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

Minutes January 8, 2016

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, January 8, 2016, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present:	Mmes. DeJoy, McMahon, Merrigan, Reveal, Shively, Thao, Underwood, Wencl; and Messrs. Gelgelu, Lindeke, Makarios, Nelson, Oliver, and Ward.
Commissioners Absent:	Mmes. *Padilla, *Wang, and Messrs. *Edgerton, *Ochs, and Wickiser. *Excused
Also Present:	Donna Drummond, Planning Director; Bill Dermody, Mike Richardson, Kady Dadlez, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes December 4, 2015.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Reveal moved approval of the minutes of December 4, 2015. Commissioner Makarios seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Wencl announced that she enjoyed the swearing in of the City Council members on Tuesday evening. There were seven Planning Commissioners in attendance.

III. Planning Director's Announcements

Donna Drummond reminded commissioners that they had received a flyer about presentations on Jan. 20 by Jay Walljasper, a well-known local urbanist. Spots are filling quickly and RSVPs are requested.

Ms. Drummond also introduced a new city planner, Kady Dadlez, who started a few days ago. Kady worked in PED from 1990 – 2000 and everyone is excited to have her back.

IV. Commissioner Appreciation

Honoring Commissioner Noecker for her service on the Planning Commission.

Chair Wencl read a resolution thanking Commissioner Noecker for her service on the Planning Commission.

Commission Noecker thanked the commissioners and said that they are a great group to work with. This is where she really got her feet wet in terms of an interest in serving the City and that's when she realized how much everything we do at the City really matters.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Reveal moved approval of the resolution honoring Commissioner Noecker. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

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

Chair Wencl announced that the Saint Paul Planning Commission was holding a public hearing on the University Avenue Parking Study. Notice of the public hearing was published in the Legal Ledger on December 17, 2015, and was sent to the citywide Early Notification System list and other interested parties.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, announced that Chris Ferguson would give a brief overview to remind the commissioners what this is about.

Chris Ferguson said he was originally involved in this work as the chair of the Business Resources Collaborative which was started to help the businesses along University Avenue survive the LRT construction. One piece of work that they looked at was the parking on University Avenue. The decision was made to go with the design that is out there now with two lanes of traffic, primarily because if there was a decision to have one lane of traffic and one lane of parking and that didn't work then it would be an extremely expensive project to go and remove all of the curb lines and all of the gutter to put it back to two lanes of traffic. It was determined that after the project was done and the train was running we would go back and look at what the actual traffic on the corridor was, and whether or not it would be possible at certain times of the day or all times of the day to remove one of those lanes of traffic and bring parking back to University Avenue.

The initial assessment from an engineering perspective was that the vast majority of the corridor could have one lane of traffic all day and it would function in an acceptable fashion. There is a stretch of the corridor around Snelling, between approximately Snelling and Hamline, that has very high traffic volumes because of the big box stores that are located there and all of the retail that is there. It didn't make sense to reduce any of those lanes of traffic in that area because of the traffic volumes there. It did make sense for most of the corridor to have one lane of traffic and one lane of parking. They also went through a community feedback process, and the feedback from the community was that they didn't want to have all day parking on University Avenue yet. A lot of people were feeling that traffic was slower on University than it used to be, which is more to do with the train and signal lights but there was a desire not to it any slower. So both the technical and advisory committees looked at the engineering results as well as the community feedback and decided that the best solution would be to look at bringing parking back to University Avenue in the evenings. There is a significant drop in traffic volumes around the 6 o'clock time in most of the corridor and that would allow free flowing traffic throughout the corridor in the evenings. This leaves it open at some point for this body or another group to review that day time traffic piece after a few more years of operation of the train.

The recommendation of the Advisory Committee and the Technical Committee was to generally

bring parking back from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. along the corridor, but there are segments detailed in the plan that they recommend not putting parking back even in the evenings. One of the considerations was public safety. Near the two fire halls parking would not be brought back so that the Fire trucks would have clear access to get in and out. These recommendations would result in bringing back over 400 spaces of parking at a low cost through signage changes only. It would be free parking in the evening, because most of the city has free parking in the evening so it would be consistent with the rest of the city.

