

**CITY OF NORTH ST. PAUL
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 2021
6:30 P.M.**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Barton called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was conducted via Zoom.

II. ROLL CALL

COMMISSION

Elaine Barton, Commission Chair
Patrick Blee, Commissioner
Erik Brenna, Commissioner
Rick Gelbmann, Commissioner
John Monge, Commission Vice Chair
Lisa Wong, Commission City Council Liaison
Andrew Wise, Commissioner
Allan Worm, Commissioner

STAFF

Eric Zweber, Planning Consultant
Lisa Ritchie, Planning Secretary

III. ADOPT AGENDA

Motion to adopt agenda by Commissioner Gelbmann, and seconded by Commissioner Worm, with all present voting aye (6-0). Motion carried to adopt the March 4, 2021 Agenda.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

-None.

V. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

John Schmahl, 2750 Chisholm Avenue, stated he saw that the Shoreland area would be discussed at this meeting. He added a Code update 5 years ago adopted new regulations from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR), including an amendment to the setback from lakeshore. He noted the 5 Casey Lake waterfront property owners were not notified of these changes.

Mr. Schmahl stated he would like to know what changes are proposed to be made so he will know what limitations will be placed on his property. He added it should not be too onerous to notify 5 people.

Chair Barton stated property owners on Casey Lake will be notified when there is a public hearing.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated notice should also be sent to the next tier of residents near the lake.

VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS

-None.

VII. COMMISSION BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

-None.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

a. 2020-2021 Zoning Code Update Discussion

City Planning Consultant Eric Zweber reviewed amendments to the Zoning Code that have been discussed by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Zweber stated, with regard to the Shoreland Ordinance, a change in lot width in any zoning district could have an impact on the Shoreland district, as it would affect everyone within 1,000 of the City's two lakes. He added the narrowing of lot widths throughout the City could be removed, or lot width requirements implemented within the Shoreland Ordinance. He noted, if approved, this would have no effect on R-1 and R-2 zoned properties within the shoreland district, as the current minimum lot width is 60 feet, and no new restrictions would be imposed.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated there would be a wider lot requirement of 7 feet for riparian lots. Mr. Zweber confirmed this.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated, for riparian lots, the R-1 district has 60-foot lot widths for a duplex or 2-family property, which would be a significant change. Mr. Zweber agreed.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated development in the Shoreland overlay district is not desirable as it can cause degradation. He added lot widths are currently at 60 feet, which helps to maintain the quality of the lake, which would be compromised if lot splits of 50 feet width were to be allowed.

Chair Barton stated she would support lot widths of 60 feet for both riparian and non-riparian lots.

Commissioner Worm requested clarification on page 9 which states "50-foot lots for single family homes" in the single-family residential district. He added this should be changed to 60 feet wide, or 7,920 square feet. Mr. Zweber agreed.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated a lot would have to be 160 feet deep to meet the square footage. Commissioner Worm agreed.

Mr. Zweber stated he recommends removing the 2 columns related to riparian and non-riparian properties and leave the shoreland lot area and lot width for any parcel. The Commissioners agreed.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated the recreational and natural environment tables are the same and could be condensed. He asked whether there needs to be a distinction between the two tables.

Chair Barton stated they are different in terms of the geography around them. She added she is unsure whether there is a need to regulate them differently.

Commissioner Gelbmann asked whether lot width will be changed to 50 feet everywhere but kept at 60 feet in the shoreland overlay. He added a shoreland overlay table with lot and width requirements would be necessary.

Mr. Zweber stated the use table indicates that townhomes are allowed in the MU-1 district, but they may not be appropriate elsewhere. He added the downtown overlay district that does not include all MU-1 so this amended language would prohibit townhomes in the overlay district.

Mr. Zweber stated he recommends removing the riparian columns and simply use shoreland lot area and lot width. The new R-1 lot area would be the minimum for R-1 zoned properties, and the more restrictive district would apply. For duplexes, the R-1 standard would be less than 11,934 square feet.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated it might be worthwhile to change the table to correspond with districts. Mr. Zweber stated he would need to look at all zoning districts in the shoreland district. He added there would be more impervious surface with larger lots.

Chair Barton stated the Zoning Map indicates that the only districts with properties in the Shoreland overlay are R-1 and a few in MU-2.

Mr. Zweber stated both triplex and quad houses fall under the definition of “townhouse”. He added “duplex” could be changed to 2-family, and triplex and quad combined into “townhouse”.

