

WEST ST. PAUL PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

The regular meeting of the West St. Paul Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Kavanaugh on Tuesday June 18, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Center, 1616 Humboldt Avenue, West St. Paul, Minnesota, 55118.

ROLL CALL Chair Kavanaugh and Commissioners McPhillips, Fransmeier, Strohmeier, Leuer, and Stevens.

Absent: Commissioner Green

Also Present: Assistant Community Development Director Boike, Community Development Coordinator Melissa Sonnek, and City Council Liaison John Justen

Adopt Minutes Minutes from the May 21, 2019 Planning Commission regular meeting and work session were adopted with no changes.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

[PC CASE 19-06 – Preliminary/Final Plat Review for Two Parcels Located at the Southeast Corner of Delaware Ave. and Marie Ave., Including the Vacant Wooded Parcel and 1846 Delaware Ave. – Josh Kirchert](#)

Community Development Coordinator Sonnek led the staff presentation of the preliminary and final plat application to subdivide and plat five new lots for the construction of four new single family homes in addition to the existing single family home located on the eastern most portion of the site.

The existing single family home on site is currently being accessed off of Delaware Ave. and the initial proposal was to create four new driveways off of the existing east-west drive; however, after the application was reviewed by Dakota County's Plat Commission, the applicant decided to relocate the access to Marie Ave. as was requested by Dakota County.

All parcels surrounding the site are zoned as single family residential and are being used as such, with the exception of Henry Sibley High School to the southwest of the site.

Community Development Coordinator Sonnek explained how the proposed plat aligned with the newly updated comprehensive plan, stating that the comprehensive plan calls for a density of three to six units per acre in the R1 zoning district. Comm. Dev. Coordinator Sonnek stated that while the applicant's proposal only calls for 1.6 units per acre, City Staff is still comfortable recommending approval as not all applications will fall within the three to six units per acre density range. This is especially true when considering that the required minimum lot size depends on what area of the city you are located in. Lots on the northern portion of town are much smaller and therefore have a minimum lot size of 7,000 square feet, compared to the lots on the southern side of town that have a minimum size of 15,000 square feet.

Comm. Dev. Coordinator Sonnek stated that the proposed subdivision meets all of the requirements for lot size, setbacks, and width. Similarly, the proposed subdivision will have no issue meeting the

minimum landscape requirement as the site is currently heavily wooded with large, mature trees. However, after multiple neighboring property owners expressing concern over the increased amount of traffic, City Staff is requiring as a condition of approval that the applicant provide additional landscaping between the east-west driveway and the single family homes to the south.

The plat application was also reviewed by the Dakota County Plat Commission since the site abuts Delaware Ave., which is a county road. As a part of their review, the Plat Commission strongly encouraged that the access to the site be removed from Delaware Ave. and placed onto Marie Ave. since it is a lower volume road and the location of the existing driveway access could be restricted by a possible future roundabout at the intersection of Delaware and Marie.

Comm. Dev. Coordinator Sonnek explained that typically City Staff reviews storm water runoff and drainage of the site; however, since the submitted plans did not include details on this City Staff is requiring as a condition of approval that the applicant include that information in the application for the final plat. Staff is also requiring as a condition of approval that the applicant complete all items outlined in the Engineering memo.

South Metro Fire also reviewed the plat application and required that a driveway turnaround be provided for fire vehicles to use when on site.

At the conclusion of her presentation, Comm. Dev. Coordinator Sonnek stated that City Staff is only recommending approval of the preliminary plat subject to the listed conditions, but not the final plat since additional information was needed. Comm. Dev. Coordinator Sonnek also stated that the applicant may alter the location of the access due to Staff's requirements for additional landscaping and the firetruck turn around.

Asst. Director Boike then came forward and explained the recent changes proposed by the applicant since the publication of the staff memo. Asst. Director Boike provided a map detailing the new access proposed by the applicant. Then explaining that the firetruck turn around might not have been feasible with the previous proposal; therefore, the applicant is now considering creating individual driveways off Marie Ave. By doing so, the house would be re-oriented to have the garages to the north and no longer create additional traffic that would disrupt the properties to the south. As such, Asst. Director Boike stated that he does not feel that the original conditions for additional screening and the fire turnaround are needed. Asst. Director Boike explained that this idea has been preliminarily approved by the City's Public Works Director and the Fire Marshal.

Chair Kavanaugh then asked what the next steps are for this application. Asst. Director Boike explained that the applicant would have to re-submit an application for the final plat, and once submitted and reviewed by Staff the item would come back to the Planning Commission for review.

