

MINUTES OF THE ZONING COMMITTEE
Thursday, May 20, 2021 - 3:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Baker, DeJoy, Grill, Hood, Reilly, Syed, and Taghioff
EXCUSED: Rangel Morales
STAFF: Menaka Mohan, 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.

240 W Sycamore Auto Salvage CUP - 21-257-179 - Conditional use permit for motor vehicle salvage operation at 240 Sycamore Street W, between Rice Street and BNSF Railroad.

Menaka Mohan presented the staff report with a recommendation of approval with conditions for the conditional use permit. She said District 6 submitted a letter recommending approval, and there were 0 letters in support, and 3 letters in opposition.

Neil Ollarvez, President of Soowys Corp, 240 W Sycamore Street, Saint Paul, said their top priority is safety for their employees and for the environment. He would like to get a license to operate as a motor vehicles salvage dealer. He thinks his neighbor has a concern about oil. He said after they get all their licenses, they are going to purchase platform that is used specifically for salvage where all the fluids will be divided into individual compartments. Right now, they are not working with car fluids. He said they had an inspector come to their business and told them what they needed to do, and they are complying because they would like to have a safe environment. He said one of the public comment letters was complaining about the employment market in this industry and they will be relocating employees from their Florida location to Minnesota to work at this location to create an expansion of this business. He said they have companies in other countries, and they are not going to sell parts to people they are going to sell parts to other businesses in other countries. He said his neighbors are concerned about competition and this is a free country where we can have competition, but this is not the same business model that they have. They would like to be on the legal side and have a safe environment.

Jose Larrarte, 1581 Zenith Way, Western Florida, spoke in support. He said that Neil is his brother in law, and he was at the location helping with the business. He can testify that they are honest hard working people. They have over a decade of experience in this business. They own a salvation company in Florida, and they have been very successful. They work hard and take care of their employees and society. This is a family owned business and they are very responsible. He said he is from Columbia and he said it is a shame to see that in this Country some people with a little bit of power think that they are going to silence someone else because they are different. This goes against everything the United States stands for and he doesn't think they are anything less than anyone else. The application has met all the conditions.

Angel Contreras, 111 E Kellogg Blvd. Saint Paul, spoke in support. He said he works for Soowys Corp and was relocated from Miami. He said the business is a safe environment and they have been working hard to keep all the legal procedures up to date. They worry about the employee's safety and they are not creating competition with their neighbors. Since the day they arrived they would like to build a healthy relationship with their neighbors. There have been some situations that were not pleasant for the company because their neighbors offended some of their employees. They would like to keep growing and supply jobs and money to the state and people of the industry.

Sean Murphy, Atlas Auto Parts, 228 W Sycamore Street, Saint Paul, spoke in opposition. He said he has never been approached by anyone from Soowys so a lot of these statements that they are making are untrue. He currently employs 12 people, 4 Spanish people, 1 African American, and Caucasians. He doesn't know if the Committee has read their letters stating their concerns. He said he has heard multiple times that Soowys states that they are safety oriented, but just today he saw one of their employees walk right under a car that was under a forklift and that is a major safety violation. Soowys is operating a salvage yard without the current permits needed like he has obtained. He purchased his property January 8 and he has been in the industry for 23 years.

Mr. Ollarvez responded to testimony. He said that he is not a person that likes to fight, but he has proof that employees at Atlas have harassed them. He said that Atlas claims that they have cars in stacked high, but they have had inspectors at their property. Atlas uses the city street for parking cars for their business. He said that they are not happy with them being from another country and being a business owner. He has asked the City Inspector for help and has been directed to contact the police if they are harassed. They have proof on their security cameras. He would like to talk with his neighbors because they believe in safety. He does not want to fight with his neighbors, but they are making things up. They work in a safe modern way, and they are going to continue.

The public hearing was closed.

Commissioner DeJoy said that they have read all the letters submitted by the public. She asked if stacking the cars and tires as seen in the photos submitted followed licensing requirements for a salvage yard.

Ms. Mohan said the photos were submitted by the neighbor. She said the conditional use permit does have the condition that there must be an eight foot fence so when she went to visit the site, she did not see that, and everything was below the fence.

YaYa Diata, Zoning Administrator, Department of Safety and Inspections, said that he believes as long as the cars are not exceeding the height of the fence they are in compliance. He said he can confirm with licensing staff.

Ms. Mohan added that one of the conditions they put on the conditional use permit is that they must meet all the licensing requirements and if they don't, they can remove the conditional use permit.

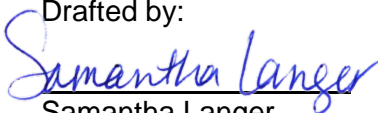
Commissioner Grill moved approval with condition of the conditional use permit. Commissioner Syed seconded the motion.

In response to Commissioner Taghioff, Ms. Mohan said if neighbors do see violations, they can call the Department of Safety and Inspections to report any violations. She also said that the fence is part of the licensing requirements so they would need to make sure that tires and cars are not stacked above the fence.

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:



Menaka Mohan
City Planner

Approved by:



Cedrick Baker (Jun 4, 2021 15:34 CDT)

Cedrick Baker
Chair









21-257-179 240 W Sycamore minutes - MM

Final Audit Report

2021-06-04

Created:	2021-06-04
By:	samantha langer (samantha.langer@ci.stpaul.mn.us)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAmC6zxXZRMq1zwdTxbtc-cjDrpEvD8Mdr

"21-257-179 240 W Sycamore minutes - MM" History

-  Document created by samantha langer (samantha.langer@ci.stpaul.mn.us)
2021-06-04 - 1:06:44 PM GMT- IP address: 156.99.75.2
-  Document emailed to Menaka Mohan (menaka.mohan@ci.stpaul.mn.us) for signature
2021-06-04 - 1:07:12 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Menaka Mohan (menaka.mohan@ci.stpaul.mn.us)
2021-06-04 - 2:02:03 PM GMT- IP address: 75.168.212.62
-  Document e-signed by Menaka Mohan (menaka.mohan@ci.stpaul.mn.us)
Signature Date: 2021-06-04 - 2:27:49 PM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 75.168.212.62
-  Document emailed to Cedrick Baker (cedrick.baker@spps.org) for signature
2021-06-04 - 2:27:51 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Cedrick Baker (cedrick.baker@spps.org)
2021-06-04 - 8:34:10 PM GMT- IP address: 63.238.68.53
-  Document e-signed by Cedrick Baker (cedrick.baker@spps.org)
Signature Date: 2021-06-04 - 8:34:38 PM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 63.238.68.53
-  Agreement completed.
2021-06-04 - 8:34:38 PM GMT