

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

Minutes December 5, 2014

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, December 5, 2014, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present: Mmes. DeJoy, McMahon, Merrigan, Reveal, Thao, Underwood, Wang, Wencl; and Messrs. Connolly, Edgerton, Lindeke, Nelson, Ochs, Oliver, Wickiser.

Commissioners Absent: Mmes. *Noecker, *Padilla, *Shively, and Messrs. *Gelgelu, *Makarios, and *Ward.

Absent: *Excused

Also Present: Donna Drummond, Planning Director; Reuben Collins, Department of Public Works, Jake Reilly, Lucy Thompson, Josh Williams, Michelle Beaulieu, Hilary Holmes, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes October 31, 2014.

MOTION: *Commissioner Reveal moved approval of the minutes of October 31, 2014. Commissioner McMahon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Wencl had no announcements.

III. Planning Director's Announcements

Donna Drummond reminded the Planning Commissioners about the retreat at the December 19th meeting on Urban Industrial Development Policy. Some information was emailed out and more information will be included in the next packets.

IV. PUBLIC HEARING: Saint Paul Bicycle Plan – Item from the Transportation Committee. (Reuben Collins, 651/266-6059)

Chair Wencl announced that the Saint Paul Planning Commission was holding a public hearing on the Saint Paul Bicycle Plan. Notice of the public hearing was published in the Legal Ledger on November 24, 2014, and was emailed to the citywide Early Notification System list and other interested parties.

with the bike path is in Lowertown where construction on the ballpark resulted in 285 parking spaces lost and the expanded sidewalk on 6th Street also resulted in lost parking spaces. He wants the city to slow down the process, the study and the new construction on Jackson and take a deep breath and see what kind of impact especially in the Lowertown area the recent loss of parking has on businesses. He is a businessman and he knows a lot of businessmen in the city and everybody is afraid of the loss of parking. There are situations like Macy's on Wabasha Street that really should be a priority to try to figure out how to stimulate the core area of Saint Paul with retail and in his view that relates to more convenient parking. He thinks that the bike paths and the efforts of the bicyclist are for a certain profile of a person in the city and not universally accepted by everyone in the city. Again slow down and take a look at what kind of impact the efforts that have been done already and what kind of impact it has on retail and vibrancy in the city and go on from there.

5. Jim Ivey lives and has had a business in Lowertown for over 15 years. For decades downtown streets have been owned by the car and for decades on-street parking lots did nothing to create business. If he wants to drive to a store with easy parking then he will go to one of the malls, because they have free parking which downtown Saint Paul cannot compete with. But what can be done is transform the dense downtown business district into a vibrant, friendly, attractive place for people to walk, bike and linger. This bike plan is a chance to make it possible for hundreds or even thousands of people to take one step closer to being car free, and pumping millions of dollars back into Saint Paul, instead of the pockets of car companies, gas companies and insurance companies. He hopes the Planning Commission will approve this plan to move Saint Paul into the future and help make these investments in our city both for the health of our people and the health of our economy. Written testimony was received from Mr. Ivey.
6. Benita Warns is owner and operator of Mr. Michaels Recycles Bicycles and Midway Bicycle Supply, a wholesale distributor of bicycle parts. She overall supports the plan; however there are two items that need to be addressed. First, there is a section in the plan that talks about barriers and then it list certain barriers and those barriers are typically streets or railroads, freeways, rivers and bodies of water. There is one that is significant and it is missing. That is where to connect the bicycle route that goes currently down Pascal all the way down to Marshall with the bicycle route that is proposed in this plan on Saratoga that goes all the way up to Dayton. Pascal actually goes a block south of Marshall to Dayton; however Dayton has a railroad track that goes in between there. There is also a vision for a path along that railroad track which is alongside Ayd Mill Road that eventually will happen. There is also City right-of-way on Dayton that is east of Saratoga and she will be proposing to connect those two routes there, that will then give a continuous north south route to a very busy area and it would be accessible to both pedestrians and bicyclists. This would be a much safer alternative and a lot less expensive than trying to retrofit Hamline. Another item to address is that there is a suggestion to pass an ordinance to prohibit being able to chain bicycles to parking signs, telephone poles and other objects that are in the public right-of-way. Enforcement of something like that would be a nightmare, what's the penalty, they seize the bike? There are enough problems with enforcement of the rules that are in place already. Example: The bike rack in front of a business is full, so you chain the bike to a sign and then somebody leaves and you come back and your bike has a ticket on it because it is not on the rack even though there was no place on the rack when you first got there. So this ordinance should be avoided.

