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

Minutes October 28, 2011

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, October 28, 2011 at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present:	Mmes. Halverson, Perrus, Porter, Thao, Wang, Wencl; and Messrs. Commers, Connolly, Fernandez, Gelgelu, Kramer, Nelson, Ochs, Oliver, Schertler, Spaulding, Ward, and Wickiser.
Commissioners Absent:	Mmes. *Merrigan, and *Reveal *Excused
Also Present:	Donna Drummond, Planning Director; Emily Erickson, Department of Public Works; Patricia James, Christina Morrison, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes October 14, 2011.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Thao moved approval of the minutes of October 14, 2011. Commissioner Gelgelu seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Commers announced that the Planning Commission's annual holiday party is approaching and Commission Thao has volunteered to lead planning for it. He encouraged other interested commissioners to let her know if they could help.

III. Planning Director's Announcements

Donna Drummond reported that the Hamline, Western and Victoria Station Area Plans were adopted by City Council. This concludes the station area planning for the Central Corridor LRT. The City Council also adopted the Solar Energy Systems Zoning Code Amendments.

IV. Zoning Committee

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

One item came before the staff Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, October 25, 2011:

- Saint Paul Eye Clinic, parking lot reconstruction at 1099 Grand Avenue.

One item to come before the staff Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, November 1, 2011:

- Kendall's Hardware, new construction at 840 Payne Avenue.

NEW BUSINESS

311-282-542 Catholic Charities – Modification of Conditional Use Permit for overnight shelter (ZF# 10-939-012) to extend the months of operation. 215 Old 6th Street, NE corner at Main. *(Luis Pereira, 651/266-6591)*

MOTION: ***Commissioner Kramer moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the modification of conditional use permit subject to additional conditions. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

#11-282-365 Fort Road Coffee Company – Rezoning from B1 Local Business to T2 Traditional Neighborhood. 1518 Randolph Avenue, SE corner at Saratoga. *(Sarah Zorn, 651/266-6570)*

MOTION: ***Commissioner Kramer moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the rezoning. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

#11-281-220 Wulff Family Mortuary – Rezoning of 1755 Nevada and 1756 Nebraska from R4 Single-Family Residential to VP Vehicular Parking. 1485 White Bear Avenue N, Between White Bear Avenue and Flandrau Street. *(Penelope Simison, 651/266-6554)*

Commissioner Kramer said that the committee recommends approval of the rezoning with the understanding that the issues that were raised in opposition will be addressed during the laid over variance case but the committee felt that the rezoning was an appropriate extension for the purposes of parking.

Commissioner Nelson said that he was the dissenting vote on the matter because it seemed there could be a more comprehensive solution by relocating the alley and consolidating a parcel. This would eliminate the need for a parking lot to access a public alley with 24 cars backing out of that alley, but perhaps some of these issues can be addressed as part of site plan review. So he will be switching his vote to recommend approval of the VP Vehicular Parking.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Kramer moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the rezoning. The motion carried unanimous on a voice vote.***

#11-285-730 Wulff Funeral Home – Variance of VP front yard setback requirement for 1756 Nebraska and 1755 Nevada. 1485 White Bear Avenue N, between White Bear Avenue and Flandrau. *(Penelope Simison, 651/266-6554)*

Commissioner Kramer reported that the Zoning Committee laid this case over to the November 22, 2011 meeting.

Commissioner Kramer announced the items on the agenda for the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, November 10, 2011.

V. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, announced the items on the agenda for the next Comprehensive Planning Committee meeting on Tuesday, November 15, 2011.

VI. Neighborhood Planning Committee

Commissioner Wencl had no report.

VII. Transportation Committee

Transportation Vision for Generations – Approve resolution endorsing the Transportation Committee's comments to the Mayor. *(Allen Lovejoy, Public Works, 651/266-6226)*

Commissioner Spaulding reported that the "Transportation Vision for Generations" is a MnDOT process to develop longer-term planning values. Commissioner Spaulding outlined the major topics of the City's draft comments on the vision and noted that staff would forward final comments to MnDOT.

