

**CITY OF NORTH ST. PAUL
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 2020
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

Michael Stahlmann, Commissioner

ABSENT AND EXCUSED

Tom Sonnek, Commission City Council Liaison

Chris Bathurst, Commissioner

Rick Gelbmann, Commissioner

Trisha Hamm, Commission Vice Chair

Allan Worm, Commissioner

STAFF

Erin Perdu, City Planner

Olivia Boerschinger, Planning Secretary

III. ADOPT AGENDA

Chair Barton requested the following addition to the Agenda:

-Item 8b – Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Motion to adopt Agenda by Commissioner Gelbmann, and seconded by Commissioner Bathurst, with all present voting aye (5-0). Motion carried to adopt the January 2, 2019 Agenda, as amended.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve Minutes by Commissioner Worm, and seconded by Commissioner Hamm, with all present voting aye (5-0). Motion carried to approve the December 5, 2019 regular meeting minutes as submitted.

V. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

There were no comments.

VI. PUBLIC HEARING

a. Final Plat – 2nd Addition of McKnight Townhomes

City Planner Erin Perdu reviewed a request for approval of Final Plat for Phase 2 of the Gateway at McKnight townhome project. Originally approved in 2018, there are 46 remaining townhome sites on approximately 3.5 acres. The proposed plat for this area matches preliminary plat approval which was given for both phases when the project was originally reviewed.

Ms. Perdu stated Gateway Curve will be completed with this phase. She added the dedication of Outlot C remains to be addressed, and approval is required to convey Outlot C to the adjacent property owners. She noted the developer plans to dedicate Outlot C when the file the final plat.

Ms. Perdu stated City Staff recommends Planning Commission recommendation of City Council approval of the final plat with conditions related to the City Engineer's comments and conveyance of Outlot C.

City Council Liaison requested clarification regarding the conveyance of Outlot C. Ms. Perdu stated a small piece of land at the southern end of the site is to be conveyed to the adjacent property owner as determined in the original approval.

Chair Barton opened the public hearing at 6:22 p.m.

Rob Aurelius, 2271 7th Street North, asked why single-level townhomes were not included in this project as they are in high demand. He added the developer has circumvented City Code by having 6 units in a row without windows on 3 sides. He added open space should be required as there is no room for amenities, and that would improve curb appeal. He commended the developer for complying with setback regulations.

Chair Barton closed the public hearing at 6:24 p.m.

Planning Secretary Olivia Boerschinger stated additional comments received by City Staff have been included in the meeting packet and emailed to the Commissioners.

Chair Barton stated one of the purposes of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) is to allow for flexibility in design and architecture. She asked whether City Staff can comment on having 6 units in a row.

Ms. Perdu stated it was discussed during the PUD architectural review, and revisions were made to the façade to ensure visual interest and variations. She added, when the project was approved, the Planning Commission felt that the intent of the PUD ordinance was met.

Ms. Perdu agreed, adding the difference between a PUD and other developments is that flexibility can be granted in exchange for other benefits that would not otherwise be included in the project plans.

City Council Liaison Sonnek asked whether there is a definition for “public benefit” in the City Ordinances. Ms. Perdu stated there is currently no specific criteria to determine public benefit, but City Staff reviews the City’s Comprehensive Plan goals and environmental goals. She added some cities have specific criteria, and she recommends including this issue in the Code review, to make it easier and more transparent.

Chair Barton requested clarification regarding a requirement related to retaining walls that require fencing if they are greater than 4 feet in height.

Ms. Perdu stated that is a general requirement from the Building Code.

The WSB Engineer stated fencing is required for safety reasons when there is a walkway or sidewalk adjacent to a retaining wall.

Motion by Commissioner Worm, and seconded by Commissioner Hamm, with all present voting aye (5-0). Motion carried to recommend City Council approval of Final Plat for 2nd Addition of McKnight Townhomes subject to conditions listed in the staff report.

Chair Barton stated this item will be reviewed by the City Council at their January 7, 2020 meeting.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

-None.

VIII. COMMISSION BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Rezoning, Major Subdivision and Planned Unit Development – 2242 7th Street N – Concept Plan Only

Ms. Perdu reviewed the revised concept for a PUD and major subdivision at 2242 7th Street N. She added this is a concept plan review and no action will be taken. The developer is requesting feedback and comments before they develop a full set of plans. She noted there is no detailed staff report on this agenda item.