Commissioner Reveal asked if there was a parking study being done with the soccer stadium planning as well.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, replied yes there is a parking and transportation consultant that will be developing an analysis of that.

Commissioner Reveal asked whether the parking committee had discussed the possible impact of that.

Mr. Ferguson said that their work was done before the soccer stadium was announced. So the answer to that is no, they did not factor in the soccer stadium.

Commissioner Ward asked if there is a timeframe for evaluating whether or not restoring parking is working? How would that be determined, who would make that the decision and how would the public be notified?

Mr. Ferguson said that he is not an expert on the City's process, but he thinks that would be something for the City Council or for this group to figure out with Public Works. They did not specify a particular time or process for that. Their role is not to mandate to the City how they are going to operate the road, their role is to make a recommendation and the City would have to handle operations and function of that road. Actually there are two bodies that operate that road, it is a County road maintained by the City.

Commissioner Underwood said all throughout the materials it explains that 64 businesses responded to the survey about 1,200 residents. She asked how many businesses are on University Avenue, because it seems like a low number.

Mr. Ferguson said that in total when they looked at their work from Minneapolis to the end of Saint Paul on the corridor there were about 700 businesses in total. On the Saint Paul side he could not say exactly the number that is on University Avenue, but generally speaking there are around 500 on the Saint Paul side and 200 on the Minneapolis side. It is very difficult to get feedback from retail businesses in particular because they are busy running their businesses and don't have time to leave and go to a public meeting or don't have time to be here at Planning Commission.

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

The following person spoke.

1. Ms. JooHee Pomplin works with the Asian Economic Development Association at 377 University Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55103. They work with Asian owned businesses and

other businesses along University Avenue in the Little Mekong district between Mackubin and Galtier on University Avenue, where the parking study recommends restoring parking. She expressed their support to add parking to the avenue in that area because a lot of the businesses were not set up in a way to have off-street parking nearby. When you are centrally located on the block, it is very difficult for people to access the business especially when weather makes it challenging to walk around the block. Also, people are already parking around the block because of the lost parking on University Avenue. They would also support not putting in parking meters, but support having it be free, time limited parking. During the day another challenge is parking for employees and also people parking to access the train, so we want to make sure that it is made available to people who want to patronize the businesses. In conclusion, they support time limited parking but would like to see it be free.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Lindeke moved to close the public hearing, leave the record open for written testimony until 4:30 p.m. on Monday, January 11, 2016, and to refer the matter back to the Transportation Committee for review and recommendation. Commissioner Thao seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

Commissioner Merrigan asked if during the discussions of this proposal, did the Transportation Committee have any strong opinions either way?

Commissioner Lindeke said that they had a good discussion, and he personally was impressed by the thoroughness of the research in the document. It's really well done for a traffic and parking study and the committee looked at it favorably. There was a discussion about how it would affect pedestrian safety along University Avenue, which is an issue especially when you think about light rail and the recent accidents that have been happening. In the interest of experimentation and trying to be creative about Saint Paul they supported the plan.

VI. Zoning Committee

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

OLD 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 be between the principal structure and a public street. 30 Fairview Avenue South, NE corner at Grand Avenue. *(Mike Richardson, 651/266-6621)*

Commissioner Padilla gave Commissioner Merrigan permission to speak on her behalf, regarding her comments at the Zoning Committee meeting. Commissioner Merrigan said that at the time Commissioner Padilla made her vote, the representative for the applicant, Attorney Brian Alton, had put forward four precedents, which Commissioner Padilla felt was significant and should be considered. However, following the vote Commissioner Nelson brought up a Google aerial of the BMO Harris Bank, which he felt was the closest precedent. Upon seeing the example, Commissioner Padilla questioned whether or not it was indeed a precedent. Commissioner Merrigan could not say whether Commissioner Padilla would have voted differently, but that the certitude with which she voted was altered a bit.

