

WEST ST. PAUL PLANNING COMMISSION

The regular meeting of the West St. Paul Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Samantha Green, on Tuesday, September 15, 2020 at 6:32 pm in the Municipal Center Council Chambers, 1616 Humboldt Avenue, West St. Paul, Minnesota 55118.

ROLL CALL: Samantha Green, Morgan Kavanaugh, Peter Strohmeier, Dan McPhillips, Lisa Stevens, Maria Franzmeier, Tori Elsmore

Also Present: Melissa Sonnek, City Planner; Sharon Hatfield, Administrative Specialist; Amanda Johnson, Attorney; John Justen, Council Liaison

Adopt Minutes: Minutes from the August 11, 2020 meeting were approved.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PC Case #20-10- Site Plan Review for the Expansion of an Existing Building at 1700 Marthaler Lane - Maureen Haggerty

Sonnek reviewed the site plan application for an expansion of the existing building at 1700 Marthaler Lane. The expansion would be just under 1,600 square feet on the eastern side of the building. The expansion would not increase or alter the intensity of the site but rather allow for year-round use. It is an outdoor dog training facility. Currently, with the unpredictable Minnesota weather, the facility cannot be used year-round. The property is located almost center in the Light Industrial District. The existing building plan and the proposed building plan meet and sometimes exceed setback requirements. Similarly, the parking setbacks requirements are being met or exceeded. The applicant is not requesting any changes in the existing use and no change requests are being made for the existing parking lot. The parking lot requirements were created in 2010; the existing eight stalls are all that would be required. However, the site's parking lot is not striped. City staff is recommending as a condition of approval that the applicant stripe the lot. Regarding the landscaping, the applicant is proposing to remove one tree. In order to comply with the 30 percent replacement rule, the applicant must plant at least one tree, 4 inches in diameter. City staff is comfortable with the number of buffer trees; the site has a number of mature trees whose caliper inches compensate for lower number of actual buffer trees. City staff has recommended that the applicant replace the shrubs in the front of the building because the existing shrubs are in poor condition. The Environmental Committee reviewed the site plan at their September 2, 2020 meeting. They agreed with City Staff regarding the replacement of the tree caliper inches and the replacement of the plantings in front of the building. The Committee would prefer that the annuals be pollinator-friendly and not treated with neonicotinoids. City Staff is recommending as a condition of approval that the applicant consider the additions put forth by the Environmental Committee as outlined in the memo dated September 8, 2020. The construction materials are expected to match the existing structure; they will be comprised of brick, glass and metal. They are code compliant. However, the proposed

north and south elevations will have segments that are longer than 60 feet. This triggers the measures for visual relief. Sonnek listed the measures. The applicant must have at least two of the measures to meet the requirement. Therefore, City Staff recommends as a condition of approval that the applicant incorporate at least two visual relief measures. The submitted plans do not include any details on lighting or signage. City Staff is recommending as a condition of approval that lighting levels not exceed zero foot candles and that signage meet the requirements of section 153 of the zoning code. Staff's recommendation to the Commission was approval of the site plan with the existing conditions that Sonnek previously listed. McPhillips asked about the lighting plans; he remarked that if the property were fully lit, the applicant could use the whole property. Sonnek said there were no lighting plans; she guessed that the current lighting was sufficient. The applicant confirmed that there was no need to add lighting; their needs are being met. With no other questions for the applicant, Green opened the public hearing for comment. Hearing no comments, the public hearing was closed at 6:42 pm. There was no further discussion made by Commission members.

A motion was made by Elsmore to approve the site plan with the staff recommendations. Kavanaugh seconded the motion.

Vote-7 ayes/0 nays. The motion carried.