Ms. Perdu stated the approximately 4.25-acre property is a heavily wooded site on 1 outlot with a private drive, 20 townhomes and 3 single-family homes. She added the plan was reviewed by the City Council in December 2019. Public comments were received with concerns about the loss of trees and preservation of the wooded nature of the site, as well as creative design elements of the project. The revised concept plan is a cul-de-sac design with 18 units, and the

developer has provided information taken from a tree survey that was completed on the southern portion of the property. The applicant is seeking consensus and feedback on the concept plan.

Ms. Perdu stated the applicant is considering the inclusion of space on the site that would be specifically preserved as open space.

The developer addressed the Planning Commission, stating the T-shaped road was replaced with a cul-de-sac to fit in with the neighborhood, which opened up some space to the east where as many trees as possible would be preserved. He added as many trees as possible would also be saved near a ponding area that has been added to the southern area of the property. He noted all units would be owner-occupied single-family twin homes, at a starting price of \$300,000-350,000.

City Council Liaison requested clarification regarding the ponding area. The developer pointed out the area on the map, where the infiltration pond, with an average depth of 2 feet, could be split into two separate ponds on the southern portion of the property. He added the holding pond would empty within 48 hours of a heavy rainfall.

Commissioner Worm asked whether the developer considered the possibility of single-family homes. The developer stated they have had discussions with City Staff who have indicated that more density is desired. He added single family homes would be a possibility with the proposed layout. He noted he is unsure what the lot sizes would be.

Ms. Perdu stated the lot sizes are 7,920 square feet with setbacks in the R-1 district.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated the property could be rezoned back to R-1 and single-family homes developed, but the density would be higher with more buildings on the property.

Ms. Perdu agreed, adding 3.4-acre development in the R-1 district without a PUD could accommodate approximately 15 single-family homes, using minimum lot calculations and right-of-way consideration.

City Council Liaison stressed the importance of finding a balance between the residential feel of the neighborhood, the natural habitat and wooded area, and inevitable development.

Commissioner Worm stated single-family homes in the R-1 District could also be two-story homes, and more than 15 homes could potentially fit in the development. The developer confirmed this, adding the lot size could also be smaller.

The developer stated single-level townhomes in this type of development are generally purchased by homeowners over the age of 50, looking toward retirement, with no small children. He added it tends to be a very quiet neighborhood.

Chair Barton stated this type of development fits in a high-density neighborhood and appeals to residents who do not want to live in a large development. She added the PUD provides the opportunity to expand the diversity of housing options and locations. She noted she feels that this is a positive aspect of the PUD.

The developer stated these types of developments are usually self-governed, with individual lots, which gives residents the flexibility of a single-family home.

Chair Barton requested clarification on the developer's comments regarding the inclusion of two separate holding ponds.

The developer stated discussions with the surveyor and engineer included the possibility of creating two separate ponds, one in the southeast corner and another in the southern area. He added this is not his area of expertise.

The WSB Engineer stated it appears there would be an opportunity to split up the holding ponds, and the City Engineer would review them for the same requirements as a single pond.

Commissioner Gelbmann asked whether the linear shape of the pond could be changed. The developer stated that shape conforms to the layout of the development on the property.

Commissioner Worm asked whether the developer had considered a 27-foot wide roadway, which would accommodate parking on both sides of the street. The WSB Engineer stated more impervious surfaces would create the need for additional stormwater mitigation.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated there were questions regarding the potential for water runoff onto neighboring properties. He asked whether that has been reviewed. The WSB Engineer stated the same questions still exist and will be reviewed when engineering plans are received. She added issues to be reviewed include soil borings, types of infiltration, the size of the ponds, and other considerations.

City Council Liaison Sonnek asked whether underground holding tanks could be done in residential areas. He added massive underground holding tanks are proposed at the downtown development to improve stormwater runoff.

The WSB Engineer stated the City may not want to be responsible for the type of maintenance required when underground holding tanks are installed. She added the intent would be to improve the current stormwater run-off situation on the property. She noted that can be accomplished through ponding.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated the concept plan is an improvement from what was previously presented, and he appreciates the preservation of trees and wooded areas. He added the concept plan information is not complete and further review will be required to weigh potential options.

