

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

Minutes August 7, 2015

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, August 7, 2015, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present: Mmes. McMahon, Merrigan, Noecker, Padilla, Reveal, Shively, Thao, Underwood, Wang, and Wenc; and Messrs. Edgerton, Gelgelu, Lindeke, Makarios, Ochs, Oliver, and Wickiser.

Commissioners Absent: Ms. *DeJoy, and Messrs. Connolly, *Nelson, and *Ward.
*Excused

Also Present: Allan Torstenson, Acting Planning Director; Bill Dermody, Michelle Beaulieu, Mike Richardson, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes July 10, 2015.

Chair Wenc announced that the minutes are not available at this time.

II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Wenc announced that the Campus Boundaries Zoning Study public hearing, originally set for today, has been moved to Friday, August 21, 2015.

Also, the Planning Commission will receive a memo on Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Rulemaking that will be on the August 21, 2015 agenda.

III. Planning Director's Announcements

Acting Planning Director Allan Torstenson had no announcements.

IV. PUBLIC HEARING: Gold Line Station Area Plans – Item from the Neighborhood Planning Committee. (Continued from the July 24th public hearing). (Bill Dermody, 651/266-6617)

Chair Wenc announced that the Saint Paul Planning Commission was holding a public hearing on the Gold Line Station Area Plans. Notices of the public hearings were published in the Saint Paul Pioneer Press on July 20, 2015, July 27, 2015 and August 3, 2015, were published in the Legal Ledger on July 13, 2015, and were sent to the citywide Early Notification System list of recipients and other interested parties.

Bill Dermody, PED staff, gave a power point presentation at the previous Planning Commission meeting on July 24, 2015.

Chair Wencil read the rules of procedure for the public hearing.

No one spoke.

MOTION: Commissioner Oliver moved to close the public hearing, leave the record open for written testimony until 4:30 p.m. on Monday, August 10, 2015 and to refer the matter back to the Neighborhood Planning Committee for review and recommendation. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

V. Zoning Committee

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

Four items to come before the Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, August 11 2015:

- Capitol Ridge Hotel – Reconstruct existing parking lot and other site improvements at 161 St. Anthony Avenue.
- Children’s Museum – Small expansion of existing museum building at 10 West 7th Street.
- Saint Paul Parks – Expand existing parking lots at Como Park and associated site improvements at 1225 Estabrook Drive.
- Keg and Case Market (Preliminary meeting) – Renovate existing building at Schmidt Brewery site for commercial use and build a parking lot at 928 West 7th Street.

OLD BUSINESS

#15-134-559 Taco Bell/Border Foods – Conditional use permit for drive-through sales and to increase the maximum number of off-street parking spaces, and variances of minimum floor area ratio (0.5 required, 0.11 proposed), window and door openings of front façade length (50% required, 47% proposed), and interior parking lot landscaping (15% required, 12% proposed). 565 Snelling Avenue North, SW corner at Edmund. *(Jake Reilly, 651/266-6618)*

Commissioner Padilla said that the Zoning Committee spent a lot of time at their last meeting working through conditions for approval, with little chance for review. Border Foods has agreed to extend the deadline for action to see if there might be some language changes to make them acceptable to everyone involved. Commissioner Padilla moved to refer this item back to the Zoning Committee for further consideration at their August 13, 2015 meeting.

Commissioner Noecker asked what conditions were at issue.

Commissioner Padilla said that two of the conditions pertain to the hours of operation and onsite patrol. Another condition related to DSI enforcement is probably unnecessary.

Commissioner Noecker said that she liked the conditions and is not inclined to change them. She asked if there are any legal issues with them.

Commissioner Padilla said there aren't legal issues, but rather questions of acceptable language options to achieve the intent of the conditions.

Commissioner Wickiser said that there is a conditional use permit for the existing use with no conditions that Taco Bell can continue operating under if they don't rebuild.

Commissioner Padilla said that at the Zoning Committee meeting members had made it clear that noise and other code standards and requirements for the existing use must be enforced.

Upon question from Commissioner Revea, commissioner Padilla said the Planning Commission has authority to refer this back to the Zoning Committee for further consideration.

MOTION: *Commissioner Padilla moved to refer this case back to the Zoning Committee's next meeting on Thursday, August 13, 2015. The motion carried 16-1 (Noecker) on a voice vote.*

NEW BUSINESS

#15-138-295 Joan Bassing – Reestablishment of nonconforming use as a triplex. 900-902 Jenks Avenue, between Forest and Mendota. *(Bill Dermody, 651/266-6617)*

Commissioner Padilla said that Ms. Bassing was unable to be at the Zoning Committee public hearing, and her representative was unable to answer some of their questions. Ms. Bassing has asked for a chance to address the Zoning Committee and the reasons for denial that were in the report.

