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

Minutes September 30, 2016

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

Commissioners Present:	Mmes. DeJoy, Reveal, Thao, Underwood, Wencl; and Messrs. Fredson, Lindeke, Makarios, Ochs, Oliver, Ward and Wickiser.
Commissioners Absent:	Mmes. *McMahon, *Merrigan, *Shively, and Messrs. *Edgerton, *Gelgelu, and *Nelson. *Excused
Also Present:	Donna Drummond, Planning Director; Margaret Jones, Allan Torstenson, Kady Dadlez, Tony Johnson, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes August 19th and September 2, 2016.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Reveal moved approval of the minutes of August 19, 2016. Commissioner Lindeke seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

and

Chair Wencl announced that the September 2, 2016 minutes are not available at this time.

II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Wencl had no announcements.

III. Planning Director's Announcements

Donna Drummond announced that the Accessory Dwelling Unit amendments recommended by the Planning Commission were considered by City Council. There were several layovers to provide more time for the Summit University neighborhood to hold some meetings. The ordinance was amended to eliminate the area east of Lexington from the Green Line Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance which will go into effect for the areas along the Green Line west of Lexington. Some of the discussion at City Council was that they would see how it goes and potentially in the future consider it for other areas of the city.

The October 5th meeting of the Neighborhood Planning Committee will be a joint meeting with the Comprehensive Planning Committee and actually the whole Planning Commission is invited

also. They will be doing a tour of the River Balcony, led by Lucy Thompson, starting at the Science Museum and walking along the future location of the River Balcony. At 4:30 p.m. there will be a presentation on Union Depot, followed by a tour of the Custom House at 5:00 p.m.

Lastly, former Planning Commissioner Bob Spaulding has been hired by Planning and Economic Development as a Research Analyst. He started about 3 weeks ago.

IV. Zoning Committee

SITE PLAN REVIEW – List of current applications. *(Larry Zangs, 651/266-9082)*

NEW BUSINESS

#16-064-802 St. Paws – Determination whether dog day care and boarding is similar to other T3 Traditional Neighborhood district uses. 1920 University Avenue West between Prior and Lynnhurst Avenue West. *(Kady Dadlez, 651/266-6619)*

Commissioner Reveal gave the report.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Reveal moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the determination of similar use subject to additional conditions. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

Commissioner Reveal also, announced that the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, October 6, 2016 has been canceled.

V. Rethinking I-94 – Informational presentation by Brian Isaacson, Project Manager and Bill Goff, Transportation Planner, Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Brian Isaacson, Project Manager, Minnesota Department of Transportation gave a power point presentation which can be seen on the web page at:
http://www.stpaul.gov/planningcommission

Commissioner Thao said there has been a lot of community engagement with this project. How can we change the system so this is not a one-time thing and this approach of co-creation is incorporated in the entire system going forward?

Mr. Isaacson said this has not been a smooth process but it really does feel like cultural change within the department. He said he had his own concerns taking this on in the beginning. They started this project in the usual way but MnDOT wide leadership decided we should do this differently. He was identified as the lead staff person with four staff in a project office at Fairview and University. MnDOT recognizes that they have a long way to go and a lot of progress to make relative to engagement and how they include people both on a project like this and on the construction side.

Commissioner Underwood commented that she served on the Smith Avenue Community Advisory Committee and MnDOT staff Tara McBride is really doing a great job. She has done a nice job of setting expectations of explaining really complicated things in a simple way and the advisory committee would agree that they are seeing their input have an influence on the process.

Tara has talked openly about how this process is different, doing something new for MN Dot and it feels really good. They will see when the reconstruction happens if their influence is really there.

Commissioner Lindeke said he is thinking about the tradeoffs between traffic volume and the regional picture of what I-94 does and the impact on Saint Paul specifically around livability for any property or people that are near it. The idea of rethinking the freeway is an interesting question. A lot of those things you can't really do a lot about like pollution, noise, and noise walls are a standardized thing and access to bridges is a key thing. When you get to the question of safety and speed it is interesting to think outside the lines of the freeway a little because the volumes of cars and speeds of cars don't end at the borders of I-94. Think of all the streets that are next to the freeway or all the on and off ramps where you have an interchange. There are issues of livability and safety, because people are dying on streets right next to the on ramps. He would like them to think larger about the impact that I-94 has on Saint Paul and include St. Anthony and Concordia and the downtown interchanges and think about how those are done. A crucial distinction should be made between the way people drive on the freeway and the way people drive in the city. The point is to recommend they think a little larger in terms of scope.

Mr. Isaacson said that has come up in a number of forms. There is an advisory committee on ADA and accessibility at Met Council and they have highlighted these issues. There is a lively discussion about Lexington. They just did some work at Lexington and 94 and there are a lot of uses on one side and a lot of residential on the other. So how do you make this more livable? If you are driving 70 mph on I-94 and you come roaring up the ramp and you want to go somewhere you tend not to see pedestrians so how do we cope with that? Even the pedestrian crossings from the schools to the pedestrian bridges are challenging, and that is part of the mix. He does not have a good answer about how to fix that but it is on their radar.

