



**Planning Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
August 1, 2024
6:30 PM**

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

COMMISSION

Patrick Blees, Chair
Andrew Wise, Vice-Chair
Arthur Alvarez, Jr., Commissioner
Stephanie Kane-Burback, Commissioner
Elizabeth Gadbois, Commissioner
Cameron Muhic, Commissioner
Jim Rathe, Commissioner

STAFF/LIAISONS

Riley Grams, Community Development Director
Ron Ritchie, Public Works Director
Randy Miller, Public Works Supervisor

III. ADOPT AGENDA

Blees asked for a motion to adopt the August 1, 2024 meeting agenda.
M/Rathe, S/Wise.
Motion carried 7-0.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of July 10, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes

Blees asked for a motion to approve the July 10, 2024 special meeting minutes.
M/Gadbois, S/Muhic.
Motion carried 7-0.

V. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

John Schmahl, 2750 Chisholm Ave, asked for a status on the fence ordinance.

VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Approve Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for Special Infill Housing at 2007 6th Street North
Community Development Director Grams provided background on the Student Built Housing program. The program dates back to 2004 and is an agreement between the City of North St. Paul and Northeast Intermediate School District 916. The program provides students with on-the-job home

building and remodeling experience, eliminates hazardous homes, expands the City's single-family housing stock and expands the City's tax base. The proposed Student Built Home will be the fifteenth in North St. Paul. In 2015, the City approved a Student Built Home located to the south at 2001 6th St N. The lot was split in order to create a second lot located at 2007 6th St N for a future Student Built Home location. The North St. Paul Housing Redevelopment Authority (HRA) was granted a Conditional Use Permit for special infill housing at 2001 6th St N. That home was constructed within the district's setback requirements. The surrounding area is comprised of other single-family homes to the west and south, and Webster Education Center is located to the east. The property is located within the R-2: Mixed Residential Zoning District.

Grams provided the Planning Commission with the procedures for considering a CUP request for special infill housing pursuant to §154.006(C) of the City Code. Based on staff findings, staff recommend the Planning Commission recommend approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow for special infill housing located at 2007 6th St N.

Alvarez asked what would be considered "due regard" given to adjacent property. Grams clarified that typically if the proposed project meets the setbacks of the zoning district, it may be considered due regard. Muhic asked why this project is considered infill housing. Grams responded that the Student Built Home in the south followed the same procedure, and that this lot is empty within a larger developed area. Blees clarified that the applicant is the HRA.

Blees opened the public hearing at 6:42 PM.

Angela Webb, 2146 7th Ave, asked if there are any details on what the value of the property might be and if there is any intention for screening on the shared property line.

Tom Spehn, instructor of the Student Built program, stated that the valuation of the project, based on historical data, is about \$480,000. The last three buildings in the program that were sold were \$480,000, \$460,000, and the current home will soon be listed at around \$480,000. The home itself is 1,400 square feet and with the garage, 2,000 square feet. In deciding a location for the project, they strongly consider whether a new single-family home would stylistically fit in with the neighborhood. The home built is typically 4 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms.

Blees closed the public hearing at 6:46 PM.

Alvarez asked about the standard for screening. Blees stated that landscaping or fences are suitable for screening, and it may be appropriate to include screening as a condition of permit issuance. The Planning Commission discussed how to quantify the screening requirement as a condition. Grams recommended including a condition that allows staff to determine what would be proper screening for the project between the properties.

Chair Blees asked for a motion to recommend approval to City Council the Conditional Use Permit for special infill housing at 2007 6th Street North subject to the condition that staff work with the adjacent property owners to resolve privacy screening concerns from the proposed property.

M/Muhic, S/Alvarez.

Motion carried 7-0.

B. Approve Setback Variance for Student Built Home at 2007 6th Street North

Grams provided the Planning Commission with the purpose and procedures for the consideration of a variance request, pursuant to §154.004(E). The front and rear yard setbacks in the R-2 Mixed Residential Zoning District are both 25 feet. If both setbacks are adhered to, there would only be 10 feet of buildable space. The proposed front yard setback is 18 feet and the proposed rear yard

setback is 6 feet. The intent is to match the front and rear yard setbacks of the single-family home to the south. Staff recommend that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the front yard and rear yard lot setback variance request located at 2007 6th St N.