Commissioner Porter asked if the participatory process included only professional planning staff, or if it also included other organizations and community members.

Christina Morrison, PED staff, reported that MnDOT had a broad approach to their community process, which included over one hundred briefings across the state to different groups. She noted that the City's comments could be clarified to express our support for the broad approach.

Chair Commers asked about the vision's wording regarding "throughput and vehicle capacity," noting that he was interested to see the use of the word "throughput" in that context. He noted that the idea of "throughput" does not match the vision's emphasis on accessibility.

Commissioner Spaulding replied that capacity of a road is significantly enhanced when it includes transit. If roads have high numbers of single occupancy vehicles, there is a high amount of vehicle traffic, but more throughputs can be added on the same road with just a few high occupancy vehicles.

Ms. Morrison further clarified that "throughput" or "person throughput" is a phrase that the Metropolitan Council and City use to take into account not just the number of vehicles, but the actual number of people moving through a system. This term is seen as more inclusive than the traditional counting of vehicles, or vehicle "capacity."

Commissioner Ochs noted that he did not see anything in the document pertaining to health, such as air quality and water quality, and asked if this could be added. He also stated that the document should address technological advances as well, such as the reduction of traffic volume due to the ability to work remotely.

Commissioner Spaulding said some of the issues Commissioner Ochs has identified are largely addressed in the actual document, and therefore not included in the City's draft comments.

Commissioner Ward commented because Saint Paul has been recognized as a bike-friendly city, he would like to see more of an emphasis on bikes in the vision document.

Ms. Morrison noted that because the vision document is fairly concise, biking and walking are more generally grouped into "active transportation" or "healthy living." It could be called out more specifically as being a value that is important to Saint Paul.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Spaulding moved the Transportation Committee's recommendation to approve the resolution endorsing the Transportation Committee's comments to the Mayor. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

Raymond Avenue Traffic Calming Project – Approve resolution recommending the project to the Mayor and City Council. *(Paul St. Martin, Public Works, 651/266-6118)*

Commissioner Spaulding said that the project examines the design of Raymond Avenue between University and Hampden Avenue. The roadway through that area is a unique north-south corridor that connects the University of Minnesota Saint Paul Campus to University Avenue and a number of other designations. The goal is to make Raymond a more complete street and to calm traffic through an area with a variety of users.

Chair Commers commented that he is enthusiastic to see this project come out of the committee, and that he has recently become more aware of the research around safety for cyclists and pedestrians, particularly when traffic speeds are 30 to 40 mph. He noted that streetscape and alignment changes will better manage traffic speeds and dangerous intersections.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Spaulding moved the Transportation Committee's recommendation to approve the resolution recommending the project to the Mayor and City Council. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

Griggs Bikeway – Approve resolution recommending the project to the Mayor and City Council. *(Paul St. Martin, Public Works, 651/266-6118)*

Commissioner Spaulding said that the project seeks to provide a more Complete Street on Griggs Street between Summit Avenue and Minnehaha Avenue by improving how motorized and non-motorized users access and use the corridor. This will be accomplished by installing:

- Bump-outs at approximately two (2) intersections;
- Traffic circles at approximately six (6) intersections;
- A new 12' shared use path through the Dunning Recreation Center;
- Countdown pedestrian timers and bicycle detection at Marshall Avenue;
- Lantern style street lighting between St. Anthony and University;
- Sharrow pavement markings along the entire corridor;
- Advanced pedestrian and bicycle detection technology at Concordia, St. Anthony and University; and
- Destination, direction and route marker signs along the entire corridor.

Commissioner Spaulding noted that this is a bikeway that is consistent with the goals of the Transportation Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Connolly asked for clarification between traffic circles and roundabouts.

Paul St. Martin, Traffic Engineer for the Department of Public Works, said a roundabout is larger than a traffic circle, and a roundabout generally replaces a traffic signal at the intersection of major streets. A traffic circle is at the intersection of two residential streets. It replaces stop signs at the intersection, is about 20 feet in diameter, and is placed in the middle of the existing intersection.

