

**CITY OF NORTH ST. PAUL
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2019
6:15 P.M.**

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Barton called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

COMMISSION

Elaine Barton, Commission Chair
Trisha Hamm, Commission Vice-Chair
Tom Sonnek, Commission City Council Liaison
Chris Bathurst, Commissioner
Rick Gelbmann, Commissioner
Michael Stahlmann, Commissioner
John Wahl, Commissioner
Allan Worm, Commissioner

STAFF

Molly Just, City Planner
Olivia Boerschinger, Planning Secretary

III. ADOPT AGENDA

Chair Barton requested the addition of the following agenda items:

VIII. Reports from Staff

- New Commissioner Packet
- Planning Commission Update Presentation to City Council

Motion to adopt agenda by Commissioner Gelbmann, and seconded by Commissioner Bathurst, with all present voting aye (7-0). Motion carried to adopt the May 2, 2019 Agenda as amended.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approve the April 4, 2019 regular meeting minutes

Commissioner Wahl requested that the April 4, 2019 meeting minutes be changed to reflect that comments attributed to him were made by Commissioner Stahlmann. Commissioner Stahlmann agreed. Ms. Just agreed to make the necessary corrections.

Chair Barton requested that the motions on pages 2, 3 and 7 should be changed to reflect that the motions passed unanimously with 5 votes.

Motion to approve meeting minutes by Commissioner Stahlmann, and seconded by Commissioner Wahl, with all present voting aye (7-0). Motion carried to approve the April 4, 2019 regular meeting minutes as amended.

V. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

There were no comments.

VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS

2557 12th Avenue – Variance (Corner Lot Side Setback, Lot Frontage, Lot Size)

City Planner Molly Just reviewed a proposal for variance approvals for City-owned property located at 2557 12th Avenue. She added the City intends to sell the property to BATC-Housing First Minnesota Foundation, a non-profit organization that provides housing for military veterans and their families. She noted BATC will work with Lennar Homes to build a single-family home on the property, in a neighborhood predominantly made up of single-family homes.

Ms. Just stated the proposal is to approve variances for setbacks on the property, which was platted before the North St. Paul Zoning Code was established. She added the property is a corner lot which has special setback provisions. She noted an error in the table provided in the meeting packet related to “Standards in R-1 Zoning District”, which should state that the corner lot sideyard setback is 20 feet for a freestanding garage.

Ms. Just stated City Staff is seeking variances from the minimum lot size and width for this non-conforming lot. She added the lot would retain its legal non-conforming status, but the variance would formalize the lot size and width. She noted, on the site plan, the location and setbacks of the previous home are comparable to what is being proposed.

Commissioner Worm stated the lot size is incorrect. He added there are 11 feet on the right, 22 feet for the house, and 6 feet on the left, which leaves an additional 2 feet as the lot is 41 feet wide. Chair Barton agreed, adding the lot is 41.44 feet wide.

Ms. Molly stated the front yard can be kept at the required setback, so any additional feet could be recaptured on the other side, but not in the side yard. She agreed to look into this issue.

Commissioner Wahl stated he appreciates Commissioner Worm’s comments. He added the house and garage do not line up on the site plan, and the house should be 24 feet instead of 22 feet.

Ms. Just reviewed the Staff Report under Findings, which states: “Variances are necessary to develop a legal non-conforming lot. Many developed parcels in the neighborhood are also non-conforming to size, frontage and corner lot side setbacks.”

Chair Barton opened the public hearing at 6:39 p.m.

There were no comments.

Chair Barton closed the public hearing at 6:39 p.m.

Ms. Just stated no other public comment was received by City Staff on this issue.

Commissioner Wahl stated the house site plan indicates that the first floor width is 22 feet. Commissioner Bathurst stated the house width is 22 feet, the deck and stairs are 22 feet, and the garage is 20 feet.

Chair Barton stated the garage and house should line up along the Margaret Street side, as there is room on the interior side lot. She added the variance should be for the inside lot line rather than Margaret Street frontage. She added steps can encroach a certain amount without a variance.