Chair Wencl asked why the project stops at Highway 61 because that is not the border of the city. And there is a lot of work being done in the Highway 61 location at this point.

Mr. Isaacson said some of the issues are probably exacerbated by infrastructure questions. When they look at a managed lane coming in east bound into Saint Paul operationally it doesn't seem to fit so there are questions about how could you make something work. The same is true on the west side of the Lowry tunnel; it's about what leads into it and there are infrastructure pieces to it but then there are operational pieces to it too. What they are trying to do is go as far as they can in understanding what the patterns are and hopefully that will be some indication of how things are working. They didn't go to either city limits but they tried to include parts that were going to be impacted.

Chair Wencl said she's not sure about the folks east of the Highway 61 area would agree they are not impacted.

Mr. Isaacson said the same is true in North Minneapolis, so they have to draw the line somewhere and to some degree the work that they are doing on the east side today is a longer term preservation activity. Part of the consideration in North Minneapolis was that the infrastructure is not as old so it doesn't have as imminent a need. That was part of their challenge how to look at those pieces that are going to be farther out and that they are not going to replace in a shorter time frame.

Commissioner Ward asked about all the data collection underway and the different paradigm about how to do business. Who is going to take ownership of this data? Where is it going to be warehoused and is there a chance for the public to be able to view it and make comments and weigh in on it?

Mr. Isaacson said all of the data they are collecting from what he knows is public information. For example the traffic data, they purchased three months of traffic pattern data from a provider that shares navigation and cell phone data. That is 6 million trip records and each record has 100 data points so it's 600 million data points, and there are limitations depending on your capacity but he thinks it's public. All of the analysis that they do is certainly going to be out in the public. They intend to both share it in whatever format makes sense at a neighborhood level as well as on a website so that people have access to it.

Commissioner Ward asked if these new approaches will be carried on throughout the state?

Mr. Isaacson said they are taking their experiences from the metro area and trying to figure out how to apply them statewide. In the case of this project, they are trying to reach more of the targeted group businesses for both the consultant work as well as the construction work. They are focusing on building partnerships and developing capacity.

VI. **Rondo Land Bridge** – Informational presentation by Lars Christiansen, Director, Friendly Streets Initiative, Marvin Anderson and Melvin Giles.

Marvin Anderson said he is a Rondo resident and 40 years ago he was a member of the Saint Paul Planning Commission. Brian Isaacson who he has had an opportunity to work with over the last year mentioned the name of Anthony Foxx, the Secretary of Transportation. Anthony Foxx has been a marvelous public servant in that he has given all of us an opportunity to think beyond the confines of old government thinking. What he had to say about the use of public dollars and transportation has inspired all of us, not just the Highway Department but the citizens who live around and who engage with transportations decisions every day. Having lived on Rondo and his father lost his home and business on Rondo and having been victimized by the decisions that the MN Department of Transportation made in the 1950's he can relate to and understand Anthony Foxx. Mr. Foxx who lost his home and his father lost his business to a transportation decision. So what Mr. Foxx has done has inspired us to combine our collective thinking on the citizen side so that we are not just waiting for the Transportation Department to make decisions and they react to them. They were inspired as citizens to go out and gather their own set of facts and bring that to the Department of Transportation so that they can be co-creators of a project that affects them in a way that I-94 has affected them for over the last 50 years. As they gathered information over the last two years Rondo Avenue Inc. has found a partner in the Friendly Streets Initiative. Their thinking has gelled and combined to believe that there are five elements to creative projects and those five ingredients are found in what they call the Rondo Land Bridge. You have a government department that is committed to doing things differently so that they are engaged. That is a very important ingredient. You have citizen engagement that has been able to bring their thinking together on a common project. They have done the work, the surveys and collected the information which is very important so that you have a citizen voice. Another ingredient is the commercial and housing possibilities that are present in such a concept. The fourth would be the city itself that wants to set itself apart and engage itself in creative and mind changing activities that not only can inspire the commercial and the housing but puts the city on the line with what they are about as a city government and a 21st century entity. Lastly, is the concept of

the rehabilitation, reconciliation and healing powers that a land bridge could bring. Mr. Lars Christianson will give a presentation on what a land bridge is all about and what a land bridge can do for this community.

Lars Christiansen, Director, Friendly Streets Initiative, gave a power point presentation which can be seen on the web page at: http://www.stpaul.gov/planningcommission.

Commissioner Reveal said that she worked and lived in Seattle and she cannot emphasize enough how transformative these things have been for that city. The sculpture park is her favorite single place, it is really remarkable. She wished that they had this discussion when they were reviewing the master plan for West Side Flats, because she thinks there were many similar issues about having made public works determinations, and industrial use determinations that destroy communities. She can think of all kinds of places in Saint Paul where looking backwards at transportation and land use decisions and the impact on communities and neighborhoods could be very helpful and we could do a lot to provide that leadership. She is really pleased to see this.

