# Saint Paul Planning Commission City Hall Conference Center 15 Kellogg Boulevard West

## **Minutes May 27, 2011**

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, May 27, 2011, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners

Mmes. Merrigan, Perrus, Porter, Thao, Wang, Wencl, Young; and

Present:

Messrs. Commers, Connolly, Fernandez, Gelgelu, Kramer, Nelson, Ochs, Oliver,

Schertler, Spaulding, Ward, and Wickiser.

**Commissioners** 

Mmes. \*Halverson, and \*Reveal

Absent:

\*Excused

Also Present:

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, Peter Warner, City Attorney's Office, Allan Torstenson, Patricia James, Kate Reilly, and Sonja Butler, Department of

Planning and Economic Development staff.

### I. Approval of minutes May 13, 2011.

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Thao moved approval of the minutes of May 13, 2011. Commissioner Gelgelu seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

#### II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Commers had no announcements.

### III. Planning Director's Announcements

Donna Drummond announced that the Steering Committee had discussed creating Planning Commissioner biographies. This would be a short paragraph with information about professional background, experiences and interests, and would be available on the City's website. The biographies will let the community know more about the Planning Commission, and help commissioners know each other better. The Heritage Preservation Commission already does this. Ms. Drummond will send out more information on this.

The Neighborhood and Comprehensive Planning Committees will start meeting in a different conference room in the City Hall Annex. The meeting location will be changed to the 13<sup>th</sup> floor conference room instead of the 11<sup>th</sup> floor conference room. The 13<sup>th</sup> floor conference room is bigger and is a better room for presentations because of a newly installed projection system.

The City Council held a public hearing on May 18<sup>th</sup> on the Planning Commission's recommendations on sign ordinances. There were a number of people testifying in favor of a proposal Councilmember Thune put forward to regulate interior window signs in businesses.

Councilmember Thune made a motion to lay the matter over for 180 days for additional study.

### IV. Zoning Committee

STAFF SITE PLAN REVIEW - List of current applications. (Tom Beach, 651/266-9086)

Three items came before the staff Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, May 24, 2011: Beacon Bluff Parcel 2 at 837 Minnehaha Avenue E., demo and grading; City House-Upper Landing Park Event facility at 258 Mill Street, building improvements for catered events; and Nova Academy, new charter school at Madison at Mercer (Victoria Park), preliminary review.

Six items will come before the staff Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, May 31, 2011: Como Park High School Paving at 740 Rose Avenue, repave parking lots, drives, and build four new tennis courts; Oxford Community Center Field at 1079 Iglehart Avenue, new synthetic turf field and upgraded lighting; Hazeldon Parking Lot at 615 Drake Street, soil clean up and temporary parking lot; Libby Parking Lot at 855 Rice Street, demolish building and build a new parking lot; Chittenden Eastman Building at 2402 University Avenue West, new parking lot on lower level of existing building and repave/stripe existing parking area behind the building; and AGAPE School at 1037 University Avenue West, small addition to existing building and rebuild existing parking lot.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

#11-129-965 Capitol Lien & Title/Tony Magnotta – Determination that vertical wind turbines are uses similar to cell phone antennas. 1010 Dale Street N., between Lawson and Hatch. (*Kate Reilly*, 651/266-6618)

Commissioner Kramer said that the Zoning Committee has recommended denial of the determination of similar use, but there has been additional discussion with staff about a different approach in this case.

Commissioner Spaulding said that at the Zoning Committee they struggled with how to properly make sure that this was not overly precedential, in terms of allowing a similar use in all B3 districts across the city. Currently there is a study underway to determine what the appropriate regulation might be for wind turbine setbacks. He supports referring the case back to the Zoning Committee to consider how to tailor a narrow set of conditions. It would also be useful for the Zoning Committee to consider the wind turbines as an accessory use that would provide electricity on the property.

MOTION: Commissioner Kramer moved to refer this case back to the Zoning Committee for additional consideration at their June 16, 2011 meeting. Commissioner Spaulding seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

#11-135-208 Church of St. Mark – Conditional Use Permit for reuse of a large structure (former convent) as a residence for Saint Paul Seminary seminarians. 1976 Dayton Avenue, SE corner at Moore. (Josh Williams, 651/266-6659)

Commissioner Kramer clarified that the application was to house up to 25 seminarians and priests in the building.

