



**Planning Commission
Workshop Meeting Minutes – No Quorum
May 1, 2025
6:30 PM**

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

Chair Blees indicated that there is not a quorum of Planning Commissioners present, and there will be no official action taken. The workshop discussion began at 6:30 PM.

ROLL CALL

COMMISSION

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

STAFF/LIAISONS

Jason Nordby, City Council Liaison
Ken Roberts, Community Development Director

DISCUSSIONS

A. Discussion: Introductions & Goal Setting

Community Development Director Ken Roberts introduced himself to the Planning Commission and provided an overview of his employment and education history.

Roberts asked the Planning Commission what they would view as priorities to work on moving forward. Blees stated the intent at one point in time was to look at the entire zoning ordinance and update it in small bites. Blees stated he cannot recall what was next on that list, but there have been discussions of looking at subdivisions and lot combinations. There are circumstances in the zoning ordinance where there are regulations that are not enforced or do not seem necessary to enforce. When the Planning Commission recommends changes to the zoning ordinance, they should consider whether the regulations are enforceable.

Nordby stated that last year the Planning Commission reviewed the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). At that point in time the levy was already decided. Nordby indicated that the Planning Commission should review the CIP earlier moving forward so action can be taken on any recommendations they may have.

Blees asked what the current status is for updating the Comprehensive Plan. Roberts stated that the Metropolitan Council is in the beginning stages of holding discussions with cities about their Comprehensive Plans. They require all cities to have the upcoming update to their comprehensive plans complete by the end of 2028. The City should take about 2 years to get it done in time.

Roberts indicated that there were concerns from the City Attorney regarding outdated language in the subdivision ordinance, so that will be high on the worklist. Blees stated that accessory dwelling units will

also require some more attention as there have been some previous Planning Commission discussions on that topic. Blees indicated the Commission had also spoken previously about tiny homes.

Nordby stated there were previous discussions regarding the technicalities between townhomes, duplexes and twin homes. Blees stated the definitions of townhomes, duplexes and twin homes are all distinctly defined but there is some overlap. Roberts and Alvarez stated that they will look at the definitions and bring information to the next meeting.

B. Discussion: Downtown Design Manual

Blees stated that the reason the Downtown Design Manual item is brought back to the Planning Commission is to discuss its relevancy. If the Commission finds it to be relevant, they will need to determine what should be removed, modified or kept in the Manual. The Manual illustrates many design elements of the zoning ordinance for the downtown district. The Manual is perhaps more substantial than it needs to be, but it is still valuable. In recent years, the Manual has likely not been strictly adhered to, but it is more of a guide than an absolute regulation document. The Manual was prepared in 2005 with the Design and Historical Review Commission (DHRC) in mind. The idea of the Manual was that properties in the downtown district would go to the DHRC for review if they were to pursue any modifications or construction on their site. The DHRC no longer exists, so the City will need to edit the Manual to be applicable and accurate.

Blees indicated that there are many references and locations in the document that should be removed or updated. Recommendations on page 10 regarding building height should be looked at again. For example, the Manual very specifically states that the maximum height of a building should be two or three stories. However, there are buildings downtown that are four stories. Stating that four-story buildings are out of the question does not necessarily make sense anymore considering these recent developments. Blees also recommended that the application procedures on page 19 and design guidelines and standards on page 25 be revisited and edited for accuracy. Gadbois cautioned against making too many regulations that would in turn remove an element of charm from the downtown district.

Roberts stated that when it comes to the Planning Commission work plan, it should be determined where on the priority list the update to the Downtown Design Manual is. The Commission discussed whether the Manual should be added as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan or if it should remain as a stand-alone document. The Commission reached a consensus that the Downtown Design Manual should remain a stand-alone document to ease the process of making any future amendments. Roberts indicated that it will be important to ensure that any references to the Downtown Design Manual in official city plans be accurate. Roberts said he will bring a list of potential work items for the Planning Commission to discuss at the next meeting, and they will evaluate priorities at that time.

REPORTS

Gadbois indicated that the Citywide Garage Sale event is occurring from May 1st to May 3rd. Roberts stated that the Citywide Cleanup event will be held on May 10th from 8am-11am. The workshop discussion concluded at 7:36 PM.

The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting is Thursday, June 5, 2025, at 6:30 PM.

Members, please notify any planned absences to:

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