Commissioner Connolly also asked staff to describe "sharrows."

Mr. St. Martin said where bikes share the traffic lane with motor vehicles; a sharrow pavement marking is used. This is a bike symbol with chevron arrows above it to show motor vehicles that they are sharing the roadway with bicyclists.

Chair Commers stated that the traffic circle at Charles and Albert Street is a traffic circle and is also complemented by stop signs, and asked if that is the City standard.

Mr. St. Martin said that when the City first started installing traffic circles, some areas requested that stop signs would remain and the decision was made to leave them installed. However, the policy now is that when the traffic circle goes in, the stop signs are removed. Public Works plans to go back and remove the stop signs from those intersections.

Commissioner Fernandez inquired as to the approximate cost for one traffic circle. Mr. St. Martin answered that they cost roughly $20,000 each.

Commissioner Spaulding noted that the Griggs bikeway project has had similar levels of community input to other projects, and has had a favorable reaction from the public. He noted that bikeways can be perceived as a community asset.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Spaulding moved the Transportation Committee's recommendation to approve the resolution recommending the project to the Mayor and City Council. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

Commissioner Spaulding announced that there will not be a meeting on Monday, October 31st but the next Transportation Committee meeting will be on Monday, November 14, 2011.

Commissioner Ward asked about the process of recruiting members for the open seat on the Transportation Committee.

Commissioner Spaulding said that he does not have any information on specific individuals, but that the deadline to apply is November 14, 2011, so there is still time for interested parties to apply.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, added that people can apply online for various commissions and committees, and encouraged commissioners to pass along that information to interested applicants.

VIII. Transitway Impacts Research Program – Informational presentation by Jan Lucke and Dawn Spanhake, Center for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota.

Dawn Spanhake is the Assistant Director at the Center for Transportation Studies, which manages a number of transportation programs including the Transitway Impacts Research Program (TIRP). Ms. Spanhake talked briefly about the program. TIRP began in 2006 with the mission to investigate the economic, social, environmental and health impacts of transitway corridors. The program also helps educate elected officials, agency leaders and staff, and the broader research community on impacts of transitways. Since 2006 local sponsors have provided over $800,000 to support TIRP activities which acts as seed funding and positions its researchers to attract additional funds. In 2011 they attracted additional funds of over $400,000 for TIRP-related activities. It's the local funding that is critical to position them to reach out and seek those additional federal and non-local funds. Ms. Spanhake mentioned all the sponsors and program supporters, and noted that Donna Drummond, Planning Director and Christina Morrison, City Planner, have been involved with TIRP's advisory committees. The program management team oversees the research priorities, project selection and annual budget. The technical advisory group provides ongoing technical feedback and overall project guidance and both groups contribute to communications and outreach, event planning and speaking engagements.

Jan Lucke, Manager of Research Administration, gave an overview of current research. TIRP strives to be an unbiased source of new knowledge and their national and international academic reputation depends on that. Ms. Lucke talked about a study completed in 2009 by Professor Ed Goetz who was looking at the Hiawatha Line and the impacts on land use and residential housing value. Hiawatha produced an increase of $47.1 million in residential property value between 2004 – 2007. The average value of homes located near stations increased; more than $5,000 for single-family homes and more than $45,500 for multi-family homes. The research results are being used to consider how property values along other planned LRT corridors may be affected.

Another study completed in 2009 by Professor Jason Cao looked at the differences between Hiawatha LRT riders and other transit riders. He found that light rail provides equity by attracting captive riders (people who do not drive and do not have a car) and efficiency by attracting choice riders (people who do drive and do have a car but choose to take transit). Thirty-three percent of LRT riders are reverse commuters, 75% of LRT riders walk further than ¼ mile to each station, and 1/3 of LRT riders choose to park and ride. His conclusion was that LRT supports mode mixing, with 50% of riders transferring to another transit service. His research results are being used to consider how other planned LRT corridors may affect travel behavior in the region.