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Kramer moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the conditional use permit. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

Commissioner Kramer announced that they also had discussion at the Zoning Committee about procedures when denying zoning applications, and Assistant City Attorney Peter Warner provided them with a detailed memo. He also announced the items on the agenda for the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, June 2, 2011.

### V. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Commissioner Merrigan said that at the last Planning Commission meeting the Comprehensive Planning Committee left something on the table that needs to be addressed. They talked about the parking amendments but the resolution was not officially announced. The Commissioners have that resolution in front of them at there places.

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Merrigan moved the Comprehensive Planning Committee's recommendation to approve the amendments as they are in the resolution. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

Commissioner Merrigan announced that the next meeting is on Tuesday, June 7, 2011.

### VI. Neighborhood Planning Committee

<u>Solar Energy Systems Zoning Code Amendments</u> – Release for public review and set public hearing for July 8, 2011. (*Kate Reilly*, 651/266-6618, and Allan Torstenson, 651/266-6579).

Kate Reilly, PED staff, gave a power point presentation, talking about how solar installations are currently regulated and the proposal for zoning code amendments related to solar energy systems. The current practice now is that they are treated as a permitted accessory use in all districts, with building mounted systems subject to dimension standards for the building. Freestanding systems are subject to dimension and location standards of accessory structures. Department of Safety and Inspections plan review and zoning staff review the application before permits are issued.

Ms. Reilly explained that there are two types of installations: building mounted and freestanding/active. The freestanding/active ones tend to maneuver to follow the track of the sun and the building mounted ones capture as much sun as they can. The code proposal is to permit solar energy systems in all zoning districts as an accessory use; a minor change would be made to language to ensure that the visual impact of rooftop equipment is reduced. The proposed amendments will add solar energy system to the accessory uses listed, clarify that building mounted systems are subject to the dimensional standards of the building, clarify that building mounted systems shall not exceed the height of a variety of roofs and shall not extend more than 12 feet above the surface of a flat or shed roof, and clarify that ground-mounted freestanding solar energy systems are regulated as accessory buildings with flat or shed roofs and shall not exceed 20 feet in height.

Ms. Reilly showed some local commercial examples of solar installations. In Saint Paul District

Energy has a one megawatt solar thermal installation integrated into its building. The Minneapolis Convention Center has a 60 kilowatt photovoltaic installation on its roof. She also showed slides of a solar heat installation on the roof at Flannery Construction in Saint Paul, a solar thermal installation on a Saint Paul home, and two more residential examples. Residential systems in general have become more sophisticated and design sensitive. They are usually integrated into the surface of the roof and there are even photovoltaic roof shingles, which means that the roof shingle itself is actually the solar energy system. There were several questions about glare. Current solar panels have a tinted glass to them so they do not give the kind of glare that the older solar installations have given off.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, asked how snow impacts these systems. Ms. Reilly said she has not done any research on that but she will look into it.

Commissioner Thao asked if there are any freestanding systems in the Twin Cities.

Ms. Reilly said there is a proposal for a freestanding one on Eagle Place by the Science Museum. It would look like a building mounted one, but it would be freestanding so it does not rotate.

Commissioner Schertler asked if solar installations would be treated any differently than heating and cooling equipment on top of a building. Ms. Reilly said yes, code requirements would deal with them in a similar fashion.

Commissioner Spaulding asked about sloped roofs and the fact that an installation couldn't extend above the top of the ridge line. Some roofs do not have much of a slope. Would a variance be possible to accommodate these types of situations? Reilly said that a variance could be used to address this type of situation.

MOTION: On behalf of the Neighborhood Planning Committee, Commissioner Wencl moved to release the draft for public review and set a public hearing on July 8, 2011. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

Commissioner Wencl announced the items on the agenda for the next Neighborhood Committee meeting on Wednesday, June 1, 2011.

VII. <u>Planning Work Program Update</u> – Presentation by Donna Drummond, Director of Planning. (Donna Drummond, 651/266-6556)

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, referenced a spreadsheet that had been distributed showing the various projects that the planning staff and the historic preservation staff are working on. She wanted the Commission to see the full picture of the planning work program and also to preview what items will be coming to the various committees throughout the rest of the year. She proceeded to highlight several projects. There is a lot of work going on related transportation planning, including evaluating a number of corridor for future transit improvements. The airport zoning amendments for Holman Field are on hold because of a recent court ruling related to the Rochester airport, which created some liability for these new types of regulations.