Ms. Just stated the deck would become an encroachment if it were to be bumped out to accommodate steps.

Commissioner Stahlmann stated the steps could be started sooner and moved to the south. He added this is a design issue for the architect, and not part of the variance discussion. He noted, regarding the setback on 12th Avenue, the survey shows steps on the east side, which is incorrect. He asked what is the dimension from the lot line to the steps. Ms. Just stated that is 13 feet, and the front yard does not require a setback variance. She added the house on the site plan is 22 or 25 feet from the front lot line.

Chair Barton asked what is the consideration for front yard setback for an enclosed front porch. Ms. Just stated an enclosed porch is not proposed. Chair Barton stated the elevation depiction shows a front porch. Commissioner Stahlmann stated the survey does not show that the porch goes further south, and it is on the wrong side of the survey.

Commissioner Worm stated it is 25.6 feet from the front lot line to the front of the home, according to his calculations. Commissioner Gelbmann stated the front door is recessed by 2-3 feet, and there is a bump-out that goes the remaining length of the house.

Commissioner Stahlmann expressed his concern that the home as proposed will alter the essential character of the neighborhood, as there are no windows on the Margaret Street side, with the exception of two basement windows. He added these basement windows are taller than any other homes in the neighborhood and appear to be more like windows on a split level.

Ms. Just stated the Planning Commission can choose to make a conditional recommendation based on the architectural plans and variance request.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated the designers may have left windows off of the Margaret Street side because of lights from the Highway exit ramp.

Chair Barton stated there are many homes on corner lots that have side yards facing Margaret Street and they all have windows.

Commissioner Stahlmann stated the Certificate of Survey shows an entry on the west side, and that should be flipped to the east side.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated the builder's goal is to provide housing to families of veterans, and a goal will be to make the home accessible for people with disabilities. He added that would fit with the lower height of the structure.

Commissioner Stahlmann stated what is proposed is a large house with 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms and a 2-car garage. He added this is a small lot, and there will be very little yard space. He asked how many people would be living there, and how many cars. He added he is uncomfortable with the plans. He noted the property is owned by the City.

Ms. Just stated the builder is attempting to incorporate a new home into an existing older neighborhood.

Vice-Chair Hamm stated the variances that can be approved are the same as what would be acceptable on surrounding properties, regardless of design.

Commissioner Worm stated the basement may be planned to be more shallow because of egress. Ms. Just agreed, adding this can be accommodated with window wells.

Commissioner Wahl stated the Planning Commission does not have sufficient materials to make a variance decision. He added there are many discrepancies, including the garage and home in alignment; the additional 2 feet of home width; and other details that are unclear.

Commissioner Worm suggested that this issue be tabled to the Planning Commission's next meeting, and request additional information and correct measurements from City Staff.

Ms. Just stated a conditional recommendation would be appropriate, with conditions related to lining up the home and garage, as well as additional windows, on the Margaret Street side.

Chair Barton requested additional details related to lot size, garage alignment, and other design aspects. She added this issue can be tabled to the Planning Commission's May 16, 2019 meeting.

Chair Barton requested clarification from City Staff on the size of the lot, which is listed in the staff report as 5,127 square feet, and on the site survey as 5182.5 square feet. She requested that larger plans be provided for the Planning Commission's review.

Motion to table variance requests by Commissioner Wahl, and seconded by Commissioner Gelbmann, with all present voting aye (7-0). Motion carried to table variance requests for 2557 12th Avenue to the May 16, 2019 meeting.

Chair Barton requested that the Planning Commission Meeting Agenda be printed on a single page, rather than two-sided. Ms. Boerschinger agreed to this.

VII. COMMISSION BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Chair Barton stated she has been unable to find the public hearing notices on the City's website. She added the website has a Public Notices page, but it is not updated regularly. Ms. Just stated the public hearing notices are on the website. She agreed to follow up and ensure that public hearing notices are linked in the correct location on the City's website.

