Saint Paul Planning Commission & Heritage Preservation Commission

MASTER MEETING CALENDAR

WEEK OF JANUARY 4-8, 2016

Mon (4)

Tues (5)

3:30-5:00 p.m. **Comprehensive Planning Committee** *(Merritt Clapp-Smith, 651/266-6547)* **HAS BEEN CANCELLED**

Weds (6)

Thurs (7)

Fri (8)

8:30-11:00 a.m. **Planning Commission Meeting** *(Donna Drummond, 651/266-6556)*

Room 40 City Hall
Conference Center
15 Kellogg Blvd.

PUBLIC HEARING: University Avenue Parking Study – Item from the Transportation Committee. *(Bill Dermody, 651/266-6617)*

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

NEW BUSINESS

#15-180-427 CVS Pharmacy – Conditional use permit for drive through service with modification of special conditions requiring drive through lanes and service windows to be at least 60 feet from residential property and requiring drive through lanes not to between the principal structure and a public street. 30 Fairview Avenue South, NE corner at Grand Avenue. *(Mike Richardson, 651/266-6621)*

#15-185-423 Holiday Station Stores – Conditional use permit for replacement of the auto convenience market building. 1608 Rice Street, SE corner at Wheelock Parkway. *(Jamie Radel, 651/266-6614)*

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

Minutes December 4, 2015

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, December 4, 2015, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present:	Mmes. DeJoy, McMahon, Merrigan, Padilla, Reveal, Shively, Underwood, Wang; and Messrs. Edgerton, Gelgelu, Lindeke, Makarios, Nelson, Oliver, and Ward.
Commissioners Absent:	Mmes. *Thao, *Wencl, and Messrs. *Ochs, and *Wickiser. *Excused
Also Present:	Donna Drummond, Planning Director; Lucy Thompson, Allan Torstenson, Bill Dermody, Josh Williams, Jamie Radel, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes October 30, 2015.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Nelson moved approval of the minutes of October 30, 2015. Commissioner Lindeke seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

II. Chair's Announcements

Commissioner Reveal, the Commission's First Vice-Chair, chaired the meeting. She had no announcements.

III. Planning Director's Announcements

Donna Drummond gave an update about the Snelling-Midway redevelopment site. On Nov. 30th there was a large meeting to gather community input and the first committee advisory meeting followed on December 3rd. Commissioner Padilla is co-chairing that group.
On Wednesday, the City Council approved resolutions that affect the Planning Commission work, regarding a study of alternative financial institutions and the addition of a public art chapter to the Highland District Council plan.

IV. Zoning Committee

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

Two items to come before the Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, December 8, 2015:

- Cleveland Hi-Rise – Add 9 spaces to an existing parking lot at 899 South Cleveland Avenue.

(Larry Zangs)

- Sunrise Bank – New office building (57,000 square feet, 3 stories) at 2525 Wabash Avenue. *(Tom Beach)*

NEW BUSINESS

#15-173-084 Patrick Nseumen – Rezone from RT1 Two-Family to T2 Traditional Neighborhood. 805 Hudson Road, NE corner at Wilson. *(Bill Dermody, 651/266-6617)*

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

#15-173-542 Omar's Auto – Conditional use permit for an auto specialty store with modification of required landscaped buffer area width along residentially zoned property (10 ft. required; proposed 9 ft. along N property line and 7.5 ft. along E property line) 619-621 St. Anthony Avenue, NE corner at Dale Street. *(Jamie Radel, 651/266-6614)*

MOTION: ***Commissioner Nelson moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the conditional use permit subject to additional conditions. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

DISCUSSION

Zoning Fee Study – Review and recommendation for updating zoning fees to cover the cost of the service for which the fee is imposed. *(Allan Torstenson, 651/266-6579, and Wendy Lane, DSI, 651/266-9081)*

Commissioner Ward asked why we are not looking at fees in a more holistic way. One thing that he hears is that Saint Paul fees are too high, higher than in other Twin Cities communities. Are we looking at best practices so we can reduce our fees?