Commissioner Fransmeier asked if Dakota County had established a date for the implementation of the roundabout. Comm. Dev. Coordinator Sonnek explained that Dakota County has a review of the intersection in the five year improvement plan; however, no formal date has been set. Commission Fransmeier asked for more information about the fire apparatus. Asst. Director Boike explained that if a driveway serves more than two buildings, the fire department needs a wider road and a place to turn around. The turnaround could be a cul-de-sac or a T, where the truck can drive in, then back up, and turn around. Asst. Director Boike continued by stating that the cost of implementing the turn around, correcting the grading, and maintaining the turnaround was an additional complication that caused the applicant to re-think the proposed access. Commissioner Fransmeier then asked Staff to confirm that

with the potential individual driveways, the turnaround would not be required. Asst. Director Boike confirmed.

Commissioner Leuer asked who would be responsible for maintaining the fence and the driveway that would run east to west along the five properties. Asst. Director Boike stated that it would be up to the individual property owners to maintain their portion of the fence and driveway.

Commissioner Fransmeier asked about the driveways were made to be individual to each home, and if the lots and setbacks would still comply with the code requirements. Asst. Director Boike said that based on the size of the lots, the building setbacks should not be an issue. Commissioner Stevens asked if the existing east-west driveway would be removed if the applicant decided to do the individual driveways. Asst. Director Boike stated that the specifics on that would have to be worked out between the applicant and the Dakota County Plat Commission before submitting the plans for the final plat.

Chair Kavanaugh, seeing no questions from the commission, invited the applicant to come forward and speak about the application. Blaine Kirchert came forward and stated that he represents the applicants throughout the process. Mr. Kirchert summarized the multiple changes of the proposed access to the site, and after the most recent discussion with City Staff, the plan was to construct four new individual driveways off Marie Ave and keep the original driveway off Delaware Ave. for the original house on site.

Commissioner Fransmeier asked if the owner of the existing home would be interested in creating a new driveway off Marie. Mr. Kirchert stated that it would cost the property owner \$100,000 to construct a new driveway, and that it would be unfair to ask the homeowner to construct a new drive since the home has been using the existing driveway for so long. Commissioner Stevens added that a new driveway might be beneficial because otherwise the homeowners would have to maintain a very long driveway. Mr. Kirchert stated that the previous homeowners maintained that driveway for a very long time, and that the new owners of the property were made aware of the maintenance prior to purchasing the home and are okay with continuing to maintain it. Chair Kavanaugh asked if the cost of the driveways off Marie were factored into the development of the lots. Mr. Kirchert explained that he had only just started the conversation about that cost, and did not presently know. Chair Kavanaugh then asked about possibly creating one shared driveway for two houses to reduce the number of curb cuts off Marie. Mr. Kirchert stated that the shared driveways would hurt the property values and be a detriment to the neighborhood based on the high caliber of the homes that are expected to be built. Chair Kavanaugh asked about the number of driveways across the road and if this proposal would mirror that. Asst. Director Boike stated that the proposal would mirror the existing driveways across Marie Ave.

Chair Kavanaugh, seeing no questions from the commission, opened the public hearing at 7:24pm, and asked that anyone from the public wishing to speak on the item to come forward. Dave Wright from 1862 Heather Ct. came up to speak. Mr. Wright stated that a couple of the surrounding property owners to the south of the subject site were in attendance at the meeting as well as one neighbor that was unable to attend the meeting but did write an email to City Staff expressing their concerns about the project. Mr. Wright stated that there seems to be a lot of new information and a lot of things that are unknown at this time.

Mr. Wright asked Asst. Director Boike if the existing home would get a north-south driveway if Dakota County were to deny the use of the existing east-west access. Asst. Director Boike stated that is unknown at this time, legally Staff is unsure if Dakota County can require an existing access be

removed if there is no additional traffic proposing to utilize the drive. Mr. Wright stated that he has no issue with the proposed plat itself; however, he is concerned about headlights shining into his home if the existing property is eventually forced to construct a new north-south access. Mr. Wright continued by saying the new homes would not be a concern because the garages would be located on the north side and the car headlights would not shine into the homes that way. However, since the existing home's garage is on the south side of the home that would cause the headlights to shine into his home and therefore, some additional screening would be necessary. Mr. Wright stated he would like to discuss this with the developer.

Mr. Wright then asked Asst. Director Boike to confirm that the existing east-west driveway would have to be removed if Dakota County did not allow access off Delaware Ave. Asst. Director Boike confirmed this would be the case.

Mr. Wright then stated that he would like the developer to meet with the surrounding property owners to discuss items such as screening.

Mr. Wright then asked if the existing utilities could be buried during the construction of this project since Xcel Energy currently has a hard time accessing the lines due to the number of trees. Asst. Director Boike stated that he was not sure if this would be a reasonable condition of approval.

