

**MINUTES OF THE ZONING COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, February 25, 2021 - 3:30 p.m.**

PRESENT: Baker, DeJoy, Grill, Hood, Rangel Morales, Reilly, Syed, and Taghioff  
STAFF: Anton Jerve, Sonja Butler, Allan Torstenson, and Peter Warner

The meeting was chaired by Commissioner Baker. He stated that the chair of the Planning Commission had determined that due to the COVID-19 pandemic it is neither practical nor prudent for the Zoning Committee to meet in person, and therefore the meeting was being conducted remotely, with all members of the Zoning Committee attending the meeting remotely. The public is also able to join the meeting remotely and can speak during the public hearing portion or submit comments by noon on the day before the meeting.

**275 Erie Nonconforming Duplex - 21-236-115 - Reestablishment of nonconforming use as a duplex, 275 Erie St, between Grace Street and Saint Clair Avenue**

Anton Jerve presented the staff report with a recommendation of approval with a condition for the reestablishment of nonconforming use permit. He said that District 9 had not commented, and there were 1 letter in support, and 7 letters in opposition.

In response to Commissioner Baker, Mr. Jerve said they asked the applicant to provide the affidavit with the expectation that it would be used as justification for a variance for signature requirements, which the applicant was seeking prior to the pandemic. Given the reasons stated staff wanted it to be documented and seen before the Committee. The affidavit documented the justification to ask for a variance. He said that the Mayor's order waived the requirement for a notarized petition of at least two-thirds of the owners of real estate within 100 feet of the subject property during the pandemic. If the Mayor's order wasn't in place the applicant would have needed to also apply for a variance for the required petition which the Committee would review.

In response to Commissioner Taghioff, Mr. Jerve said that the current physical condition of the property is that the living quarters are on the upper floor like as they are shown in the staff report. The lower level is used for storage and laundry. It has been inspected for building code requirements for a Certificate of Occupancy for a single-family home several times and it has been deemed by the Department of Safety and Inspection to meet those standards.

Yonas Gebrekristos, spoke on behalf of Eyob Gebrekristos 3801 Laurel Court, Eagan, MN. He said that they have made significant changes to the property. They have added fencing and made changes to the flooring and walls.

Aklilu Dunlap, Attorney to the applicant, 57 N 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Minneapolis, said he wants to reiterate how this experience of reestablishing a duplex really is the undergirding of a lot of American and community-oriented policies. This property was vacant for a very long time and as the surrounding neighbors know vacant properties invite a lot of societal ills. Mostly in the form of criminal activity typically involving drugs. Mr. Gebrekristos took this on and he rehabilitated this property to its continuing state of occupancy. It's a combination status change because he brought it to city code compliance. He brought it to a condition where it could be occupied as a rental property. It has not been perfect, but this property is far better than it had been. A lot of the resistance to all the work that has been done is related to the history prior to Mr. Gebrekristos ownership. He seeks to reestablish to a duplex because the status is too large for a single-family home for most people. The lower level, which cannot be occupied, is used as

storage space and during time of improvement a workplace for vendors and other skilled laborers. If it were reestablished as a duplex another affordable housing unit would be introduced and that is a good thing in a community that cares about fair housing. It would also generate rent and that rent would go to a tax base that would support Saint Paul and Ramsey County. It would provide additional funding so that he can continue making improvements that he has been planning. It is a modest building, but it has improved so much from what it was previously. It is imperative that this be restated as it will complete an American story. Mr. Gebrekristos escaped a war in his country and came to American as a refugee and adopted American values and dreams. He is not asking for any special favors he only wants an opportunity to characterize this property the way it was in 1968. He will continue doing the hard work. The benefit is great to the neighborhood. When he purchased the property, it was valued under \$100,000 and it is now valued close to \$200,000 because of the work he has done to the property.

In response to Commissioner DeJoy, Mr. Dunlap said he both units would be rented. Yonas Gebrekristos has taken real estate courses and he would operate and manage the property including background checks and making improvements that would allow parking onsite.

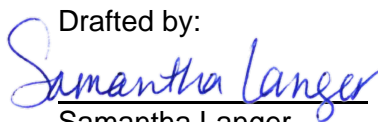
Yonas Gebrekristos added that they will be renting one of the units and one of the units may be used by his younger brother.


No one spoke in support or opposition. The public hearing was closed.

Commissioner DeJoy moved approval with a condition of the reestablishment of nonconforming use permit. Commissioner Syed seconded the motion.

The motion passed by a vote of 8-0-0.

Adopted                      Yeas - 8              Nays - 0              Abstained - 0

Drafted by:  
  
Samantha Langer  
Recording Secretary

Submitted by:  
  
anton jerve (Mar 12, 2021 10:15 CST)  
Anton Jerve  
City Planner

Approved by:  
  
Cedrick Baker (Mar 12, 2021 10:33 CST)  
Cedrick Baker  
Chair









# 21-236-115 275 Erie NCUP duplex minutes-aj

Final Audit Report

2021-03-12

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