Commissioner Gelbmann asked the developer whether stormwater ponds on the property would overflow to the southeast. The WSB Engineer stated that would be reviewed when plans and specifications are received from the developer.

Chair Barton stated the concept plan is in line with the City's recently adopted Comprehensive Plan. She added she believes the development plan is headed in the right direction and is worth pursuing, and she likes the cul-de-sac option which has more design interest than a straight road with turn-around. She noted pervious pavers might be considered.

Chair Barton asked whether the 3 single family homes on 6th Street would have access to the open space and ponding area, and whether the homes would be part of the PUD. Ms. Perdu stated the feedback previously received by the developer was for the single-family homes to be removed from the PUD. The developer confirmed this, adding the homes on 6th Street would be zoned R-1 single family and would not be incorporated into the PUD.

The developer stated there is currently no access from the single-family lots on 6th Street to the southerly pond area, but an access easement is proposed between the south 2 lots on 6th Street.

Commissioner Worm asked whether fire trucks will be able to access the development and fit in the cul-de-sac. Commissioner Bathurst confirmed this.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated, as a long-term consideration, a process should be considered for notifying residents about future land use and changes within the City's development plans. He added there was an outreach process that accompanied the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan, and a fair amount of people participated in that process. He stressed the importance of giving residents more notice, and increased opportunity to be involved in changes that are happening.

Ms. Perdu agreed there is a gap between long-term goals in the Comprehensive Plan and specific proposals like the concept plan being considered at tonight's meeting. She added focused neighborhood meetings in areas that are planned to change is a possibility and would give residents an opportunity to discuss what can be considered under the City's zoning Ordinance and development proposals.

VIIIb. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Motion by Commissioner Gelbmann, and seconded by Commissioner Hamm, with all present voting aye (5-0). Motion carried to nominate Elaine Barton for Planning Commission Chair.

Motion by Chair Barton, and seconded by Commissioner Worm, with all present voting aye (5-0). Motion carried to nominate Trisha Hamm for Planning Commission Vice Chair.

A resident interrupted the proceedings and stated that it was indicated at the beginning of the meeting that public comment related to agenda items would not be taken during the Public Comments portion of the meeting but would be taken during the public hearing. She asked why public comment was not taken during the discussion on Agenda Item 8a.

Chair Barton stated the agenda item was a concept review and not a public hearing, and no action was taken. She added the purpose of the review was to receive information from the developer.

The resident asked why the audience was not made aware that there was no public hearing, so they could speak during Public Comments. She asked when a public hearing will be held.

Chair Barton public hearing notices are posted on the City Calendar and on the City website. Ms. Perdu stated City Staff sends notification of the public hearing to residents within 350 feet of the subject property and also to anyone who wrote their contact information on the sign-in sheet.

IX. REPORTS FROM STAFF

a. 2020 Goals Discussion

Ms. Perdu stated a list of 2020 Planning Commission goals was compiled by Ms. Boerschinger. She added the main item for 2020 will be updating the Zoning Ordinance to ensure consistency with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. She asked whether the Planning Commission has any other goals to articulate to the City Council and requested consideration of dates for preparing and presenting reports.

Chair Barton stated the City Council had indicated it was not necessary for the Planning Commission to provide a formal report.

City Council Liaison Sonnek agreed, adding the Commission could focus on reviewing the language in commonly used zoning ordinances, including completion of the discussion related to the off-street parking ordinance. Chair Barton agreed, adding parking requirements do not seem to be sufficient, and parking stalls are getting smaller.

Commissioner Worm stated he would like to discuss the minimum lot width ordinance, and reducing the lot width minimum from 60 feet to 40 feet.

Commissioner Gelbmann stressed caution in amending the City's parking requirements, especially in areas like 17th Avenue near Richardson School, where parking is limited due to construction.

City Manager Scott Duddeck stated the School District has been in contact with the City Staff requesting consideration of placement of "no parking" signs on the south side of 17th Avenue between 1st and 2nd Streets to prohibit parking during school hours.

Chair Barton stated she would like to address guidelines for townhomes.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated he would like to address specifications for culverts, to address flooding and drainage. He added that is an issue for the Watershed District, but the City will continue to see large storms and extra capacity is important.