community and addressing the needs. Ms. Airmet spends a lot of time in the summer biking for fun and recreation in Saint Paul, but she also bikes for transportation and that is not easy. The existing trails don't go everywhere she needs to go so she is more likely to bike somewhere she knows is a safe route and a safe place for bikes. This summer her 16 year old daughter was hit by a car while riding her bike across a major arterial street at the crosswalk; she is okay with just some bumps and bruises. That brought two things into focus, one is the need for safer bike infrastructure and secondly the need for greater public awareness of cyclists and their safety. Educating drivers about bikes and bike safety, not just cyclists will increase safety. Please include guidelines for setting aside a percentage of funds to educate the public about the rights of cyclists, the benefits of cycling and the safety of everyone who uses our streets. Equity lies at the heart of the Bike Plan and if it is adopted and then implemented with a strong vision and spirit of equity, it can help restore and enhance dignity for those among us who do not have a car or who minimize car use, either by choice or by necessity. Ms. Airmet submitted written comments as well.

12. Nicki Jones, a resident in Lowertown and a business owner in Saint Paul, supports the Saint Paul Bicycle Plan. A year and a half ago her family of six, four are kids, sold their only car and now use public transportation, bicycles and walking to get nearly everywhere they go. Anything they do within city limits of the Twin Cities they use their bikes to get there. She supports the bike plan because it outlines a great start toward creating safer bicycle routes and to make most of those routes as safe as possible by implementing protected lanes, we need physical barriers not just painted lines between cars and bicycles. At a recent Metro Independent Business Association public policy meeting one of the members talked about moving his retail business from Snelling Avenue to Como Avenue in the St. Anthony Park neighborhood. Neither location had dedicated parking, but business is significantly better on Como Avenue, in part because of the bicycle lanes. Bicyclists move slower, therefore cars move slower and everyone has a better chance to see the storefronts and stop. Her business is just off University Avenue and in front of her business she converted the parking space into about 12 bicycle parking spaces so all we need now is to make those bike routes to her business safer and more accessible for their growing customer base who choose to bike. Ms. Jones also submitted written testimony.
13. Wes Johanson resides in the Como area and he is all for bicycle lanes but he does have a problem when we reduce the main arteries down from four lanes to two lanes. He and his wife travel downtown once a week and the cars are backed up between Rice Street and Dale Street solid. He does not see any bicycles but these cars are idling and that is part of the carbon foot print due to bicyclists. He is all for bicycling, and he is all for bike lanes, but off the main arteries. Because people are not as fortunate as all these people in the audience here to be able to ride bikes to work a lot of people have to commute and the traffic is backed up. He has owned snowmobiles and four wheelers and for everything he has owned he had to pay a user fee, for using the trails for the snowmobiles and he had to have those insured. He does not understand why there is not a bond or something to protect the drivers as they are driving, he does not bike ride anymore, but he used to. He is a minority in this majority group of bicyclists here.
14. Paul Bengtson, Director of Capitol River Council. Mr. Bengtson read an official resolution that was adopted by their organization in regards to the Bicycle Plan. He thanked the Planning Commission for the opportunity to testify and the downtown stakeholders who have

with the support of the City of Saint Paul will promote economic development in the city. Many residents use their bikes for transportation and recreation and having good bike access and parking near local businesses is crucial. But it is not safe biking on many of the roads in Saint Paul and there are no good routes to get around. The bike plan and the infrastructure will help to attract and retain residents in Saint Paul. Ms. Schwartz has submitted written comments as well.