Mr. Anderson said they are excited about the fact that if they had this sort of conversation 50 years ago perhaps the conversation now would be completely different and that is why the citizen's part of this as a co-partner with MnDOT makes sense. That is why the Planning Commission's support and understanding will invigorate the conversations so that 50 years from now we will have better decisions being made between the government and citizens. This is the beginning of a whole new way of looking at government, looking at community engagement, looking at progress and using transportation as the kick off for that. There is a lot of work to be done but now we have an opportunity to be fully engaged where Rondo had absolutely no input and the decisions made 50 years ago are still affecting residents. Here we have an opportunity to correct that through this Rondo Land Bridge where it all comes together.

Chair Wencl thinks this is very exciting, the way that the freeway runs through really does separate the areas and the bridges that were put in certainly are not friendly. And in the winter when the wind is blowing that is the last place you want to be.

Mr. Anderson replied that before they took down the Grotto and Mackubin bridges you were walking through an enclosure of wire over the bridge and those bridges were called the "cage". Walking through there as an adult you would say how did this happen and how did it happen for the last 50 years?

Commissioner Ward thanked both Mr. Anderson and Mr. Christiansen. He is impressed at their vigor and the amount of energy that they have going into this. Because it is so emotional he hopes they can find the resources in order to keep this moving forward. Find someone else you can pass the torch to and keep it going because the work you are doing is so important that it cannot be lost at all. Not just for the community but for the entire nation because this is a model moving forward if they can do it the way that both Mr. Isaacson talked about and the way that Mr. Anderson and Mr. Christiansen talked about. This isn't just about healing a community through transportation but it is about healing a community economically and culturally bringing people together. Develop a whole new culture for any construction that can be done so that its equitably beneficial to everybody. The speakers have done a lot with a little and it is impressive work.

Mr. Anderson said getting a protégé is number one on his list. The opportunity in Saint Paul is to

do something that not only makes transportation decisions much more equitable but it is a way in which they can deal with government decisions that has not been done before in the United States. We can do something here in Saint Paul again to lead the nation as a forward thinking community and a national model for getting things done. With what FSI has done in support of Rondo, what MnDOT is doing and reaching out to us, what Ramsey County is doing in terms of the Dale Street bridge and the eight bridges of Rondo is all this concept of rehabilitation and healing. If we all just pull ourselves together we can achieve progress on these ideas that have a good chance of coming to fruition and realization.

Commissioner Fredson asked what other metro locations were locations for the site visits for the ULI technical panel on the freeway lid concept?

Mr. Christiansen said that the other sites are downtown Minneapolis East and connecting that over toward Cedar Riverside and Farview in North Minneapolis that connects a park.

Mr. Isaacson added that Farview Park is about connecting Farview Park over to the river. It's a long standing plan in Minneapolis and it is in the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Boards plans to make that connection. The ULI example is instructive, and when they engaged the services of business leaders in the Twin Cities in the commercial real estate industry the initial reaction was guarded cynicism. But throughout the course of a three day workshop and hearing those stories and the emotion it made an impact. In the transportation projects he will say that that emotion is contagious and it is important that they don't leave it out of this conversation. It feels like they are going pretty far by saying they are going to solve the world's ills but when you start to have compelling projects that do address some of these things and you have a series of partnerships that are developing it's progress. At the end of that workshop those business leaders were not only fully embracing the idea of doing this work and saying there is a business need but they were fully embracing the fact that we're here to connect communities and address some equity issues issues. They fully embraced that and they are taking it farther than we asked them to.

Commissioner Ochs said that land bridges have always been a design study and through the efforts and progress in the State of Washington and some of the projects in Minnesota these land bridges are becoming a reality. It is important that you keep this initiative moving forward for the better of us all.

VII. Comprehensive Planning Committee

No report.

VIII. Neighborhood Planning Committee

Commissioner Oliver announced that their next meeting on Wednesday, October 5th is a joint meeting with the Comprehensive Planning Committee; however all of the Planning Commission members are invited. They will take a walking tour of the River Balcony, Union Depot and the Custom House. Everyone will meet on the Science Museum Plaza at 4:00 p.m. to start the tour.

IX. Transportation Committee

Commissioner Lindeke announced that the next Transportation Committee meeting on Monday, October 3, 2016 has been canceled.

X. Communications Committee

Commissioner Thao had no announcements.

XI. Task Force/Liaison Reports

No reports.

Additional Announcement:

Chair Wencl thanked the students from Humphrey School of Public Affairs for joining the meeting this morning and hopes they got a better understanding of how the Planning Commission works.

XII. Old Business

None.

XIII. New Business

None.

XIV. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:14 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by
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Planning and Economic Development Department,
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Respectfully submitted,

Donna Drummond
Planning Director

Approved October 28, 2016
(Date)

Daniel Ward II
Secretary of the Planning Commission

Planning Team Files\planning commission\minutes\September 30, 2016