

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

**Minutes May 22, 2015**

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, May 22, 2015, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

**Commissioners Present:** Mmes. DeJoy, McMahon, Noecker, Padilla, Reveal, Thao, Wencl; and Messrs. Edgerton, Gelgelu, Lindeke, Makarios, Nelson, Ward, and Wickiser.

**Commissioners Absent:** Mmes. \*Merrigan, \*Shively, \*Underwood, \*Wang, and Messrs. Connolly, and \*Ochs.

**Absent:** \*Excused

**Also Present:** Donna Drummond, Planning Director; Allan Torstenson, Merritt Clapp-Smith, Josh Williams, Bill Dermody, Jamie Radel, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

**I. Approval of minutes May 8, 2015.**

Chair Wencl announced that the minutes are not available at this time. However they will be ready for approval at the next Planning Commission meeting.

**II. Chair's Announcements**

Chair Wencl had no announcements.

**III. Planning Director's Announcements**

Donna Drummond reminded the commissioners about an email she sent about the American Planning Association (APA) discounted memberships for planning commissioners. Membership includes both the National APA and Minnesota State Chapter along with other benefits. Interested commissioners should mail a check made out to the City of Saint Paul to Ms. Drummond by Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup>. The due date is June 1<sup>st</sup>.

On Wednesday, City Council considered the appeal of Jack Kirr to a decision of the Planning Commission approving a site plan for a four-story mixed-use development at 735 Cleveland Avenue South. The Council denied the appeal.

**IV. Zoning Committee**

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

No new site plan review meetings on May 26<sup>th</sup> or June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## NEW BUSINESS

#15-030-336 Twin Cities Concrete Products – Rezoning from I1 Industrial & VP Vehicular Parking to T1 Traditional Neighborhood, and from R4 One-Family to RT1 Two-Family. 1474 – 1520 Minnehaha Avenue East, 685 Hazelwood Street, 1446 Beech Street, et al, between Hazelwood and Birmingham. (*Bill Dermody, 651/266-6617*)

Commissioner Edgerton stated he voted against this rezoning at the Zoning Committee meeting because of concern about loss of industrial land within the city. He recalled presentations from the Port Authority about the importance and value of industrial land in terms of jobs and tax base. Upon further discussion and consideration about this site, he understands why the proposed rezoning is OK in this case, and he will support it.

Commissioner Oliver echoed Commissioner Edgerton's sentiments, noting that in this case the site is a poor location for modern industrial use.

Commissioner Wickiser said that the taxes and jobs provided by industrial uses should be looked at together with vacancy and market demand in industrial areas.

Commissioner Lindeke recalled the December 2014 retreat about industrial land use, and said that some of the ways industrial uses are changing and new technologies may change our conversation.

Commissioner DeJoy said that if this were a site in the middle of an industrial park she would feel differently, but this site is in the middle of a neighborhood and would be fine for a school. She has concerns about loss of industrial land but this site is in a neighborhood.

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

#15-024-667 James Hoye/Hoyeboy Automotive – Conditional use permit for an auto repair facility. 550 Como Avenue, SW corner at Burgess Street. (*Josh Williams, 651/266-6659*)

Commissioner Noecker asked about permit revocation procedures and what happens when violations of a conditional use permit occur.

Commissioner Nelson said the Planning Commission can revoke conditional use permits where violations of permit conditions have occurred after another public hearing to consider the situation, and noted a permit revocation case at the last Planning Commission meeting.

Commissioner Lindeke noticed that one of the problems at this location is cars parked in the bicycle lanes on Como Avenue, which need to be kept clear.

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

#15-027-778 Gowshoua Vang – Reestablishment of nonconforming use as a duplex. 733 Blair Avenue, between Grotto and St. Albans. (Hilary Holmes, 651/266-6612)

*Commissioner Nelson announced that his case has been laid over to the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, May 28, 2015.*

Commissioner Nelson also announced the items on the agenda at the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, May 28, 2015.

V. **Ford Project Update and Study Trip Highlights** – Presentation by Merritt Clapp-Smith, PED and Kyle Makarios, Planning Commissioner and Ford Site Planning Task Force co-chair.

Merritt Clapp-Smith and Kyle Makarios, gave a power point presentation which can be viewed on the web page at: <http://stpaul.gov/index.aspx?NID=3430>

Commissioner Thao asked about the examples of large, publicly-owned redevelopment sites and whether they were owned by the particular municipalities they were developed in.