Allan Torstenson, PED staff, said the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) proposed a 3% across-the-board increase for all DSI fees (building permit and license fees, etc.) as part of their 2016 budget process with the Mayor and City Council. The Planning Commission is being asked to look just at amendments to zoning fees that are in the zoning code because state law requires Planning Commission review and recommendation before the City Council can take action on zoning code amendments. Since the DSI proposal only included amendments to fees paid to DSI, and did not include other zoning fees paid to PED, in addition to a recommendation on the fee amendments proposed by DSI as part of their budget the draft resolution also initiates a zoning study to consider more holistic amendments to fees prescribed in the zoning code including fees paid to PED. In the past PED and DSI have always looked at all of the zoning fees together, carefully considering costs and appropriate fees for different types of applications. For some zoning work, such as zoning compliance letters, it is appropriate for fees to cover 100% of the cost. For some other things it may be appropriate for fees to cover something less than 100% of the cost.

Commissioner Lindeke asked about the process DSI has used for getting public feedback on the proposed fee increases from people who pay fees to DSI for such things as zoning applications and building permits.

Mr. Torstenson said he understands that DSI discussed their proposed fee increases for months as part of their budget process, but he does not know who all they talked with.

Commissioner Nelson said he thinks that Minneapolis fees are generally higher than in St. Paul. A lot of building permit fees are built into the building code itself. He noted that responsibility for some zoning compliance review that used to be done by building permit staff has shifted to zoning staff.

Mr. Torstenson said that at the Zoning Committee meeting Wendy Lane, the zoning administrator in DSI, had explained that building code plan checkers used to cover basic zoning compliance at the same time. They don't do that anymore because it has gotten to be more complicated with some of the recent changes in zoning requirements, such as design guidelines, so that review is now done by zoning staff in the zoning administrator's office in DSI. Current fees are not enough to cover the cost of zoning administrator's office staff for this work.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Nelson moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the zoning fee study and text amendments. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

Commissioner Nelson also announced the items on the agenda at the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, December 10, 2015.

V. Neighborhood Planning Committee

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, stated that there was a polling of the Neighborhood Planning Committee members asking them whether or not they wanted to forward these two items with a recommendation for approval and the majority said yes and no one disagreed.

Expansion of Downtown Commercial Development District – Approve resolution regarding Comprehensive Plan conformance. *(Lucy Thompson, 651/266-6578)*

Lucy Thompson, PED staff, said the expansion of the downtown commercial development district is being considered at the request of Councilmember Thune in order to allow Ward 2 to exceed the ward limit on liquor licenses. Each ward is capped at a certain number of licenses; Ward 2 is often challenged by that cap because of downtown and the West 7th entertainment district. Artspace is the petitioner, on behalf of several businesses. The request is to expand the existing Downtown Commercial Development District in three areas: 1) in Lowertown, between Wall and Broadway; 2) along W. 7th Street over to Chestnut and down to the river; and 3) on the West Side Flats. The role of the Planning Commission is to advise the City Council as to whether these proposed expansions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Lindeke asked where the numbers came from in the first place, and whether this action is connected to the parallel action to redefine "restaurant" in order to allow for more liquor licenses.

Ms. Thompson said that she does not know how the ward allocations are determined. There is a city-wide cap of 215; the creation or expansion of a commercial development district does not allow the city to exceed that number. There is a parallel process going on right now to amend the "restaurant" definition and the issuance of liquor licenses, dealing with the 60 food/40 drinks split. The two actions are related but deal with different aspects of existing codes and ordinances. Both of them will loosen up the ability to establish restaurants with liquor licenses.

Commissioner Lindeke asked why, if changing the restaurant definition will solve the same problem, then why do both things.

Ms. Thompson said that it's just a matter of timing right now.

Commissioner Nelson noted that the Saints ball field is not included within the expanded boundary.. He wondered why CHS Field wouldn't be included if the Science Museum is being proposed to be included.

Ms. Thompson does not know why it is not included; CHS Field may have its own special issuance of a license because of it being a regional sports facility.