PC Case #20-11- Zoning Ordinance Amendment, Regarding Lot Area per Dwelling Unit- City of West St. Paul

Sonnek said at the last couple meetings of the Commission expressed a desire to update the code. This code is clear-cut and in the top three priorities for the Commission. Sonnek listed some of the past projects and with the unit per acre counts. The counts fall in line with the 2040 Comp Plan. The plan calls for 20-40 units per acre. Sonnek also provided the red-lined ordinance which included the requested changes to the ordinance. Sonnek asked for comments from the Commission. Kavanaugh asked if this would be the minimum requirement of the zoning district and if an applicant could go over the requirement. Sonnek said that if the application went over 40 units it would likely go fall under a PD or a PUD. Kavanaugh concluded that if an application were not using the Planned Development tag, they would not need a variance. Sonnek said this was correct. Green opened the meeting for the public hearing. As there was no input, Green closed the hearing at 6:47pm. Green commented that [the amendment] is exactly what the Commission is trying to accomplish.

A motion was made by Kavanaugh to approve the zoning code amendment.

McPhillips seconded the motion. Discussion ensued.

Elsmore suggested removing the word, "minimum" from Section 2, Amendment 2, Paragraph A, to avoid confusion regarding unit ratio limits. Kavanaugh said he would amend the motion and defer to staff on the wording of the amendment.

Vote-7 ayes/0 nays. The motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS - NA

OLD BUSINESS -

Zoning Code Amendments-Update

Sonnek talked about the information she gathered from other cities regarding off-street parking and building materials. She asked for general discussion from the Commission; she is looking for recommendation on next steps. Kavanaugh asked about having a work session on the two topics. Green said that it was a lot to “chew on” and agreed that a work session was a good idea. Sonnek asked if the information provided was sufficient. Kavanaugh said that the parking metrics were well done. Franzmeier asked for clarification on the minimum parking requirements and if the stalls per unit were based on occupant use, for residential buildings as an example. Sonnek confirmed that it was based on occupant use. Franzmeier asked how the existing ratios of square footage to parking stalls came about; Sonnek guessed that it may have been through the same process that the Commission is performing currently. Kavanaugh said that the updates were last done in the 90’s. Sonnek said that it might be further back than the 90’s.

Green asked if the Environmental Committee had started the work on the pollinator friendly building ordinance. Sonnek confirmed that the committee has started work on the list of items; Dave Schletty said that they have some homework to do. They are moving forward.

Elsmore is interested to know when other cities ordinances were last changed. Elsmore does not want to look at Mendota Height’s numbers if they have not updated their code since 1992. She is not sure how involved the info gathering would be. Sonnek said she can look into this. Stevens would like to sketch what the basic principles are behind why something needs more or less parking. She would like to know what the objectives are. She talked about developers, construction or road/vehicle changes. Justen said it might be interesting to look at the pattern of variances with recent projects. It is even more work for Sonnek. Sonnek has looked at the history of parking variances for the last 10 years. Surprisingly, there has not been a lot of requests. The majority of them (whether PD or PUD) have been multi-family residential applications. There have been three requests for commercial applicants in the last five years. One of them was a big box store; the other two were in the Smith-Dodd area where an overlay district was just recently created. Justen is interested to see if other comparable cities are going through the same process. Green would like to know if any of the applicants regret not having more parking. Perhaps a general survey could be generated to see if the applicants are satisfied with the current parking or if they could have gone down more. Kavanaugh said that the Commission could also look at studies or surveys that have been done out-of-state regarding changing parking requirements. Justen suggested looking at people that did not get variances and see if they did not need as much parking. Kavanaugh asked if there is a budget to hire a consultant. Sonnek can ask about this. Franzmeier commented about the mixed use buildings on Robert Street and shared parking lots. Sonnek said she did not know how formally the shared

parking rules were outlined in code, but the City has allowed shared parking especially with alternating uses and different peak times. The City has encouraged shared parking.

Kavanaugh asked about having a work session next month. Sonnek said that there are currently no applications for next month's meeting; the submittal due date is next Friday. She will not be available for the work session next month, but can find other staff to fill in for her if need be.

OTHER BUSINESS - NA

ADJOURN -

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:06 pm. The motion carried. All ayes.

**Respectfully submitted,
Sharon G. Hatfield**