Chair Barton asked whether City Staff contact information has been added to the public hearing notice. Ms. Just confirmed this.

VIII. REPORTS FROM STAFF

New Commissioner Packet

Ms. Just stated Ms. Boerschinger has obtained a copy of a document that will be useful for the Planning Commission, entitled "Chairperson's Guide". She added this is in response to the Planning Commission's request for information and guidance. She noted the document addresses meeting format and procedures.

Ms. Boerschinger stated the Planning Commissioners should have received an email with a link to the Minnesota APA's "Planning Commission Guidebook". She added she also has a few hard copies of this document.

Vice-Chair Hamm and City Council Liaison Sonnek requested copies of the APA manual. Ms. Boerschinger agreed.

Ms. Just stated Zoning Code updates from the last six months are available for the Planning Commission in hard copy, to add to the full Zoning Code document. She added the online version has been updated as well. Chair Barton and Commissioner Stahlmann requested copies of this document.

Chair Barton stated she printed out a copy of the League of Minnesota Cities' planning document, as referenced by Ms. Just at the Planning Commission's last meeting. She added this document could be helpful for new Planning Commissioners.

Update from City Council Liaison

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated the Gateway at McKnight townhomes development at the south end of the Anchor Block property is planning to begin construction on a model townhome.

Chair Barton requested information regarding the pawn shop application. Ms. Just stated Twin Cities Pawn is submitting a Conditional Use Permit application. She added Twin Cities Pawn has locations in Oakdale, Osseo, Coon Rapids and Ramsey.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated the Car Show will be starting again on June 7, 2019 and will run through September 20, 2019.

Planning Commission Update Presentation to City Council

Chair Barton stated there had been some discussion about the Planning Commission presentation to the City Council. Ms. Just stated discussion centered on the role of the Planning Commission as it relates to State Statute.

Chair Barton stated she was thinking the presentation should focus on larger planning issues and activities, rather than specific hearings and recommendations. She added, for instance, the Planning Commission has reviewed the issue of lot widths, as well as side yard setbacks for corner lots.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated the APA manual may provide some guidance with regard to planning issues, land use and Code requirements. Chair Barton agreed, adding part of the role of the Planning Commission is to add value to the City's redevelopment and planning process.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated the City has been shaped and developed over the years through various methods, and the Comprehensive Plan document is a good example of this. He added sometimes a singular planning issue is presented to the City Council, and it is viewed in isolation and not as part of a bigger plan. He noted the Planning Commission presentation could be given at a City Council Workshop rather than a Regular Meeting, which would allow for more discussion. Chair Barton agreed.

IX. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Hamm and Commissioner Bathurst stated they will not be able to attend the May 16, 2019 meeting.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated Silver Lake park Clean-up is rescheduled to Saturday, May 4, 2019. He encouraged residents to come out and participate. He added a meal will be provided.

Commissioner Wahl asked whether there are any other agenda items for the May 16, 2019 meeting. Ms. Just stated only the tabled item from tonight's meeting will be on the agenda.

Commissioner Stahlmann stated he noticed there is a City Hall Open House scheduled for June 7, 2019, for the City's fire fighters. Commissioner Bathurst confirmed this, adding he is unsure what is planned but it will be different from last year.

Commissioner Gelbmann asked whether the tabled item can be addressed at the Planning Commission's first meeting in June 2019, as it is the only item on the May 16, 2019 agenda. Ms. Just stated that would not be in keeping with plans to develop the property.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated the tabled item could then be addressed at the City Council's May 21, 2019 meeting.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, motion to adjourn by Commissioner Worm, and seconded by Commissioner Gelbmann, with all present voting aye (7-0). Motion carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting is Thursday, May 16, 2019 at 6:15 p.m.

Members, please notify any planned absences to: Olivia Boerschinger
Planning Commission Secretary
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olivia.boershinger@northstpaul.org