Ms. Clapp-Smith replied yes and noted this is similar to the large former Twin Cities Army Ammunition site owned by Ramsey County in Arden Hills.

Commissioner Makarios noted that the public entities often purchased and developed the public infrastructure, then sold off parcels for private development. Having the public entity do this on the front end put them in the driver's seat, so they could be more directive of the kind of development that occurred.

Ms. Clapp-Smith said so these public entities were essentially acting as the owner and master developer, with the government often putting in that up front investment for the really high quality infrastructure and public realm. But in a lot of these cases they are turning a very nice profit once that investment is made.

Commissioner Edgerton asked about the level of expenditures needed to do all this.

Commissioner Makarios said that one of the developers on the trip was asking all of these very detailed questions. He does not have a clear sense about what kinds of rents they can charge, for example, but the rents are high in many of these places so there is a lot of income to off-set the infrastructure costs.

Ms. Clapp-Smith added that energy costs are more expensive in Europe, which changes the cost dynamic when considering things like investing in district energy. The representative from Ryan Companies noted that the private sector here has a shorter two-year timeline for expected return on investment and the private market over there is used to longer timeframes.

Commissioner Ward said that the culture and lifestyles in these European communities is nothing like what we have in the United States. The cost of living and for energy is so much more expensive, so they invest in things like district energy because they need to. The densities of development are also much higher.

Commissioner Makarios agreed with a lot of what Commissioner Ward said but he did learn some history while over there as well. Copenhagen for instance, which is a very dense city, is doing incredible things with energy sustainability. This is partly because they have to - they're at low elevation next to the ocean, and with climate change they get bigger storms and they have to figure out how to deal with storm water so the city does not flood. So part of it is because they need to and part of it is deliberate planning choices that city leaders made in order to change the culture of the citizens.

Commissioner Wickiser would like to hear more about what the representative from Ryan Companies was talking about and private sector return on investment. He thinks the idea of public ownership and financing to invest in the things that people want, then selling sites for private development is an interesting concept that should be explored further. Maybe the Ford site is the place to model this as a model throughout the city. The developers are about making money, and if we could put together a financial model that could get them paid in the time frame they expect but being able to build the things that the public is asking for could be a really powerful tool.

Ms. Clapp-Smith agreed and noted this is sometimes called green financing, and it's just starting to emerge in the United States. There is more of it going on in the east and west coast but there is an effort to bring it here as well. There are consultants who are working with the City on the Ford site, with Prospect North in Minneapolis, and with the Ramsey County Rice Creek Commons site (former TCAAP) right now to advance this discussion.

Commissioner Nelson asked about the status of the rail spur that goes into the Ford plant.

Commissioner Makarios said the CP Rail spur is currently unused and unlikely to be used, and there is also a rail yard on the site that is probably going to end up in the same master development plan as the Ford site itself. So CP Rail is likely to sell that and make that into one master development site. But then the spur that runs all the way down past W. 7<sup>th</sup> St. is definitely something that is being considered as part of the Riverview corridor study for possible transit use. Community members have voiced strong support for that idea or making it a sort of bike walking corridor, maybe with transit. The hope is to turn it into public use.

Commissioner Lindeke said another model of development closer to home is the public development of the Midtown Greenway and the development that has occurred along there in the Uptown area. He suggested the Ford Site task force members be encouraged to go over there to look at that. It is really a lot of development built around a dense urban node with an old movie theater next to it.

Ms. Clapp-Smith said that Councilmember Tolbert brought Rob Corey from Ford Land and one of his colleagues over to that area when they were in town to help them better understand the kind of market we have here in the Twin Cities. It was very eye opening for them. Being from Detroit, they have a completely different mindset about where the market is at, so that was a great example for them to see.

Commissioner Noecker said Ms. Clapp-Smith had talked about the importance of having a mix of housing types and affordable housing on the Ford site, and asked about examples they saw on the trip. Also, what are the tools and mechanisms available to achieve that?

Commissioner Makarios said that he asked a lot of questions about affordability because many of these neighborhoods are extremely unaffordable in his opinion. In Copenhagen they did social housing, their version of affordable housing, so there was some housing that was made to be more affordable for people of modest incomes. Also they have a much smaller range of incomes across the country. In Stockholm one of the guides said that they don't subsidize housing if somebody doesn't have enough money to afford housing. They give them more money to be able to afford the housing.