Commissioner Fransmeier asked about the grading of the site. Asst. Director Boike stated that generally, the grade slopes downward as you move westward across the site.

Chair Kavanaugh, seeing no other individuals from the public wishing to speak on the item, closed the public hearing at 7:33pm, and brought the item back to the Commission for further discussion. Commissioner McPhillips stated that a new drawing was needed. Commissioners Stevens and Fransmeier agreed.

Commissioner Leuer prompted the question if the Commission was comfortable approving the preliminary plat and then having the final plat come back with all of the additional needed information. Asst. Director Boike stated that the recommendation from City Staff was to approve the preliminary plat with the listed conditions and then gather the needed information for the final plat. Commissioner Fransmeier then asked if it would be reasonable to better understand the County's position on the new driveway proposal prior to the final plat. Asst. Director Boike confirmed that City Staff would be in contact with the county and continue to discuss the access options. Commissioner Leuer asked if there was a benefit to approving the preliminary plat first, as opposed to approving the preliminary and final together at the same time. Asst. Director Boike stated that for larger subdivisions, it is very common to do the approvals separately. Historically, West St. Paul has done the approvals together because more commonly, the application is for one piece of land with driveways and utilities already existing.

Commissioner Fransmeier asked if the Commission could require that the developer speak with the property owners as mentioned by Mr. Wright. Asst. Director Boike stated that he was unsure if they could require it, but the Commission could suggest that the developer talk with the surrounding property owners. Mr. Kirchert came up to speak and stated that until very recently, he did not have enough information to discuss with the neighbors, but also that this subdivision isn't intended to be a development, but rather each lot is being sold off individually. Mr. Kirchert ended by stating that he would be willing to discuss with the neighbors as soon as he has a little bit more information.

Chair Kavanaugh asked Asst. Director Boike to confirm that City Staff added a new condition to the memo requiring additional information on access for the final plat. Asst. Director Boike confirmed. Asst. Director Boike also added that he believed that the Commission could remove the second condition from the list pertaining to landscaping because the landscaping could be dependent on the access, which is not yet determined. The condition could be removed from the preliminary plat, but added to the final plat if necessary. Chair Kavanaugh asked if the final plat would include a new engineering memo with information about the new access. Asst. Director Boike confirmed.

Commissioner McPhillips asked how many of the homes would be hooking up to the City's sanitary sewer system. Asst. Director Boike stated that all of the homes would be required to connect to the City's sanitary sewer system. Commissioner McPhillips then asked if it would be the same for storm water. Asst. Director Boike stated that that information has not yet been submitted, but will be required for the final plat.

Chair Kavanaugh mentioned that this project is a good thing to have in West St. Paul and it is good to see. Chair Kavanaugh continued that he is in favor of moving the project forward since the Planning Commission would get a second chance to review the plans.

Commissioner Leuer asked if the Commission wanted to include something in the approval about the electrical lines. Chair Kavanaugh asked Asst. Director Boike if that was something that is required by code. Asst. Director Boike stated that he was unsure if the Commission could require it; however, they could suggest or recommend that the applicant work with City Staff on the issue. Commissioner Leuer stated that he would like to add that request. Commissioner Stevens agreed. Chair Kavanaugh asked for clarification on if Commissioner Leuer wanted it on the preliminary or the final plat. Commissioner Leuer stated he would like to add the condition to the preliminary plat that the applicant review it with City Staff for the final plat.

Commissioner Fransmeier motioned to approve preliminary plat for the Bakewell Addition, based on the following conditions as outlined by City Staff. With the exception of condition number two, pertaining to additional screening as that is to be reconsidered based on the final layout of the plat, as well as the added conditions to discuss access with Dakota County and that City Staff is to review and advise the applicant on the utility layout.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stevens.

ON MOTION to APPROVE PC Case 19-06 – Preliminary/Final Plat Review for Two Parcels Located at the Southeast Corner of Delaware Ave. and Marie Ave., Including the Vacant Wooded Parcel and 1846 Delaware Ave. – Josh Kirchert by Commissioner Fransmeier with amendments, seconded by Commissioner Stevens. Motion approved 6-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Housing Plan Presentation

Asst. Director Boike gave a brief history of the plan while Comm. Dev. Coordinator Sonnek prepared the presentation. Asst. Director Boike stated that the Housing Plan has been in the works for three years. A good draft was started back in 2015; however, the 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update began and City Staff wanted to make sure that the Housing Plan aligned with the content of the comp plan. Therefore, City Staff went through the process of updating the comp plan, which has a chapter

specifically on housing. After establishing the majority of the comp plan, which is still pending approval, City Staff then began to work on making the final edits to the Housing Plan. After this was completed, City Staff presented the plan to City Council at an open work session. City Council approved of the plan and suggested it be reviewed by the Planning Commission before going to the City Council for formal review and adoption.