Ms. Perdu stated that is related to engineering specifications and is not part of the City Code.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated, in summary, the 2020 list of goals could include reconsideration of zoning language amendments for off-street parking; parking stall size requirements; townhome requirements; minimum lot width requirements for single family homes, and drainage requirements.

Ms. Perdu stated City Staff can provide a comprehensive list at the Planning Commission's February meeting. She added the Comprehensive Plan items are time sensitive and must be submitted within 9 months.

Commissioner Gelbmann stressed the importance of stormwater drainage resiliency. Chair Barton stated that is mentioned in the City Code but could be improved, as it relates to erosion and the effects of stormwater. She added she would like a review of tree requirements for developments, including types of trees.

Ms. Perdu agreed, adding there are currently no tree requirements in the City Code. She added requirements related to trees and tree preservation should be discussed.

Mr. Duddeck requested that the Planning Commission address the issue of chickens and bees as soon as possible. He added City Staff can provide a lot of background information for the Commission's review. He noted there has been growing interest from the community related to keeping chickens and bees. The Planning Commission agreed.

Commissioner Barton stated it is an issue of regulation and whether the City has the resources to enforce regulations.

Mr. Duddeck stated he would like to schedule a joint meeting or workshop between the Planning Commission and the Economic Development Authority. City Council Liaison Sonnek stated that would be helpful. The Planning Commission agreed.

Mr. Duddeck stated the City Council's January 7, 2019 meeting will include 2020 appointments, including a new Planning Commissioner.

Mr. Duddeck stated City Staff has discussed the possibility of creating a sub-committee for design and historical review from within the Planning Commission. He added the subcommittee could be called upon for review as needed.

X. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

a. Update from City Council Liaison

City Council Liaison Sonnek reviewed the City Council's December 2019 meeting, including approval of 2020 History Cruiser Car Show agreement. Mr. Duddeck stated the car show will remain open for all businesses during road construction and will be extended east to Henry Street. He added the car show will probably be moved periodically to accommodate construction.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated a purchase agreement for the former BP gas station site was approved. He added the existing building will be demolished and the site cleared to eventually facilitate the Highway 36/120 interchange. Mr. Duddeck stated the plat was received by Ramsey County on December 31, 2019.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated the 2020 Street and Utility Project Feasibility Study was reviewed and accepted. He added stormwater mitigation is a high priority throughout the project area.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated the City Council voted to renew annual membership with the Ramsey Washington Suburban Cable Commission. He added the City's representative on the Commission has many years of expertise and can help make positive changes.

Mr. Duddeck agreed, adding the Commission's technology capabilities need to be reviewed and updated, as it is not sustainable in its current format.

City Council Member Sonnek stated a resident made a comment earlier in the meeting about the procedure for making public comments at Planning Commission meetings. He added the Commission should consider ways to be clearer that the Public Comments section is reserved for comments related to items that are not on the meeting agenda.

Commissioner Gelbmann agreed, adding it is an issue of fairness, as the Public Comment portion would otherwise become an informal public hearing, which is not equitable for all sides of the issue. City Council Liaison Sonnek agreed, adding it is a formal process.

Commissioner Worm stated the property north of 7th Street may come forward for development, if a precedent is set at the 7th Street project. Chair Barton confirmed this, adding property owners can do whatever they want with their property.

Commissioner Worm stated the Commission receives too much paper. Commissioner Gelbmann agreed, adding guidelines should be considered as some documents do not need to be reviewed by the Commission.

Ms. Perdu stated it is difficult for City Staff sends the entire packet as it is difficult to determine which documents to omit.

Mr. Duddeck stated the Commission could receive documents electronically, which would reduce printing and paper costs.

Ms. Perdu stated the volume of the paper packet can be reviewed by City Staff.

Mr. Duddeck stated the City Council uses SharePoint, a web-based electronic document sharing platform. He added a workshop could be scheduled to provide information for the Commissioners on using SharePoint to reviewing electronic documents.

Mr. Duddeck stated developers are required to submit all documents electronically to minimize the amount of paper that is used for plan reviews by City Staff.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated he visited the new pawn shop recently, which is now open for business.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, motion to adjourn by Commissioner Gelbmann, and seconded by Commissioner Bathurst, with all present voting aye (5-0). Motion carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Members, please notify any planned absences to: Olivia Boerschinger
Planning Commission Secretary
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