Commissioner Thao said she appreciates the fact in the report that there was the other visual survey of other areas. She asked if the Planning Commission had approved other types of conditional use permits for a drive-through with a similar proximity to residential property of eight feet. Commissioner Nelson said that they did not get into any specifics about those dimensions in the precedents. He knows that they have been that close with regard to a driveway to an apartment building but that is different than a drive-through application.

Commissioner Nelson said that Attorney Brian Alton, representative for the applicant, clarified some of the testimony with staff that of the four examples, three of those were proximity to residential areas and one of them pertained to the location of the drive-through between the street and the building itself. Based on their own knowledge of the examples that were given, Commissioner Nelson didn't feel that the examples were comparable to this particular situation. He cited the example of Walgreens at Randolph and Snelling, which has a drive-through in the middle of the site and not adjacent to the public sidewalk. Some of the committee members discussed other potential locations that the drive-through could fit on that site. Some commissioners acknowledged that a drive-through along the alley and the east property line were not possible, but seemed that there may be other possibilities.

Commissioner Ward clarified with Commissioner Nelson that it's not that the Planning Commission does not want a drive-through at all, but there are alternatives on the site that could also work.

Commissioner Lindeke mentioned the importance of walkability and the importance of improving the pedestrian environment as much as possible, especially on Grand Avenue which is one of the city's most walkable streets. He said that it is up to the Planning Commission to try and push retailers and developers toward emphasizing some of the city goals like focusing on pedestrian walkability and streetscapes that really work. He supports the decision to deny the application.

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

NEW BUSINESS

#15-185-423 Holiday Station Stores – Conditional use permit for replacement of auto convenience market building. 1608 Rice Street, SE corner at Wheelock Parkway. *(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.***

Commissioner Nelson announced that the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, January 14, 2016 has been canceled.

VII. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Commissioner Merrigan reported that they did not meet on January 5th and the next scheduled

meeting is on Tuesday, January 19th.

VIII. Neighborhood Planning Committee

Commissioner Oliver announced that their next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, January 13th has been canceled.

IX. Transportation Committee

Commissioner Lindeke announced that the next meeting is on Monday, January 11th to welcome new members and hear from MnDOT about the Minnesota Highway investment plan and from Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority with an update on the Riverview Corridor. Also, next week there are three public meetings about the Riverview Corridor, on January 11th, 12th and 13th.

X. Communications Committee

Commissioner Thao had no report, but noted that soon they will be putting out the 2015 annual report.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, added that they plan to have a draft for the Communications Committee by the next meeting.

XI. Task Force/Liaison Reports

Commissioner Makarios announced that the Ford Task Force will meet in Monday, January 11th, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.

Commissioner McMahon announced that the Highway 5/Shepard Realignment Study is going on, the Technical Advisory group is finishing its work looking at potential realignments and the Community Advisory Committee will be meeting in February.

Commissioner Thao reported that the Grand Round Community Advisory Committee will not be meeting in January, because they will be holding an Open House about the design of the Grand Round especially with the first phase starting this year which will be on Johnson Parkway. The open house is on January 19th from 6-8 p.m. at the Arlington Hills Community Center.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, announced that the Snelling/Midway Community Advisory Committee met last night and heard an initial presentation from both Bill McGuire, owner of the soccer team, and S9 Architects about precedents and the conceptual approach for redevelopment of the 34.5 acre site. There will also be a community meeting on Tuesday, January 26th at Concordia University from 7-8:30 p.m. That will be a chance for the broader community to see the conceptual approach and also provide input on what is presented.

XII. Old Business

Commissioner Thao announced that she had sent out an email earlier this week about the annual holiday party which is on Tuesday, January 12th 5:30 p.m. at the Flat Earth Brewing Company. She has already received about ten RSVPs and invites everyone to come out and join them.

XIII. New Business

Chair Wencl announced that she had appointed David Wickiser as chair, Emily Shively and Gaius Nelson to the Nominating Committee and they will have their recommendations for the annual meeting which will be at the next Planning Commission meeting.

XIV. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:23 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 2/5/16
(Date)

Elizabeth O'Reneal

for Daniel Ward II
Secretary of the Planning Commission

Planning Team Files\planning commission\minutes\January 8, 2016