Commissioner Fransmeier asked for clarification on what City Staff is requesting from the Commission. Asst. Director Boike stated that Staff is looking for a recommendation from the Commission as well as feedback on the content. Particularly because the Planning Commission performed most of the reviews of the comp plan and Staff wanted feedback to see if the Commission found any conflicting information or general content.

Community Development Coordinator Sonnek led the Staff presentation on the Housing Plan with how important housing can be to a community. Comm. Dev. Coordinator Sonnek stated that not only is housing one of the biggest revenue sources, but it is also where our residents live their lives and have birthday parties or garage sales. Comm. Dev. Coordinator Sonnek then stated that historically, single family detached homes have been the majority of the housing stock since 1990; however, in order to retain the existing residents as well as attract new ones, it is important to open to change.

Comm. Dev. Coordinator Sonnek then stated that West St. Paul's housing stock is beginning to age, as 44 percent of the houses were built prior to 1960, and if the goal is to retain residents, that might mean retrofitting their existing home. Similarly, the multi-family housing in West St. Paul is aging, 1/3 of the multi-family units that are 10 or more units are nearly 50 years old. One advantage of an older housing stock is that it provides naturally occurring affordable housing, compared to the Twin Cities metro average, West St. Paul ranks at 89% affordable. On the opposite side, the downside of an aging housing stock is that it often times comes with differed maintenance and a lower market value. West St. Paul's median housing value is \$183,300.

Comm. Dev. Sonnek gave a history on the housing plan efforts; in the early stages in 2014, an intern conducted a visual survey of all the single family homes and ranked the homes on a scale of one to five based on twelve different factors. Then transitioning into what the City of West St. Paul does to address issues such as property maintenance and rehabilitation. The City has a Quality Housing Program that incorporates things like code enforcement, licensing of rental properties, and home improvement efforts. Comm. Dev. Coordinator Sonnek then provided some numbers on recent permits that demonstrate a clear motivation from the residents to reinvest; about 65 percent of the housing stock has been altered or improved in some way, shape, or form in the last ten years. The Housing Plan establishes needs, goals, and funding options to improve the housing stock.

Commissioner Stevens asked to what extent the residents were utilizing the programs available to them. Comm. Dev. Sonnek explained that unfortunately, not many residents are taking full advantage of the programs available. Commissioner Stevens stated that the City should maybe invest in a marketing effort to get the word out, as it is beneficial for the residents to know what resources are available to them. Additionally, Commissioner Fransmeier added that education and promotion is important. Asst. Director Boike expanded by stating that education and marketing is one of the first steps, especially since the City does not currently have funding set aside specifically for housing. So it is important to inform the residents of the other funding options available. Chair Kavanaugh asked if other cities provide funding for housing. Asst. Director Boike mentioned that some cities do have an HRA, however West St. Paul does not.

Chair Kavanaugh asked for a little more information about Code Enforcement, if the program is strictly complaint based. Asst. Director Boike stated that the program is primarily complaint based, however when the inspector goes out to investigate a complaint, they also look at the surrounding properties as well. Chair Kavanaugh asked if there has been a discussion to make the program more proactive and hire additional staff to perform a comprehensive sweep of the city. Comm. Dev. Coordinator Sonnek and Asst. Director Boike explained that the city had previously hired a seasonal employee, about ten years ago, to look at each property in the city and there was some negative feedback on that process.

Commissioner Fransmeier noted that some property maintenance issues could be self-correcting, specifically when someone wants to sell their home they will make the necessary improvements or repairs in order to sell, or the new buyer might re-invest and improve the property for himself or herself.

Commissioner McPhillips asked what the Commission could do at the meeting to further advance the plan. Chair Kavanaugh mentioned that due to the length of the report and the large amount of content, it might be beneficial to continue the review until the next meeting to allow the Commissioners additional time to read the report and send questions and comments to Staff.

Commissioner Fransmeier motioned to continue the discussion of the Housing Plan to the next Planning Commission meeting, seconded by Commissioner Stevens. Motion approved 6-0.

OLD BUSINESS

N/A

ADJOURNMENT

ON MOTION TO ADJOURN by Commissioner Fransmeier, seconded by Commissioner Stevens. Commissioners RESOLVED to ADJOURN the June 18, 2019 regular meeting of the Planning Commission at 8:16 PM. Motion approved 6-0.

Melissa Sonnek

Community Development Coordinator