Commissioner McMahon said that she supports this, but hopes the parallel process will be successful, as it is a better way to address the issue.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Ward moved on behalf of the Neighborhood Planning Committee to recommend approval of the resolution and forward to City Council for adoption. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

District 10 Como Community Plan – Approve resolution recommending plan adoption to the Mayor and City Council. *(Josh Williams, 651/266-6659)*

MOTION: ***Commissioner Oliver moved on behalf of the Neighborhood Planning Committee to recommend approval of the resolution and forward to the Mayor and City Council for adoption as an addendum to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

Commissioner Oliver announced the next Neighborhood Planning Committee meeting on Wednesday, December 9, 2015 has been cancelled.

VI. Transportation Committee

University Avenue Parking Study – Release draft for public review and set a public hearing for January 8, 2016. *(Nancy Homans, 651/266-8568, Mayor/Council/Public Works)*

Commissioner Lindeke said the Transportation Committee had a presentation by Chris Ferguson who has been working for a long time on this issue that dates back to light rail construction and the debate about on-street parking on University Ave. before and after the Green Line.

Chris Ferguson, President and CEO of Bywater Business Solutions, 716 Washington Avenue SE, Minneapolis, MN, and chair of the Business Resources Cooperative. Mr. Ferguson said that

during the original planning of the light rail construction there was a lot of conversation around whether or not they should have University Avenue as one lane or two lanes. The decision during the planning stage was to leave it as a two lane road the whole way. The thought was that if it was built as a one lane road and there was too much traffic, then it would be very expensive to go back in and remove curb and gutter to make it a two lane road. Whereas if it is built out as a two lane road and it is decided later that traffic volume would warrant bringing parking back, that would not require a significant change to the curb and gutter line, so there would not be a lot of expense. The decision from the LRT project office back in 2009-2010 was to build it as a two lane road and not structure it with cut outs for parking.

One of the commitments that were made back to the business community was that when the construction was done, they would study the traffic volume again and see whether or not the traffic along the corridor returned to pre-construction levels. This study is living up to that commitment to the business community. The traffic counting was done in October 2014, originally with all the intersection counts, and Public Works redid traffic counts in April/May 2015 to see whether things had changed after the winter. In the second set of counts they wanted to look at traffic over the weekend period. The conclusion from an engineering perspective and from a traffic perspective was that much of the corridor could be reduced to one lane without a significant reduction of service, leaving it as an acceptable level of service for most of the corridor. There are stretches in the corridor, particularly around Snelling, where there are large big box retailers that drive a lot of traffic where it doesn't make sense for, and you need the two lanes to get the traffic flow and volume in traffic and cars through that intersection.

Extensive outreach was done to the community on the corridor. Over 1,000 surveys were received. The community feeling was that they were not ready for bringing on-street parking back full time. Both the Technical Committee and Community Advisory Committee met and looked at it and said the compromise solution would be to bring parking back in the evenings only. There was a significant drop in traffic from pre-LRT levels. Even in the rush hour daytime most of the corridor could have one lane of traffic and still function. But looking at the evening period of time after the rush hour peak, University Avenue is not a typical street where there is a morning peak and an afternoon peak – it is more of a built street. So over the course of the day more and more people come to the corridor, there is an evening peak around dinner time and then the traffic volume drops off in the evening. The thought in the analysis was to look at having evening parking which would help the retail businesses and restaurants, and to help fill many of the vacant buildings and lots along the corridor with activity. Yet during the bulk of day when there is a lot of commercial traffic and a lot of other activity along the corridor the two lane road is maintained to allow that to continue to happen. That was the conclusion of the committee to recommend having evening parking. They did look at weekends also, because some committee members wondered whether or not they could have evening parking during the weekday and all day on weekends. The traffic volumes on the weekends up and down the corridor during the day on weekends are similar to a normal workday – there is not the same drop off seen, for example, in downtown Minneapolis or downtown Saint Paul. University Avenue is very active during the day and the conclusion was to just have evening parking Monday through Sunday, 6:00 p.m. to 2 a.m. would be the recommendation for parking. The parking will be non-meter parking at this point to be consistent with the rest of the city, where people do not pay for parking in the evening.