MOTION: *Commissioner Padilla moved to refer this case back to the Zoning Committee's meeting on Thursday, August 27, 2015. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

#15-139-934 Kowalski Companies – Rezone from R2 One-Family residential to B2 Community Business. 1261 Grand Avenue, NE corner at Syndicate. *(Mike Richardson, 651/266-6621)*

Commissioner Ochs said that Kowalski's seems to be creeping into another zoning district and wondered whether that is a good idea.

Commissioner Padilla said that we review zoning applications as they come in, hold a public hearing, and look at whether it's consistent the Comp. Plan and community goals. In this case circumstance there was no opposition received at all and she thinks this has been the intended use of this parcel for some time.

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

VI. Transportation Committee

Robert Street Transitway Alternatives Analysis - Approve resolution supporting conclusion of the alternatives analysis. *(Michelle Beaulieu, 651/266-6620)*

Michelle Beaulieu, PED staff gave a brief overview of the Robert Street Corridor Transitway analysis conclusion. Joe Morneau from Dakota County presented this at the Transportation Committee. The Robert Street Transitway Alternatives study has been ongoing since 2012; it's a joint effort between Dakota County Regional Rail Authority and Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority. As with these big transit studies, they started out looking at a number of alternative modes and alignments, all of which originated in downtown Saint Paul heading south into Dakota County. The study narrowed down the options to the three that are summarized in the executive summary that was in your packets. These three were Robert Street Arterial Bus Rapid Transit that would end at Highway 110, a Robert Street streetcar alternative that would have the same end point, and a highway BRT on Highway 52. The study showed that both the Robert Street alternatives the arterial and streetcar had potential to meet the goals of the study and be viable transit projects as well as attract new development to the corridor. However some of the additional analysis performed on economic development potential in this corridor showed that there is a little uncertainty in the future of the corridor in Saint Paul and particularly in West Saint Paul so the recommendation coming out of the study is to move both of those Robert Street alternatives, the arterial bus rapid transit and the modern streetcar forward until the two Cities have had a chance to update their Comprehensive Plans at which point they will take another look and see what the economic development potential and future land uses and form of those land uses look like in the corridor. The resolution reflects the process that the study has gone through as well as the recommendation to move both of the alternatives forward and allow the cities to do Comprehensive Plan updates to be transit supportive in this corridor.

Commissioner Lindeke asked for more detail because we all know who does the Comprehensive Plan in Saint Paul so what about in West Saint Paul is there any sense of a time line might be for that.

Ms. Beaulieu said throughout the region all cities have to update their Comprehensive Plans by 2018. We will be receiving our systems statement from the Met Council by the end of the year, so both cities will have to be going through that process over the next 2 ½ years. That's the end date at which point the study will be picked up again.

Commissioner Noecker said that the study ended with a "we don't know" and we are down to the two alternatives. She would like more detail about why the answer ended up being we don't know and we are still going to be waiting another 2 ½ years and or if there was anything that came out of the study that showed that they would have to wait longer or if this was something that could be anticipated that more study would be needed.

Ms. Beaulieu explained that with these big projects a major component is political support and the policy makers, decision-makers, supporting what the end result will be. This corridor has not been a priority in the region and there are conflicting views for what this corridor should look like coming from the various municipalities and county governments. And without strong support nothing can be built. These two options look very similar on paper; the arterial bus rapid transit has fewer stops than the streetcar but they are in the same general locations. The streetcar is seen as an opportunity to incent economic development but also create a whole-sale change in a corridor and there is some support for that and some very adamant opposition to that concept. For the people who support streetcar, the Arterial Bus Rapid Transit feels like a half measure that is saying everyone else in other parts of the region can rail this great investment that is going to improve more than just transit times but we are going to get a bus. And with all of these conflicting priorities someone needs to take time to come up with a unify vision. Dakota County

would like to lead a land use workshop that would help the two cities come to more of an agreement on what the land use looks like but also ideally have the elected officials come together on a unified vision. West Saint Paul passed a similar resolution to the one in front of the Planning Commission, but minus the streetcar.

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

Commissioner Lindeke announced the items on the agenda for the next Transportation Committee meeting on Monday, August 10, 2015.

VII. Big Picture Project: 2015 Progress Report – Informational presentation by Gretchen Nicholls, Program Officer, Twin Cities LISC.

Gretchen Nicholls, Program Officer, Twin Cities LISC and Ellen Mai, Research Associate, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation gave a power point presentation which can be viewed on the web page at: <http://www.stpaul.gov/planningcommission>

Ms. Nicholls said that Big Picture Project to preserve and strengthen affordable housing options all along the Central Corridor is a good model for community involvement in this issue, and is an important component in regional thinking about affordable housing along transit. A project objective is creating communities of choice and opportunity. They are looking at preserving existing housing and adding new affordable housing. She noted that new housing affordable at an income of \$49,750 for a family of four (60% of the metro median income of \$82,900 for a family of four) is more expensive than a lot of the existing housing in the Central Corridor. Upon question from Chair Wencl, Ms. Nicholls said they typically use a family of four as a basic standard, but they calibrate housing affordability for the different family sizes.