A third study, also completed by Professor Jason Cao, was completed in 2010 and looked at commercial property values on the Hiawatha corridor. He found that LRT has led to higher prices per square foot, suggesting higher demand for properties within the station area. Property values increase as distance to a LRT station decreases. The LRT has a positive effect on property values up to 0.9 miles from a station. His results are being used to consider how property values along other planned LRT corridors may be affected.

The fourth study was completed by Professor Yingling Fan in 2010. She looked at the spatial mismatch between low-wage jobs and housing in the Twin Cities. She found that Hiawatha LRT has increased accessibility to low-wage-jobs and that accessibility extends beyond station areas. Also low-wage workers and employers have relocated near the LRT.

Ms. Lucke said that they have three active projects now that will be completed over the course of the next 18 months. The first one is being conducted by Professor Yingling Fan. She is looking

at the neighborhood and social influences associated with major transit improvements. Professor Jason Cao is looking at associated environmental and health benefits of LRT, such as travel behavior, energy savings, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and health care savings associated with healthy lifestyle changes. The newest study which is just getting started is being led by Minnesota Traffic Observatory Director John Hourdos. He's developing a multi-resolution traffic analysis tool to study performance of a transitway corridor, and analyze interactions between transit and other modes.

Ms. Lucke said 2012 research priorities include traffic, parking, and travel behavior impacts, and also looking at the infrastructure and amenities that need to be in place to maximize development potential along these lines. The information presented today is all available at the project website - www.cts.umn.edu/research/featured/transitways. The completed studies and a two page research brief for each project are there, as well as descriptions of current studies.

Commissioner Ochs asked whether any research is being done to compare our system with more established or mature systems in this country or in other countries.

Ms. Lucke said that each of the studies includes a comprehensive literature review that covers everything that other academic institutions might have related to that topic. For the study on commercial property value the findings that Professor Jason Cao had looked at before he began his study showed that often there was not a significant improvement in commercial property values, so there is some comparison in the literature review section of each study.

Commissioner Ward asked that studies focus more on how to create mixed-income neighborhoods rather than just focusing on impacts on low-income neighborhoods. Why the focus on the poor, when the focus should be more on middle income households and higher wage earners that want to change life styles, that want to take advantage of business opportunities around these transit lines? Those are the people that are going to help bring the neighborhood up by creating small businesses, creating more jobs because they have the means to do so. He would like to see more emphasis put on research as to what's going on along Hiawatha – who are the people that are moving into the neighborhood, how many businesses were started, how many businesses failed, and what those businesses doing now.

Ms. Lucke said that there was a study that she did not present today by Professor Fan that specifically looked at medium to high wage earners. It's sponsored by the McKnight Foundation and the Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation. It is looking at economic clusters in the region and determining what economic clusters host the greatest percentage of medium to high wage jobs in the region, how does transit serve those economic clusters, how could it better serve those clusters, and how could does transit help move people from low wage to medium and high wage opportunities. It sounds like this study might be touching on some of what Commissioner Ward is interested in and Ms. Lucke could get him more information on that.

Commissioner Connolly asked about Professor Jason Cao's study of commercial property values. Did he look at sale prices, assessed values, or rental rates?

Ms. Lucke said it was sales prices of commercial and industrial properties before and after completion of the line in 2004.

Commissioner Porter asked, in developing the 2012 list of priorities, whether there was any thought given to taking a look at the impact that no parking or limited parking on University Avenue is going to have on the community and the business owners.

Ms. Lucke said the answer is yes. There was interest, but one of the members of the program management team is Mark Fuhrmann with Metropolitan Council, and he said at that time that Metropolitan Council was paying close attention to this and monitoring those impacts. So at the time he thought it wasn't the best investment for TIRP to make because TIRP might want to focus on areas that Metropolitan Council doesn't have the resources to touch. It did come up as a high need but the Metropolitan Council thinks that they can handle it.