19. Douglas Lamb, owner of Candyland, Inc. for 40 years, said his biggest complaint from his customers is that there is not enough parking. There is no reason to add to this problem by removing metered parking to add a bike path. Removing parking from Wabasha Street is not fair to any retail located downtown. Customers want to pull up and park right in front of the stores where they want to shop. The streets of downtown are very slow moving, and there is nothing wrong with sharing the road with a few bicyclists. And who rides their bikes in the extreme temperatures of the long winter in Minnesota? Please do not ruin the little retail you have downtown. Written comments were received from Mr. Lamb.
20. Lindsey Johnston, a Payne/Phalen neighborhood resident and a spokeswoman for Saint Paul Women on Bikes, said she fully supports moving forward with the bike plan. She bikes every day and sees other bikers not only everyday but almost every single trip, even on the coldest snowiest days. Lots of people in her neighborhood bike and not just by choice but out of necessity because not everyone can afford to own a car. People are forced to bike on the sidewalk of busy streets and children in her neighborhood are saying that it is dangerous to bike in the streets. It is dangerous but it does not have to be. The eastside needs to have better safer routes within the eastside and connecting it to other neighborhoods, especially downtown. We need to connect the city internally to grow and flourish and the bike plan can do that.
21. Heidi Schallberg, a resident of the Highland Park neighborhood, is employed downtown and a member of Saint Paul Smart Trips. She is in support of the City's adoption of the much needed bicycle plan. She encouraged a few modifications without delaying the adoption of the plan. The first is to not restrict bicycle parking, second is to emphasis the use of protected bike lanes on high volume roads. She thinks the adoption and timely implementation of this plan will go a long way toward truly making Saint Paul more livable for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.
22. Richard Arey represents Friends of Saint Paul and Ramsey County Parks & Trails, and they support the latest draft of the bicycle plan. But before it is adopted they encouraged the Planning Commission and City Council to amend the Priorities portion of the plan as follows:
 - 1) Build a bike route to, and through downtown.
 - 2) Build a north – south bike route.
 - 3) Sign, map and maintain major bike routes
 - 4) Provide safe and separated space for each mode of transportation.
 - 5) Promote new bike routes with a multi-media approach.

The new Saint Paul Bikeways Plan provides an excellent framework for developing a great infrastructure for cycling in the city. They hope the funding keeps pace with the ideas as the City moves forward. Mr. Arey submitted detailed written comments.

plan a gap that exists between downtown and the east side and suggested one of the possibilities that might fill that gap. He would like to see similar to the spoke of Como Avenue which goes to the north and to the west to see East 7th used to go north and to the east, as there is not an easy way to connect. It is a difficult thing for bicyclists to go out on Kellogg if that gets a new bridge soon. When the Lafayette Bridge was rebuilt one of the contentious items was whether to put a bicycle lane on it. The bike lane was put on the bridge and crossing Lafayette it dumps out on East 7th Street and then there is no connection to go anywhere. So there is the need to utilize what has already been decided as a good route (the bridge) and it needs to be connected to somewhere. He encouraged the possibility of making that a major change and make it a spoke out of the downtown.

27. Betty Wheeler, a St. Anthony Park resident, strongly endorses the bike plan as designed and described in the document and map. Facilitating a good bike route is extremely important as it must be both a route that feels safe and is safe for the bicyclist. However she has a concern about the Raymond Avenue stretch of the Grand Round of the bike plan as it is currently the only option for bicyclists to traverse from South St. Anthony Park and the Green Line to North St. Anthony Park and the U of M Saint Paul Campus. Ms. Wheeler lives along that route and most of her neighbors as well as she do not feel safe enough to ride on Raymond Avenue. To make Raymond Avenue bike friendly there needs to be some improvements. First it needs substantial traffic calming measures and trucks need to be removed from it except for local or destination. It is important for these items to get implemented soon because phases II and III of the Raymond Avenue reconstruction are about to commence. Ms. Wheeler submitted written comments as well.
28. Venita Warnke has been a resident of downtown Saint Paul for nearly 30 years and over the years she has heard comments from people about the parking situation. Ramps are expensive and on-street parking spaces are at a premium. She does a lot of walking downtown and she sees very few bicyclists, especially during the cold winter weather. Will that change with a designated bike path next to her building on Jackson Street? Most know the answer to that. She hopes the City gives serious consideration to real-life views of the residents and business owners downtown who do not want to see more on-street parking spaces lost because of this proposed city-wide bike plan. Written comment was submitted from Ms. Warnke.
29. Linda Petri, a resident of downtown Saint Paul for about 10 years, addressed the concept of the bike loop replacing economic activity lost by parking spaces. It has had one big marketing success out of state; she wants to know more about that. Being a grant writer if she ever presented that particular point to a foundation she would have been laughed out the door. How will this shake out considering several million dollars in current City debt. For now the bike loop idea is a little loopy.
30. Anne White, a resident in the Union Park neighborhood, supports the proposed Bicycle Plan but she has a few issues related to priorities. She has recently switched from mainly driving to walking and taking transit and would like to add bicycling to her transportation options but she is not confident that she can find a route that feels safe so she does not bike often. This brings her to the first point of the need to prioritize the building of protected bike lanes. If we want to encourage people to get around on bicycles it is critical that we build more protected bike lanes and paths to serve people like herself who are not comfortable riding in a narrow bike lane between parked cars and fast moving traffic. The next high priority is to fill in the gaps in existing bicycle routes. And it is important to review and update the bike plan more

