

MINUTES OF THE ZONING COMMITTEE
Thursday, May 6, 2021 - 3:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Baker, Grill, Hood, Rangel Morales, Reilly, Syed, and Taghioff
EXCUSED: DeJoy
STAFF: Anton Jerve, Samantha Langer, 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.

300 Banfil/149-155 Dousman Variances - 21-251-173 - Variances for front yard setback (9.2' minimum, 1' proposed), rear yard setback (9' minimum, 1' proposed), south side yard setback (9' minimum, 6.3' proposed), north side yard setback (9' minimum, 1' proposed), and parking (6 spaces minimum, 4 spaces proposed) at 300 Banfil Street/149-155 Dousman, SW corner at Dousman.

Anton Jerve presented the staff report with a recommendation of approval with conditions for the variances. He said District 9 had not responded, and there were 3 letters in support, and 3 letters in opposition.

In response to Commissioner Baker, Mr. Jerve said the applicant originally applied at the same time as their rezoning application that was at the April 22, Zoning Committee meeting. The reason for separating the two was that staff realized they missed the parking variance in review of the application and staff presented options for the applicant regarding the parking variances. The applicant opted to move forward with the parking variances. He recommended that they not layover the rezoning application given the additional review timeline required for rezonings. Mr. Jerve said the easement agreements are not standard, but they are provided for in the zoning code under section 66.231(h), which allows for narrow setbacks with these types of easement agreements. To go narrower than six feet requires an easement. In terms of the southern easement, that building is right on the property line so an easement is recommended there to ensure that there would be fire and maintenance access.

Sonja Mason, 21 St Albans Street S, Saint Paul, said she is representing the owners, Jeff and Rebecca Austin. She highlighted the outreach they have done on the project. She said they met with Fort Road Federation in March before they even applied and got initial feedback. They also met with them last night and the Committee voted to recommend support. The meeting of the full board will be next week. They also had a meeting on the site with the neighbors and it was attended by between a dozen and two dozen neighbors and all of the immediate residents came and generally had good feedback. She talked about the concerns of the immediate property owner at 159 Dousman. Between the initial application and now they have revised the plan to remove a retaining wall and agreed to the six-foot easement for maintenance. They looked at moving the building more to the north, but they had feedback from Fort Road Federation that they wanted to make sure there were good sightlines for the driveway crossing, and enough room to maneuver, and room for snow storage. They have provided the largest setback space they could for that neighbor and the close position is also due to his property having an existing nonconformance.

In response to Commissioner Baker, Mr. Jerve confirmed that we have not received a letter from the District yet. Ms. Mason added that her understanding is that they want to wait until the full board has their meeting.

Steven Boyer, 297 Goodhue Street, Saint Paul, spoke in opposition. He said he is speaking against the parking variance because in 2013 he spoke to the zoning office about building out the third floor at his location that would have added a one bedroom apartment and they told him absolutely not because of inadequate parking on the street and that would have only added one car. He said he would apply for a variance and they told him not to bother it will never be granted so he abandoned the project. Now we are talking about two duplexes and six cars. Currently there are always cars parked in front of this property. There are no basements in the designs of these buildings and the garages could be used as storage so they would potentially be parking in their driveways and in the street. It is naïve to think that they will use all four garages.

Ms. Mason responded to testimony. She said she sympathizes with Mr. Boyer for his previous experience. She said that West Seventh is a mixed-use corridor and one of the best transit corridors with the highest usage and frequency they have in Saint Paul. They are very hopeful these developments will be one car households because of the opportunity to walk, bike and take transit.

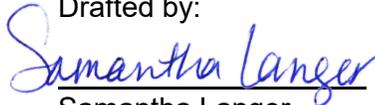
No one spoke in support. The public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Hood said this is an innovative development that adds housing and has modern elements, but still fits into the traditional pattern. The variances seem to mesh with the rest of the neighborhood. The West Seventh area at this location is an eclectic mix and this would add positively to the area.

Commissioner Grill moved approval with conditions of the variances. Commissioner Hood seconded the motion.

The motion passed by a vote of 7-0-0.

Adopted Yeas - 7 Nays - 0 Abstained - 0

Drafted by:

Samantha Langer
Recording Secretary

Submitted by:

anton jerve (May 21, 2021 09:50 CDT)
Anton Jerve
City Planner

Approved by:

Cedrick Baker (May 21, 2021 11:15 CDT)
Cedrick Baker
Chair

21-251-173 300 Banfil minutes-ajj

Final Audit Report

2021-05-21

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