CITY OF NORTH ST. PAUL
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, February 27, 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
Patrick Blees, Commissioner
Rick Gelbmann, Commissioner EXCUSED
Trisha Hamm, Commission Vice Chair
John Monge, Commissioner
Tom Sonnek, Commission City Council Liaison
Michael Stahlmann, Commissioner EXCUSED
Allan Worm, Commissioner

STAFF
Erin Perdu, City Planner
Olivia Boerschinger, Planning Secretary

III. ADOPT AGENDA

Motion to adopt agenda by Commissioner Hamm, and seconded by Commissioner Blees, with all present voting aye (5-0). Motion carried to adopt the February 27, 2020 Agenda.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of the February 6, 2020 regular meeting minutes

Commissioner Worm requested the following corrections to the February 6, 2020 minutes:

-Page 2, 1st paragraph, last line, delete "across from the Ecology Center"

-Page 5, 3rd paragraph, delete last sentence: "He noted there is an Ecology Center across the street."

Chair Barton stated the sentence on Page 5, 3rd paragraph, reflects what was said by the developer. Planning Secretary Olivia Boerschinger stated the sentence could be changed to read, "He noted there is an Ecology Center nearby." Commissioner Worm agreed.

Chair Barton stated Page 7, 1st paragraph, states: "Commissioner Worm stated City Code requires a 30-foot setback. Ms. Perdu confirmed this, adding the narrowest lot is 27 feet, and they range up to 38 feet." Chair Barton asked whether this is correct. Ms. Perdu stated her comment was to clarify that a 30-foot setback is required for the lot width measurement.

Motion to approve Minutes by Commissioner Worm, and seconded by Commissioner Monge, with all present voting aye (5-0). Motion carried to approve the February 6, 2020 regular meeting minutes as amended.

V. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Rob Aurelius, 2271 7th Street N, stated the application for the public storage facility, "applications must be submitted 30 days before the public hearing." He added the application is dated January 31, 2020, so has not been 30 days. He noted the City can have up to 60 days to review the application by State statute.

Mr. Aurelius stated the facility will be climate-controlled, but he questioned whether it is environmentally responsible to provide a place for storage of old appliances and household items. He added the proposed apartments to the south are not a good fit for this noisy, dusty area, and offices that would provide jobs might be better suited to the industrial area. He noted this type of structure, and adjacent parcels, would be prime candidates for solar and geothermal energy solutions, and could create a showpiece of forward-thinking ecological solutions. He stressed the importance of taking the time to consider green-energy readiness and not rush into this development.

VI. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Site Plan Review, Variance for Self-Storage Facility at 2300 McKnight Road N

City Planner Erin Perdu reviewed a site plan and variance request for a 3-story storage facility on an approximately 2-acre parcel in the recently approved Anchor Commons plat, at the southeast corner of Highway 36 and McKnight Road with frontage on 3rd Street and Anchor Drive. The property is zoned Corridor Mixed Use (MU-3).

Ms. Perdu stated the variance request relates to a requirement in City Ordinance that no greater than 60% of the facility can be used for storage. In this case, 73% of the facility will be used for storage, with the remaining area for common spaces and utilities.

Ms. Perdu stated the proposed site plan meets requirements for parking stalls; there is no loading dock proposed, but a location where people can pull up their vehicles to load and unload items.

Ms. Perdu stated City Staff is recommending modifications to the site plan with regard to landscape requirements. The developer has provided sufficient landscaped areas on the site, with the addition of 36 trees. City Code requires 101 trees be planted due to the multi-story nature of

the building. City Staff anticipates that it would be difficult to plant 101 trees on this site, but there may be some room for improvement and additional trees. A condition of approval is recommended that the developer should come as close to the required 101 trees as possible.

Ms. Perdu stated the northwest corner of the site is reserved for stormwater management. She added landscaped areas are proposed between the front property line and parking area to provide a buffer.

Ms. Perdu stated, with regard to parking, 25 stalls are required, and 11 stalls are proposed. No variance is being requested as the Ordinance provides the opportunity to reduce parking based on evidence of low parking demand. The applicant has provided estimates for required parking.

Ms. Perdu stated a variety of external materials are proposed that meet architectural standards, including metal veneer, brick and glass. The front of the facility facing Anchor Drive would have articulation and material changes, with 2nd and 3rd story glass panels.

Ms. Perdu stated the Engineer's Report included a few conditions. All utilities on the site are being installed by the City.

Ms. Perdu stated City Staff recommends approval of the requested variance based on the fact that Ordinance creates a practical difficulty for use of the property as a self-storage facility, which is a permitted use.

Ms. Perdu stated City Staff recommends conditional approval of the site plan, with additional details to be provided in the engineering and fire code reviews, as well as landscaping to be moved out of utility easements, signage, trees, minimum parking stall depth, and a lighting plan.

City Council Liaison Sonnek requested clarification regarding the 60% storage space requirement.

Chair Barton stated the 60% limit is appropriate in a facility where warehousing is not the primary use. She added, in this case, warehousing is the primary use. She noted there is a discrepancy in the Code, as "mini-storage" is not included in the definition as an allowed use.

Commissioner Worm asked what the setback is from 3rd Street, and whether there will be room for trees. Ms. Perdu stated the front setback requirement is 25 feet, and there is no rear setback requirement. She confirmed there are trees shown on the site plan along 3rd Street frontage.

Commissioner Blees asked where additional trees can be placed, if landscaping is not allowed in the easement. Ms. Perdu agreed that is an issue.

Max French, Adams French Properties, 7799 River Edge Lane, Indianapolis, IN, stated he is the Development Manager for this project. He added their company has been developing self-storage facilities as their primary focus for 20 years, and they are excited about this opportunity.