Mr. Zweber asked whether there is consensus about eliminating townhomes in the overlay district. The Planning Commission agreed.

Mr. Zweber stated, with regard to the Use Table, schools are conditional in MU-1, 2 and 3. There are no existing funeral homes in the R-3 district, so they can be eliminated from residential districts. There are additional standards for the PUD, and he has added them to the supplemental regulation section. Surface parking was not listed as an accessory use in the MU districts, so they have been added as a permitted use.

Mr. Zweber stated the main point is that the Shoreland Ordinance may apply and is more restrictive.

Mr. Zweber stated Chair Barton emailed him some good suggestions that he has incorporated into the red-lined document.

Chair Barton stated the definition of “front yard” is essentially the setback area only and does not include the additional portion of the area between the house and lot line. She added it makes more sense to define the yard based upon a measurement from the lot line to the nearest point of the principal structure.

Chair Barton stated the setback definition should reflect subsequent definitions for other setbacks. The definition of setback area is the same as the definition of “yard”, which is defined by distance from the appropriate lot line and cannot have a structure in it. The definition of yard was reduced to open space on a lot inclusive of a setback area.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated some homes on corner lots are set diagonally, so they face the corner. Mr. Zweber stated the line would be from the nearest point of the structure.

Chair Barton stated there may be some areas where the term “required yard” is used, and that should be defined.

Mr. Zweber agreed to provide Chair Barton’s proposed amendments to the Commissioners via email. He added the remaining definitions were reviewed by the Commission at their last meeting.

Mr. Zweber reviewed amendments to definitions based on the Commission’s discussion at their last meeting.

Banks and financial institutions – include “currency exchange” which is the definition in State statute for “pay day loan businesses”.

Dwelling cottage – a definition was added based on the Ordinance purpose statement.

Corner lot lines – three potential definitions: shortest street frontage; primary entrance of principal structure; or, if equal size, to be determined by the zoning administrator.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated this would not cover flag lots. Mr. Zweber stated flag lots are covered in the subdivision Ordinance, which should be reviewed at a later date.

Mr. Zweber stated, under “Coffee Shop”, the definition did not address drive-through facilities. He added he did not change this as it is an accessory use, and any business can have one.

Commissioner Gelbmann asked whether “natural environment lake” and “recreational development lake” should be defined. Mr. Zweber stated there is no separate definition.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated, on page 26 of Definitions, “natural lake” is defined. He asked if this should reference State statute, along with “recreational development lake”. Mr. Zweber agreed to look into it, as he is unsure whether those definitions are in statute.

City Council Liaison Wong stated, under “Farmer’s Market”, the reference to “vegetables and produce” is unclear as they are both the same thing. Mr. Zweber agreed, adding “produce” should be all encompassing.

Chair Barton stated it would be good to reference the agricultural aspect of the items that can be sold. Mr. Zweber agreed to look into it.

Mr. Zweber stated, under “Retail Sales”, he added “use may include accessory services”.

Mr. Zweber stated, under “Schools”, he amended it to read “pre-kindergarten”.

Chair Barton asked whether the front yard setback should be referenced in the lot line definition. She added only the side yard setback is referenced. Mr. Zweber agreed, adding he would recommend just “setback”.

Chair Barton stated, under the definition of “Standard”, the preferred or required level of quantity, quality or value should be included. The Commission agreed.

Chair Barton stated, with regard to traffic sight distance, the landscaping requirement is 2.5-10 feet above curb level, or 7 feet above the grade level of the street. She asked whether these two should match up. Mr. Zweber stated he will consult with the traffic engineers and potentially change it to 10 feet.

Chair Barton requested the following change: under “Variance”, the addition of “as defined in State statute”. She added State statutes dictates practical difficulty and should be referenced.

Mr. Zweber stated communities may determine variance criteria that are more restrictive than State statute and adding “State statute” would contradict variance standards if they are more restrictive.

Chair Barton stated variance standards are not, and will probably never be, more restrictive.

Commissioner Blees stated they might be in the future. He added, the way they are written now, there is flexibility. He added, if State statute is referenced, there will be no flexibility in the future.

Chair Barton stated “attached” and “detached” accessory dwellings could be combined, as they seem to be intermixed.

City Council Liaison Wong asked why 2-family dwellings in the R-1 district are not allowed to have an accessory dwelling, but they are permitted for 2-family dwellings in the R-2 district. Mr. Zweber stated accessory dwelling units (ADU) are permitted in the R-2 and R-3 districts. He added this is a fundamental difference between the zoning districts, related to density.