Commissioner Noecker asked how far out from the Green Line the study area went and if that was tied into what is known about the impact of transit.

Ms. Mai said that they used 29 census tracts for their analysis. They are within about ½ mile of the Green Line tracks.

Commissioner Lindeke asked about a recent Supreme Court decision and the process for getting affordable housing built in the suburbs.

Ms. Nicholls said the Southwest Corridor includes some of the highest property value communities. St. Louis Park, one of the hottest markets in the region right now, has agreed to an inclusionary housing policy under which they require private developers to include affordable housing in their projects. We as a region are trying to think what affordable housing mechanisms and strategies we can create for many kinds of places. The way the federal government provides resources for transit corridor provides some criteria for progress around affordable housing. The Southwest Corridor project has tried to galvanize thinking and strategies for affordable housing. A lot of it is around the market and the financing options for mixed income projects.

Commissioner Lindeke noted the Robert Street transitway alternatives discussed earlier, and the need for affordable housing and density along the corridor.

Ms. Nicholls said families in affordable housing are among the most likely to use transit, so it's good to have in terms of building ridership and maximizing use of investment in transit. They have phenomenal examples of affordable housing that is really a community amenity. Many people feel that a project that has 100% workforce housing is a concentration of poverty, which cities resist. That is why they are pushing for mixed income projects that incorporate both affordable and market rate housing.

Commissioner Noecker asked about inclusionary zoning and why it might be harder to get that to work in Saint Paul.

Ms. Nicholls said inclusionary housing is about not using public resources for affordable housing but rather requiring private developers to create affordable housing within their projects. It only works in strong market where the private developers are willing to build affordable housing even though they lose money on it because the market rate housing can cover the loss. In a weaker market, developers will just go somewhere else. We don't have a strong enough housing market for this in the Twin Cities, except to some extent in parts of St. Louis Park, Edina and Minnetonka.

Commissioner Makarios asked about the debate regarding using limited resources for affordable housing in areas of concentrated poverty.

Ms. Nicholls said that Minnesota Housing Finance Agency criteria are geared toward trying to disperse those resources and to locate projects where they will be the most successful. We need affordable housing everywhere.

Commissioner Merrigan asked about public-private partnerships to build affordable housing, noting a mixed income project for which the developer is seeking tax credits, a TIF District, and MHFA financing. she wondered how much developers are bringing to the table compared to the amount of public subsidy.

Ms. Nicholls said they just finished the 2700 University project, an amazing project with 250 units, 50 of them affordable, that used 4% tax credits and TIF and lifts the bar for mixed income projects in our region. We are not San Francisco, D.C. or Seattle, and private developers do not stand to gain the profits as those projects would in those regions, so we will rely on some level of subsidy to create mixed income projects.

Commissioner Edgerton noted the graphic that showed most of the new market rate housing in the Central Corridor are in downtown Minneapolis, U of M, and downtown Saint Paul locations, and all of the new housing the Midway is affordable. He asked about what is being done to raise up those areas, and if building a lot of affordable housing there might make it less desirable for market rate housing.

Ms. Nicholls said that the new units are more expensive than most of the existing housing in the area, so it is strengthening the market and new investment is a positive for attracting more investment. The Frogtown Rondo Home Fund is working with developers to reinvest in the existing housing stock. The cultural corridor, creative place making, and ethnic businesses that

are emerging along the Central Corridor are a "cool factor" that builds demand for people to want to live near those kinds of places or be in those environments. People desire walkability and places they can get to without having to get into their cars all the time. Saint Paul has a lot of places that are walkable.

VIII. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Commissioner Thao said the Comprehensive Planning Committee's next meeting is on August 18, 2015, and reported that their review of the Mississippi River Critical Area Rules will be coming to the next Planning Commission meeting.

IX. Neighborhood Planning Committee

Commissioner Oliver announced the items on the agenda for the next Neighborhood Planning Committee meeting on Wednesday, August 12, 2015.

X. Communications Committee

Commissioner Thao had no report.

XI. Task Force/Liaison Reports

Commissioner Thao announced that the Grand Round Community Advisory Committee is meeting on Tuesday, August 18, 2015 at the Arlington Hills Library from 6-8 p.m.

XII. Old Business

None.

XIII. New Business

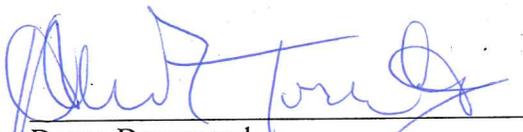
None.

XIV. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by
Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary
Planning and Economic Development Department,
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Respectfully submitted,

for 
Donna Drummond
Planning Director

Approved September 4, 2015
(Date)


Daniel Ward II
Secretary of the Planning Commission