slow even further and the point can really be driven home that this is a shared traffic and bicycle lane. Mr. Hosko submitted very detailed written comments.

MOTION: Commissioner Lindeke moved to close the public hearing, leave the record open for written testimony until 4:30 p.m. on Monday, December 8, 2014 and to refer the matter back to the Transportation Committee for review and recommendation. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

PUBLIC HEARING: Minor Zoning Text Amendments to Chapters 60-62, and portions of Chapters 63 & 65 – Item from the Neighborhood Planning Committee. (Jake Reilly, 651/266-6618)

Chair Wencl announced that the Saint Paul Planning Commission was holding a public hearing on the Minor Zoning Text Amendments to Chapters 60-62, and portions of Chapters 63 & 65. Notice of the public hearing was published in the Legal Ledger on November 24, 2014, and was emailed to the citywide Early Notification System list and other interested parties.

Jake Reilly, PED staff, said the minor text amendment package generally relates to clarity of language and typographical errors. He said that an amendment will be presented to the committee for Section 63.316. Paving. This amendment is to address the specificity of the location of driveways which has been creating a lot of variance applications. The amendment would reduce the number of variances processed by the BZA and the Planning Commission.

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

The following people spoke.

1. Benita Warns is a resident of Saint Paul and owns and operates two businesses in Saint Paul. She said that there is one item in here that came up when she looked through the proposal to see if there were any red flags for her. She spoke against deleting Section 61.601(d) under Variances which refers to ensuring an adequate supply of light and air to adjacent property. She is concerned that deleting that from the variance requirements altogether, may affect those in single-family homes or smaller structures adjacent to a multi-story building, such as the Project for Pride in Living project on University Avenue. She said in that example, the Project for Pride in Living building is going to be a lot taller structure than what was there before. She wanted to know what kind of shadow analysis was done to ensure that those home owners don't lose the sun light that they get in their backyards, and that is a principle that is very important. She thinks that some sort of measureable criteria need to be in the variance findings. If, for example, the shadow from a building that is allowed to be built with a variance, changes the light condition in an adjacent property owner's yard by more than 10%, they should either not be allowed to have the variance or the person getting the variance needs provide some compensation to the other property owner for what could be necessary changes in landscaping. She suggested that staff need to go back and rework that language and put in some sort of measurable criteria to ensure that adjacent property owners don't have something that is going to block the sun light to their property and significantly change the growing conditions.

MOTION: Commissioner Oliver moved to close the public hearing, leave the record open for written testimony until 4:30 p.m. on Monday, December 8, 2014 and to refer the matter back to

XI. Old Business

Commissioner Reveal asked what the status of the Downtown Parking Study was.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, said that the mid-point will be in January and the consultants will be in town and the plan is to have them present some initial findings to the Transportation Committee and then the study should be done approximately in March. However she is not sure if it will be approved or recommended to the council.

Commissioner Reveal would like to hear what they are learning from the study at some point before the Planning Commission finalizes their action on the bicycle plan.

XII. New Business

None.

XIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:36 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 January 16, 2015

(Date)



Daniel Ward II
Secretary of the Planning Commission