Commissioner Spaulding thought he heard them say that one of the areas to be looked at in 2012 included a look at land use and parking in proximity to transitways? Is that correct?

Ms. Spanhake said the way their process works is they do a request for proposals each year and these priorities are given to their researchers. They had a technical advisory group meeting and reviewed the proposals that came in. The result was that they kind of liked parts of several proposals, and will meet with the researcher and narrow it down. The scope was so large looking at all things land use, parking etc, but parking was one of the priorities. It's highly probable that they will have a project related to either parking or some of these specific sub bullets under that but they do not know for sure what will come out of this list of priorities yet.

Commissioner Fernandez said that he thinks it is very important to know where the data is coming from because a lot of these studies are going to directly impact the development along some of the residential and commercial neighborhoods. This data is going to be etched in history and used in various ways.

Commissioner Schertler commented on the interrelationship between park and rides, downtown turn of the century development that has no parking, employment core, the cost effectiveness of access, operation and capital on both parking and transit. If a bus ride is reduced to twenty-five cents a ride the fair box influence on ridership is huge and customer choice to make cost savings is huge and that is just a hunch. Some studies on that behavior to give a sense of return on various investments related to transit and parking would be interesting without fixating just on transit.

Commissioner Wencl said that one of the research ideas might be to focus on whether people are voluntarily giving up vehicles or moving from two to one vehicle as part of their life style. Has there been any research devoted to that kind of forward looking plan, whether people have decided not to purchase or use vehicles?

Ms. Spanhake does not know if there have been any national studies to that effect but they had the same exact conversation at the last Technical Advisory Group meeting. They talked about captive riders and choice riders and now they say there are choice captive riders, those that may have moved along the corridor and have gotten rid of their car(s) because they have the transit accessibility. One would assume that that was a good thing, that they are captive riders not because they can't afford a car, but because they were given the infrastructure to make that choice. There is interest in looking at that.

Chair Commers noted he has been a long time fan of the center generally and he thinks it's another reminder of the benefit of having a major research institution in the region and the fact that the center takes such a strong interest in the way that our metro area operates as a system. He thanked them for all of the work that the center does. Chair Commers also commented on the statistic that 75% of LRT riders were coming from in excess of ¼ mile, which he thinks is a longer distance than is typical for transit. He asked if they could talk more about that and was that a surprising finding for them.

Ms. Spanhake said they were surprised at the finding especially given the cold winters, assuming people would not want to walk as far.

Ms. Lucke agreed that it was surprising and that there were so many findings from all these studies that they had to work with the researchers to figure out what to highlight from each study. A lot of what they've highlighted were the more surprising findings.

Commissioner Wencl asked was a reverse commuter is.

Ms. Lucke said in the morning people are usually coming into the city and in the evening they are going out. Reverse commute means in the morning if it was Hiawatha you're going from Minneapolis to maybe the Mall of America and in the evening you're going from the suburb into the city. LRT really blurs those lines.

Commissioner Oliver said the Mall of America has probably distorted these findings, being such a major destination that happens to be in the suburbs.

Ms. Spanhake said one of Professor Yingling Fan's projects addressed this in some way looking at Hiawatha. Her findings were that you don't have to have complete mixed incomes at every station. So you can be a low income earner and live along the line or have access within 30 minutes and because there are all wage jobs along the line and all wage home prices along the line it's very accessible and equitable.

IX. Communications Committee

No report.

X. Task Force Reports

Commissioner Wencl reported that the Neighborhood Planning Committee will be meeting on Wednesday, November 9, 2011 and also the Near East Side Task Force will be meeting on Tuesday, November 15, 2011.

XI. Old Business

None.

XII. New Business

None.

XIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:58 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by
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Planning and Economic Development Department,
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Respectfully submitted,

Donna Drummond

Donna Drummond
Planning Director

Approved November 18, 2011
(Date)

Anthony Fernandez
Secretary of the Planning Commission

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