The good and bad for retail businesses is that traffic is down 30–40% and has not come back after Green Line construction; that is a challenge. And for a retail business that is not at a LRT stop, getting people to come from LRT to the business is also a challenge. Many businesses say they

still are not back to where they were revenue wise before light rail construction. So is this going to fix the problem for everybody? No, but if it creates more traffic and creates an environment where University Avenue is more of a place where people want to come to, as opposed to a place where we are encouraging people to pass through, that is a very important thing. From a pedestrian realm perspective, people feel safer when walking down the sidewalk when there is a row of cars protecting and buffering them from the traffic as opposed to walking down a curb line and getting splashed or a car passing by and shooting a rock or something else at you.

Commissioner Ward asked if there were any other thoughts from the data that looked at the perspective of ongoing maintenance related to the drop off in revenue for the businesses. There was money that was given to these businesses during the construction. It is going to take a while to ramp back up to any considerable levels where they recoup these revenues and get to a status quo. Going forward there will be additional taxes and fees that they have to pay in order to maintain the new road, including the street trees and the wider sidewalks that are in front of these businesses. Was there any thought given to looking at ongoing maintenance costs?

Mr. Ferguson replied that that was not part of this work. Broadly, there was a fair amount of conversation around the taxes and how those taxes were implemented on the businesses; some of the smaller businesses especially are really struggling with paying the increased taxes. It goes to the property owner, but most of property owners are passing it through in either rent increases or depending on their lease they are passing it onto their tenants. Some have done very well and returned to where they were before. In the Stadium Village area the rents are probably double what they were before the light rail construction.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Lindeke moved on behalf of the Transportation Committee to release the draft for public review and set a public hearing on January 8, 2016. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

VII. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Commissioner Merrigan had no report.

VIII. Communications Committee

No report.

IX. Task Force/Liaison Reports

Commissioner Padilla said that last night was the first meeting of the Snelling Midway Community Advisory Committee. They had a good turnout both from members and the public. Last night's effort was a framing discussion, getting to know each other on the committee and talking about priorities. Donna Drummond led them through an exercise where they laid out some of their hopes and concerns for the site. What Commissioner Padilla got out of that was there is a lot of diversity of thought on the committee and it is a great group of people who will bring a lot of interesting ideas to both the stadium proposal as well as the overall super block redevelopment. There is a lot of interest in keeping local businesses and balancing that out with new development and really creating a place to be proud to bring visitors to when they come to Saint Paul.

Commissioner Makarios announced that the Ford Site Task Force met on Tuesday night for a rap up of their series of public meetings. Since last December they have held 8 large public meetings and Tuesday night there were between 120-150 people in attendance. The purpose was not to take public input at that meeting but it was to synthesize the public input they received throughout the year and give it back. There was lots of information for community members about the input received in 2015 and what that means as they move into zoning and planning. They had an update from Ford to the public at the meeting; Mike Hogan said that they would be releasing to the MPCA the draft environmental report by the end of this year and that will become a public document. So we will know what the environmental stuff looks like and then they will move into zoning and creating a public realm plan.

The Ford Site Task Force will now start meeting again as the task force. These 2015 public meetings have been facilitated by the task force members but there have not been meetings of the task force where they discuss the policies. The Ford Site Task Force will meet on Wednesday, December 16th with two more meetings on January 11th and January 28th from 6:30-8:30 p.m. The first one will probably be at the Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.

Commissioner Underwood announced that the Riverview Corridor is having two public events next week. On Tuesday, December 8, 2015 is the Downtown routing workshop from 12:30-2:30 p.m. at the Union Depot's Veterans Gallery, 214 E. 4th Street. And on Wednesday, December 9, 2015, a Riverview Corridor update will be provided from 4:00-6:00 p.m. at the Sholom Home, 740 Kay Avenue, Saint Paul. These are two opportunities to learn more about the River Corridor transit study or go to http://riverviewcorridor.com.

X. Old Business

None.

XI. New Business

None.

XII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by
Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary
Planning and Economic Development Department,
City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Drummond

Donna Drummond
Planning Director

Approved _____
(Date)

_____
Daniel Ward II
Secretary of the Planning Commission

Planning Team Files\planning commission\minutes\December 4, 2015

FOR THE FULL ZONING COMMITTEE AGENDA and SUMMARY

of this packet go to the link below:

http://www.stpaul.gov/planningcommission

Thank you

Sonja Butler

Planning Commission Secretary/Office Assistant IV

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