He noted the company has three other properties in the Twin Cities – Bloomington, Roseville and Crystal – which are concrete examples of the quality facilities they build.

Mr. French introduced other members of the development team: Architect Tim Mahagan and Engineer Rob Latta.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated a resident spoke during the Public Open Forum about potential opportunities for green energy. He asked whether the development company has given these issues any consideration in the buildings that they develop.

Mr. French stated LED light bulbs are used throughout the facility in light fixtures that are set on motion sensors. He added these are large facilities and energy efficiency measures are considered for implementation and cost effectiveness. He noted they have not installed solar panels in the past but would be interested in a shared opportunity with the City.

Commissioner Monge asked whether the building will be climate-controlled throughout the year. He asked whether individual storage units can be set at their own temperature. Mr. French stated every unit is climate-controlled within a certain range, including humidity control, and units are open at the top, with security bars, to increase ventilation and keep temperatures consistent.

Chair Barton asked about access to the building and what hours it will be open.

Mr. French stated the facility's hours will be 7:00 a.m. -10:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and 9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. on Sundays. He added customers will enter the building through climate-controlled drive-through spaces with separate gate codes that can accommodate up to four cars at a time. He noted there will be another loading bay to the north that is a pull in, pull out, that leads to an elevator bay.

Mr. French stated there will be managers on site during weekday hours, but the facility will not be staffed on Sundays, although emergency access will be available 24 hours a day.

Chair Barton asked whether any of the units will be accessible from the building's exterior. Mr. French confirmed there will be 8 drive-up units with outdoor accessibility. He added these units will be accessible at all times.

Chair Barton asked whether there will be auctions at the storage facility. Mr. Barton stated the third-party manager, Extra Space Storage, organizes auctions, but they are only done online. He added Adams French Properties has partnered with Extra Space Storage for over 12 years to manage their properties.

Chair Barton stated she noticed the Roseville facility had an auction on site. Mr. French stated there are two self-storage facilities in Roseville, and their Roseville location just opened. He added that auction would not have taken place at their Roseville location.

Commissioner Monge asked whether there will be a fence on the property. He asked whether there will be exterior video surveillance of the facility. Mr. French stated there will not be an exterior fence. He confirmed there will be exterior video surveillance.

Commissioner Worm asked about on-site staffing. Mr. French stated there will be two employees on site during business hours. He added the business office will be on the southwest corner of the facility.

Chair Barton opened the public hearing at 6:51 p.m.

Rob Aurelius stated there was discussion regarding the trees that will not fit on the property. He added the developer might consider donating the trees to the City. He noted the west façade of the building could be dressed up a little bit, maybe with another window.

Rob Latta, consulting civil engineer, 5320 Columbus Avenue, Minneapolis, stated the landscape architect has reviewed the landscape plan with regard to the insufficient number of trees, and was able to double the number of trees to approximately 63 trees, to fill up the site so that it almost meets the landscape requirement. He noted the trees were removed from the easement area.

Chair Barton closed the public hearing at 6:53 p.m.

Commissioner Blees asked whether a solution is proposed to satisfy the sidewalk accessibility requirement in the engineer's comments. Mr. Latta stated the sidewalk access would occur right outside the front door, with an ADA-accessible ramp and opposite curb to the sidewalk, which will connect to Anchor Drive.

Chair Barton stated she appreciates the detailed and thorough information provided in the applicant's proposal, which made it easier to review.

Commissioner Monge asked if there is a time frame for construction. Mr. French stated the building will take approximately 10-12 months to construct.

Motion by Commissioner Blees, and seconded by Commissioner Monge, with all present voting aye (5-0). Motion carried to recommend City Council approval of the requested variance for a self-storage facility at 2300 McKnight Road N. to allow for 73% of the building to be used for the purpose of self-storage.

Motion by Commissioner Hamm, and seconded by Commissioner Worm, with all present voting aye (5-0). Motion carried to recommend City Council approval of the proposed site plan for a self-storage facility at 2300 McKnight Road N. with conditions listed in the staff report.

Chair Barton stated this application will be reviewed by the City Council at their March 3, 2020 meeting.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

-None.

VIII. COMMISSION BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

-None.

IX. REPORTS FROM STAFF

Ms. Perdu stated she is unable to attend the March 3, 2020 City Council meeting, but Ryan Krzos will be available at the meeting to present a review of the apartment site plan for Anchor View Apartments.

Ms. Perdu stated City Staff has been working on amendments to the Zoning Code which will be available for review by the Planning Commission at their April 2020 meeting.

X. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

a. Update from City Council Liaison

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated, at the February 18, 2020 regular meeting, the City Council approved the R-2 zoning amendment and preliminary plat for the 7th Street townhome development.

Commissioner Worm asked how the solar panels at Maplewood City Hall are working out, and whether the City's turbine is working.

City Council Liaison Sonnek stated the turbine is only able to provide power to approximately 7 homes and is symbolic of alternative energy sources.

Mr. Duddeck stated the solar panels at Maplewood City Hall were removed when the building was reroofed, and the cost of replacing them was prohibitive. He added they have ground-level solar panels. He added City Staff can look into options for green energy ideas for new development.

Mr. Duddeck stated the wind turbine is not in use as its blades are being refurbished and re-installed. He added the expectation is that it will be functional by March 15, 2020.

Commissioner Hamm stated she is unable to attend the Planning Commission's March 5, 2020 meeting due to a work commitment.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, motion to adjourn by Commissioner Worm, and seconded by Commissioner Hamm, with all present voting aye (5-0). Motion carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting is Thursday, March 5, 2020 at 6:15 p.m.

Members, please notify any planned absences to:

Olivia Boerschinger
Planning Commission Secretary
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