There are many zoning studies underway and two will be coming to the Neighborhood Planning Committee at their next meeting. These are the District 9 Residential and District 9 Commercial

zoning studies. Today the Commission is releasing the solar zoning study recommendations and staff is working on the wind turbine zoning study.

Central Corridor continues to be a major part of the planning work program, and is also a large work program item for other staff in PED, Public Works, and other staff in the city. The major planning and zoning work is done. The station area plans are completed except the Hamline, Victoria and Western station area plans need to be adopted by City Council.

Ms. Drummond then commented on Heritage Preservation staff activities. This is not something that the Planning Commission oversees. The Heritage Preservation Commission is a separate commission but historic preservation staff is part of the planning staff team which the Planning Director supervises. Several neighborhood planning projects that Ms. Drummond then highlighted included the Near Eastside Task Force and the work related to the Ford plant redevelopment. The Ford plant will close at the end of the year. The Ford site is a major opportunity to figure out the best use of that 120+ acre site. The Neighborhood Planning Committee will be fairly busy through the end of the year. The Comprehensive Planning Committee will not be as busy this summer, but will have more items ready for later this year.

### VIII. Transportation Committee

Commissioner Spaulding spoke about the three items the committee considered at their last meeting. They heard from the Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority on a study of rail traffic in the area known as Hoffman Junction and beyond, that is just east of the Union Depot. They also discussed the City's submission for the Regional Solicitation of Federal Transportation Projects that Met Council is funding from federal grants. Lastly they had a presentation about Nice Ride. Nice Ride is a bike rental program that is expanding its existing network of bike rental stations into Saint Paul this year. New stations will generally be located in the area of University, Selby, Marshall and Grand Avenue. Then next year they hope to add a number of locations around downtown. Nice Ride installs hubs with bicycles that can be rented through a self service system to ride from one hub to another making summer bicycle riding more palatable to a larger segment of the population.

Commissioner Kramer said that there concern about the Nice Ride program because none of stations are being located in the entire eastern third of the city. None are planned for districts 2,4,1,5 and nothing in the Como area either.

Commissioner Thao agreed with Commissioner Kramer and said that there is also a need around the Lake Phalen area.

Commissioner Spaulding said Nice Ride's model is to try and concentrate service as much as possible because they find that's where it's most successful, when people are able to ride from one hub to another within relatively close proximity.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, added that Nice Ride is a nonprofit and the City is not funding it, although the City did spend a little money to help with the planning activity related to it. Nice Ride is a system that is gradually expanding and it has to remain somewhat compact to work well and has to gradually expand out from its existing system in Minneapolis and not leap frog to other parts of the city. The plan is that they would like to expand more in Saint Paul in the future including downtown. It is a matter of getting the funding to do this. They have gotten

some additional funding this year which has allowed this initial expansion into Saint Paul and there are plans to keep it growing.

Commissioner Ward said in regards to funding, is their model just to provide services based upon their ability to be awarded grants or is there some type of profitability and a percentage that they are using in order to do this expansion.

Ms. Drummond said she is not entirely sure of their business model, but they have to fund raise and they've gotten funds from Blue Cross/Blue Shield and the City of Minneapolis has put in a significant amount of money to facilitate this. Nice Ride does the fund raising for their capital cost to buy the bikes and the stations. People then subscribe to be members or pay a daily fee to use the bikes, which probably covers their operating cost.

Commissioner Wickiser said that the most cost effective use of Nice Ride is that someone purchases an annual membership for about \$40.00 and if they ride under half an hour then it is free. Therefore putting the stations in line between Minneapolis and Saint Paul essentially allows someone not to be charged to ride a mile or two then put the bike in the station get another bike and continue on. That is really the impetus for them connecting from Minneapolis to Saint Paul.

Ms. Drummond noted that this system is designed for short trips, and these are not like road bikes that go long distances. This is for short trips so you don't have to use your car and then look for parking. This helps people do local daily trips that are short distances.

#### IX. Communications Committee

Commissioner Thao had no report.

### X. Task Force Reports

None.

### XI. Old Business

None.

### XII. New Business

None.

#### XIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary Planning and Economic Development Department, City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Drummond Planning Director Approved

- 10 - 1

(Date)

Anthony Fernandez

Secretary of the Planning Commission

PED\butler\planning commission\minutes\May 27, 2011