Chair Barton stated density is the number of dwelling units per acre, so the R-1 district has the lowest maximum density. She added multiple family dwellings are already allowed in R-2 and R-3 zoning districts, so it is more acceptable to increase density.

Chair Barton requested the following correction – under “Gross Vehicle Weight” in the Parking Ordinance, replace “are” with “is”, as “trailer” is singular.

Commissioner Gelbmann requested, in “Underground Bonus Parking”, that a separate paragraph be created after first sentence.

Commissioner Blees stated that should be a sub-topic, because they are related. Mr. Zweber agreed.

Mr. Zweber stated Chair Barton had indicated that there should be specific clarification regarding where vehicles can be parked and how many parking spaces are allowed.

Chair Barton stated the Planning Commission should address non-residential parking standards, although that is a big issue to tackle and does not need to be done right now.

Chair Barton asked whether the amended document will be formatted properly with indentations and alignment. Mr. Zweber confirmed this.

Commissioner Blees requested the following correction: on page 73. Item C, there should be a parenthesis after the letter C. Mr. Zweber agreed.

Chair Barton requested the following correction: “PUD Processes” should be plural. Mr. Zweber agreed.

Chair Barton asked whether public hearing notice and neighborhood meeting notice should both be 350 feet.

The Commission agreed that both public hearing notification and notice of neighborhood meetings should be sent to residents within 350 feet of the subject property.

Commissioner Blees requested the following correction: “Registered Surveys” on page 81 should read “200 feet”. Mr. Zweber agreed.

Commissioner Gelbmann asked, with regard to “Townhomes”, whether the open space requirement of 25% applies to the entire lot area. He added that should be clarified. Mr. Zweber confirmed this and agreed to make the change.

Chair Barton requested the following change: in the table for “Mixed Uses” on page 91, add “not in the D-1 Overlay District.

Chair Barton asked whether there are other public hearings scheduled for the Planning Commission’s April 1, 2021 meeting. Mr. Zweber stated there are two public hearings related to School District planning applications.

Chair Barton stated she would prefer not to have too many public hearings that could become lengthy. Mr. Zweber agreed to schedule the public hearings and make a decision after reviewing the School District applications.

Mr. Zweber stated he will work with Ms. Ritchie to prepare for the public hearing at the Planning Commission's April 1, 2021 meeting.

IX. REPORTS FROM STAFF

Mr. Zweber stated two planning applications are scheduled for review at the Planning Commission's April 1, 2021 meeting, submitted by the School District. He added the Conditional Use Permit applications relate to proposed construction projects at North High School and Cowern Elementary School. He noted the project at North High School will include an addition at the northwest corner and along the west side of the building, which is near residential properties.

Mr. Zweber stated proposed changes at Cowern Elementary are not as extensive and will not add usable classroom space or require a need for increased parking.

Commissioner Gelbmann stated recent construction at Richardson School resulted in an excess of on-street parking.

Mr. Zweber stated the proposed construction at Cowern Elementary School does not include additional parking. He added parking will be affected by the proposed plans at North High School.

X. REPORTS FROM COUNCIL LIAISON

City Council Liaison Wong stated, at its last meeting, the City Council voted unanimously to approve the PUD text amendment as recommended by the Planning Commission. She thanked the Commissioners for their hard work.

XI. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Wise asked for an update on City email addresses for the Commissioners.

Mr. Zweber stated he does not have an update, but he knows City Staff are working on it. He agreed to check with the City Manager.

Commissioner Wise asked whether all Commissioners emails will be added to the meeting packets or on the agendas, so Commissioners will be able to contact each other. He noted the email addresses will be public knowledge.

Barton they all have the same format, and there will be no harm in sharing that as it will be public information.

Ms. Ritchie stated City Staff is switching to a new collaborative online platform, CiviClerk, which may affect the email server.

Commissioner Worm stated he may not be able to attend the March 18, 2021 meeting.

Chair Barton asked whether City Staff could start the Zoom meetings a little early to ensure that all Commissioners are able to log in.

Ms. Ritchie agreed to start the meeting at 6:20 p.m. going forward.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, motion to adjourn by Commissioner Worm, and seconded by Commissioner Monge, with all present voting aye (6-0). Motion carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 p.m.

A Planning Commission/EDA Joint Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Members, please notify any planned absences to: Lisa Ritchie
Planning Commission Secretary
lisa.ritchie@northstpaul.org
651-747-2400