



**Planning Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
September 5, 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

Jason Nordby, City Council Liaison
Riley Grams, Community Development Director

III. ADOPT AGENDA

Blees asked for a motion to adopt the September 5, 2024 meeting agenda.
M/Wise, S/Rathe.
Motion carried 7-0.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of August 1, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Blees indicated the word “not” was mistakenly written twice on page 6 of the packet under the public hearing comments. Blees recommended the second word’s removal.

Blees asked for a motion to approve the August 1, 2024 meeting minutes with the recommended change.
M/Rathe, S/Wise.
Motion carried 7-0.

V. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

There were no public comments.

VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no public hearings.

VII. COMMISSION BUSINESS, ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Margaret Street Commons RFP

Community Development Director Grams presented the Planning Commission with a draft Request for Proposals (RFP) for Margaret Street Commons, located across the street from City Hall. The property has many advantages such as close proximity to City services and schools, walking distance to downtown North St. Paul and public parks, access to major highways, and is located along a public transit route. The site is empty of any current use. The existing structure was reviewed in 2022 and was deemed substandard. The City conducted a phase 1 environmental report in 2019 that recognized three recognized environmental conditions, being the previous dental uses, a former dry-cleaning operation onsite, and a dry-cleaning operation adjacent to the property. The site is serviced by North St. Paul utilities. There is a natural gas line and overhead power lines that run north and south, and there is a 48" storm sewer line on the west side that may impact some aspects of design.

The site is currently zoned MU-1: Downtown Mixed-Use which allows a wide variety of uses. In 2022, the City conducted a housing assessment by Maxfield, and that indicated the City could accommodate 955 new housing units in the next 5-6 years, being a combination of ownership and rental. In the Redevelopment Master Plan (RMP), this area calls for continued growth and increase of retail and restaurants. The City is hoping to have a mixed-use building. Developers will come forward with ideas that they believe they can do successfully and sell. The City is looking for pedestrian friendly character, design for an urban downtown, and adequate parking (under-building when possible). The RFP would be posted on the City's website and League of Minnesota Cities website. An advertisement could be posted in the Star Tribune and other sites as needed.

Blees asked if there is a standard procedure for the Planning Commission's action in this RFP process. Grams stated tonight is just a discussion. However, the Planning Commission would establish a committee with staff to review the proposals. The Planning Commission would create a shortlist from all the proposals to recommend to City Council for ultimate consideration and selection.

Blees recommended that the storm sewer line and easement should be made clearer on the aerial view in the RFP. Blees asked if there would be any consideration of a larger development utilizing some or all of the adjacent city-owned parking lot and if that is a feasible option. Muhic recommended demonstrating that parking lot on an aerial map. Grams responded that he would make that option clearer.

The Planning Commission discussed the storm sewer and how that might affect parking and use of land to the west of the easement. Blees asked what the impacts of the environmental phase 1 study mean and how that might affect a developer's interest. Grams indicated that the study reveals opportunities for environmental cleanup and development grants. The former dry-cleaning uses are concerning, as they utilized hazardous materials, but it should not be reason enough for developers to not be interested. Wise indicated that this is a very common occurrence with redevelopment sites. Gadbois clarified that the site is not blocks from the Gateway Trail, but about one block. Muhic recommended including a zoomed-out map that illustrates nearby amenities and locations of interest.

Grams stated that the appetite for developments has been getting better, however construction costs are still very high. There is hope that by the time this process gets through the climate is better for construction. Blees stated when it comes to evaluate proposals, he would strongly suggest encouraging mixed-use. Wise concurred. Grams indicated the City's planning documents indicate a need for mixed-use development at this site.

VIII. REPORTS

Muhic stated that the developer for the student-built home mentioned that it is difficult to construct a home for less than \$500k and indicated that he would like to see the home fall around \$400k to be a bit more



affordable for a young family starting out. Muhic also stated that within MnDOT and Metro Transit, there is talk about bringing the Purple Line to Century College. Muhic stated that he would like the City Council to write a letter to Metro Transit requesting a stop on the Purple Line in North St. Paul.

Blees stated that the Fall Roundup Parade will be on September 19, 2024.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Blees asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:09 PM.

M/Muhic, S/Rathe.

Motion carried 7-0.

The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting is Thursday, October 3, 2024 at 6:30 PM.

Members, please notify any planned absences to:

Chris Cherne
Planning Commission Secretary
651-747-2440
chris.cherne@northstpaul.org