thanked Brenna for his service on the Planning Commission.



Nordby recommended the Planning Commission review the December 5, 2023 City Council workshop meeting as the City Council discussed streamlining some of the procedures for development in the City. Nordby welcomed any comments on the process.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Blees asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 PM.
M/Brenna, S/Rathe.
Motion carried 5-0.

The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting is Thursday, January 4, 2024 at 6:30 PM.

Members, please notify any planned absences to:

Chris Cherne
Planning Commission Secretary
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