Ms. Clapp-Smith added that it is more expensive to be in the center of the city, but on the other side their transportation costs were a lot lower, and they have access to higher paying jobs. So you pay more for this kind of housing in these developments but some of the other costs are lower.

Commissioner Noecker said what about the second part of her question, how are we going to ensure affordability?

Ms. Clapp-Smith said Jamie Radel, Jennifer Jordan and other staff in PED are putting their heads to this. Ms. Clapp-Smith's guess is that if they do succeed in getting a really cool development that the prices are going to go through the roof. That is what happens to really good new developments of this type. So if we want affordability on the site we have to think intentionally about investing in affordable housing on the site.

Commissioner DeJoy said height and density are often issues we deal with in development. She noticed some of the buildings in the slides were very tall and other ones were 3-4 stories. She knows there are often concerns about blocking views with new development. Did they have a lot of controversy over those?

Commissioner Makarios said that not many of these developments had a lot of really tall buildings. It was not like New York City style development as most of the development was 4, 6 maybe 7 or 8 stories. The sense is that when you have mid-level buildings of that size it encourages people to be outside, making a more vibrant community rather than having everybody in a tower.

Ms. Clapp-Smith added that there were a couple of examples where developments were happening adjacent to existing neighborhoods, like the former Carlsberg Brewery that is in the middle of the city. They were keeping some of the older buildings that are cool looking and filling in with others and they have had heated discussions with the surrounding community about the heights that they were proposing. The tallest building they were proposing were 10 or 12 stories, so they are having some of these same conversations.

Commissioner Makarios noted that about half the Ford site is going to be under the Mississippi River Critical Area Corridor rules. There will likely be two different zones, so the western part of the site closest to the river will likely have a height limit of 40 or 48 feet and then a chunk with a 65 feet height limit. The eastern half of the site is not affected by that or the airport flight path height restrictions.

Ms. Clapp-Smith said that the flight path is just for a corner of the site and it's a 110 feet height limit.

Commissioner Makarios continued, so there is already an existing framework of regulations we must work within before we even think about what we want, but clearly the views to the river will be something we will be thinking about.

Commissioner Makarios announced that the Ford Site Planning Task Force will have another public open house meeting on Wednesday, May 27, 2015 at the Gloria Dei Lutheran Church at 7:00 p.m.

**VI. Comprehensive Planning Committee**

Commissioner Thao reported that at their last meeting they finished their review of the current draft of City comments on the Mississippi Critical Area rules. They anticipate the next meeting of the committee will be on June 2, 2015.

**VII. Neighborhood Planning Committee**

Commissioner Oliver announced the items on the agenda at the next Neighborhood Planning Committee meeting on Wednesday, May 27, 2015.

**VIII. Transportation Committee**

Commissioner Lindeke reported that at their last meeting an engineer from MnDOT gave an update on the Snelling Avenue bridge construction over the freeway. They also heard an update from Parks on the Grand Round project process and timeline. Finally, they considered Ramsey County's mill and overlay projects and recommended bike lanes on Cleveland, Lexington and Front. These projects now go to the City Council for the final recommendations to the county on whether to add bike lanes on those three streets.

**IX. Communications Committee**

Commissioner Thao had no report.

**X. Task Force/Liaison Reports**

Commissioner McMahon announced that the Hwy5 Interchange Task Force will be meeting on Tuesday, May 26<sup>th</sup> at the Saint Paul Jewish Community Center (JCC) at 6:00 p.m. and it is open to the public.

Commissioner Reveal announced that the West Side Task Force is meeting again on Thursday at 6:00 p.m. at the Neighborhood Development Alliance (NeDA) 481 South Wabasha Street, and that is also open to the public.

Commissioner Oliver announced that the Gateway Station Area Planning Task Force will be wrapping up over the next two Tuesdays. Their next meeting is on Tuesday, June 2 at the Sun Ray Library at 5:00 p.m.

Commissioner Thao announced that the Grand Round Committee will be meeting on Tuesday, June 16<sup>th</sup> and continuing the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month for the rest of the year.

**XI. Old Business**

None.

**XII. New Business**

None.

**XIII. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

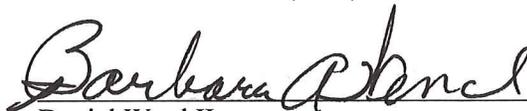
Recorded and prepared by  
Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary  
Planning and Economic Development Department,  
City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,



Donna Drummond  
Planning Director

Approved June 19, 2015  
(Date)



Daniel Ward II  
Secretary of the Planning Commission