Muhic asked how the proposed setbacks were chosen. Grams stated that the setbacks were decided in order to be uniform with other homes in the neighborhood. Wise asked if there is a design further along than the site plan. Spehn indicated that the preliminary drawings are done and sent to the City and would need to be reviewed by the HRA. Blees stated that it is not clear on the survey how the front setback matches the adjacent house and that it should be clarified. In addition, the distance between the curb and the property line is quite substantial and would make the front yard appear larger from the street. Muhic stated it would be nice to give a larger backyard if possible. Grams stated if the proposed home would be pushed further to the north, there would be more issues with Ramsey County.

Blees opened the public hearing at 7:02 PM.

John Schmahl, 2750 Chisholm Ave, stated that he has only gone to two other variance public hearings, and those have gone down in a ball of fire. Schmahl indicated that the front setback would be 18 feet and the rear yard setback would be 6 feet, but indicated discrepancies between what is proposed at the meeting and what can be found in the variance application. Schmahl asked about the possibility of building a tiny home or something more affordable. Schmahl stated he does not think that this has been thought out in the bigger picture and urged the City to consider a smaller, more affordable house.

Blees closed the public hearing at 7:09 PM.

Alvarez stated that there are no small homes being built that are more affordable in the current market. Alvarez stated in St. Paul there are tiny lots, but in that city, they build up. Tiny homes typically fall out of the normal residential building code. Alvarez indicated that the City has minimum requirements and has turned away applications for homes fewer than the required minimum square footage in the zoning ordinance. Muhic stated that the price of the home is a lot higher price than what homes in the area are going for. Muhic questioned if a \$250,000 or \$300,000 home would be better for the neighborhood. Alvarez indicated that it is difficult to build a home at that price.

Wise indicated that a 6-foot setback would strongly limit the building, as there are many fire requirements to be met and that would limit exterior materials, number of windows and a number of other factors. Wise stated that he would much rather pull the home forward and get at least a 10-foot rear setback and have a smaller setback in the front yard. Wise agreed that the shape and size of the lot makes building on the lot difficult. Wise asked if there is wiggle room to have 10 feet in the back and 14 feet in the front. Muhic asked if 4 feet will make much of a visual difference in the front. The Commission agreed that the extra 4 feet in the rear would make much more of a difference than the extra 4 feet in the front. Spehn stated his only concern with shifting the house footprint would be the driveway. Blees indicated he did not believe the driveway would be affected much with the change.

Chair Blees asked for a motion to recommend approval to City Council the setback variance from 25 feet to 10 feet in the rear yard and from 25 feet to 14 feet in the front yard for the Student Built Home at 2007 6th Street North.

M/Rathe, S/Wise.

Motion carried 7-0.

VII. COMMISSION BUSINESS, ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Discuss Request for Proposals (RFP) for Margaret Street Commons Redevelopment Site



Community Development Director Grams indicated that the City has received some interest in the development of Margaret Street Commons. When the City gets interest in development, it is a good idea to issue an RFP for redevelopment of the site. Typical RFP packages include a letter of interest, development concept design, public outreach plan, financing plan and proposed schedule. Staff recommend the Planning Commission direct staff to draft an RFP for their next meeting on September 5, 2024 and for City Council review on September 17, 2024.

Muhic requested that the RFP mention the downtown bus stop on that block. Blees stated that an RFP would be a good idea. Rathe asked if the City is seeking any specific type of proposals. Grams stated typically residential over nonresidential uses would be submitted, but the City would not steer developers into a specific direction as long as what is submitted complies with the zoning ordinance and is harmonious with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The Planning Commission directed staff to draft an RFP for redevelopment at Margaret Street Commons to present for review at the next Planning Commission meeting on September 5, 2024.

VIII. REPORTS

Gadbois stated that the Primary Election will fall on August 13, 2024.

Blees stated that National Night Out is on Tuesday, August 6, 2024. There will be many gatherings across the City.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Blees asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:33 PM.
M/Rathe, S/Alvarez.
Motion carried 7-0.

The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting is Thursday, September 5, 2024 at 6:30 PM.

Members, please notify any planned absences to:

Chris Cherne
Planning Commission Secretary
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