

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

Minutes September 18, 2009

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, September 18, 2009, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present: Mmes. Donnelly-Cohen, Faricy, Lu Morton; Smitten, Thao, Wencl; and Messrs. Alton, Commers, Goodlow, Gordon, Johnson, Kramer, Margulies, Nelson, Schertler, and Ward.

Commissioners Absent: Ms. *Porter and Mr. *Spaulding.
*Excused

Also Present: Allan Torstenson for the, Planning Administrator; Tom Beach, Department of Safety and Inspections, Patricia James, Kate Reilly, Christina Morrison, Craig Blakely, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes September 4, 2009

MOTION: *Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen moved approval of the minutes of September 4, 2009. Commissioner Thao seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Alton had no announcements.

III. Planning Administrator's Announcements

Allan Torstenson reported that on Wednesday at City Council three rezoning applications were considered. One was the East Mall Associates to rezone property from BC Community Business (converted) to B2 Community Business at 841 Grand Avenue; the public hearing is continued to October 7. The second was Zane and Mary Neal to rezone property at 998 Bush Avenue (southwest corner at Cypress Street) from B3 General Business to RT1 Two-Family Residential to re-establish a duplex; the application was approved. The third was Kevin and Debora Boyd to rezone property at 1057 Selby Avenue (between Oxford Street and Lexington Avenue) from RM2 Medium-Density Multiple-Family Residential to VP Vehicular Parking in order to provide additional parking; the application was approved.

IV. Mitigating the Loss of Parking in the Central Corridor – Presentation by Christina Morrison and Craig Blakely, PED staff. (Christina Morrison, 651/266-6546)

Christina Morrison and Craig Blakely presented the work of the Parking Solutions Team and the report *Mitigating the Loss of Parking in the Central Corridor*. Morrison outlined the outreach process and methodology, as well as the site-specific considerations and solutions that were used to determine the eleven "critical areas," or areas most impacted by the loss of on-street parking. Each of these areas recently completed a detailed parking workshop with business and property owners, and City and Central Corridor Design Center Staff. Staff also introduced the Neighborhood Commercial Parking Program (NCP), which will provide competitive forgivable loans up to \$25,000 for businesses and property owners looking to make improvements to their existing commercial parking lots.

Commissioner Faricy asked what is meant by differing hours of peak traffic, peak parking?

Ms. Morrison explained the concepts of complimentary peak demand, where multiple businesses have differing amounts of parking needs throughout the day, resulting in successful shared parking agreements.

Commissioner Smitten asked whether the parking report looked at just existing demand, or also considered future needs, and Commissioner Ward asked about vacant commercial space and the potential to convert those spaces to parking.

Ms. Morrison stated that the charge of the Parking Solutions Team was to focus on short-term, low cost improvements to help business and property owners through the construction period and early years of LRT, and that station area planning focuses more on long-term parking needs. Due to a lack of funding, Ms. Morrison also noted that acquiring new properties for parking was not a proposed solution.

Commissioner Thao said that the reason a lot of people choose to park on the street is that they have safety concerns. Do any of the parking issues address this?

Ms. Morrison said safety is a major concern of participants in the parking solutions workshops, and that security and safety improvements are eligible for NCP funds.

Craig Blakely reviewed the corridor-wide considerations and solutions outlined in the report. He also gave some examples of the policy questions related to these corridor-wide solutions, including on topics such as permit parking, parking meters, enforcement, and pricing.

Commissioner Goodlow raised a concern about creating an inclusive community process, recommending that residential stakeholders be closely involved in the broader policy issues. He also urged city staff to be creative with solutions and leverage use of large underutilized parking lots.

V. Zoning Committee

Allan Torstenson noted that the public hearing for the MGM Liquor Store site plan was rescheduled to the Zoning Committee rather than the Planning Commission because there was insufficient time to meet the ten day Legal Ledger publication notice.

Mr. Torstenson announced that while site plan review agendas have been included in Planning Commission packets for some time, they will now also appear as a regular agenda item on

Planning Commission and Zoning Committee agendas.

OLD BUSINESS

#09-089-752 Walgreens (Ford Parkway) – Site plan review for a new Walgreen’s Drug Store. 2101 Ford Parkway. (Tom Beach, 651/266-9086)

MOTION: *Commissioner Morton moved the Zoning Committee’s recommendation to approve the site plan review subject to additional conditions.*

Commissioner Commers asked about a memo from the Highland District Council’s Community Development Committee received after the public hearing. Commissioner Gordon said it should not be considered by the Planning Commission because it is not part of the public hearing record.

There was discussion of the petition submitted by site plan opponents. Commissioner Johnson noted that it just says “say no to Walgreens” and is not specific about any issues or problems with the site plan.

Commissioner Gordon spoke against the motion based on city design standards and traffic impact. The design standards for pedestrian oriented commercial areas (Section 63.110.c) say that buildings must “hold the corner – that is have street facades at or near the sidewalks on both streets...unless the applicant can demonstrate that there are circumstances unique to the property that make compliance impractical or unreasonable.” He stated his reasons for deciding that there are no unique circumstances in this case. He also stated his reasons for disagreeing that the site plan complies with the required finding regarding the safety and convenience of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic within the site and in relation to access streets, and said there would be too much traffic for the area.

Commissioner Faricy stated that she had also had concerns with the traffic study. However, at the Zoning Committee meeting a member of the Saint Paul Public Works Department said that the study was done correctly. Regarding the design standard about holding the corner, she explained why she thinks moving the parking lot to the east of the building, next to an existing large parking lot, would not work as well. Therefore, she decided to support the site plan.

Commissioner Schertler stated that he believes the corner of Finn and Ford Parkway is a unique intersection because Finn is blocked at the alley and doesn’t go through, so it is basically a driveway to serve commercial parking on both sides.

Commissioner Ward said putting the parking lot on the east side of the building would exacerbate an existing problem. He thinks the design proposed by Walgreens works best.

Commissioner Nelson expressed concerns regarding the internal vehicular circulation, the loading dock, and truck use of the one-way alley.

Commissioner Margulies stated he agreed with Commissioner Schertler that it is a unique corner, but that is not the same as unique circumstances that make the layout reasonable.

Commissioner Smitten said from a planning perspective she supports holding the corner and keeping a future option for shared parking.

Tom Beach explained that with the building at the corner, Public Works had concerns about Walgreens and Snyder's driveways being closer together.

Commissioner Margulies called the question.

After a voice vote on the motion, Commissioner Johnson called for division.

ROLL CALL VOTE: *The motion to approve the site plan carried on a roll call vote of 11-6 (Donnelly-Cohen, Goodlow, Gordon, Nelson, Margulies, Thao).*

NEW BUSINESS

#09-255-093 Nasseh and Gale Ghaffari Nikou – Rezoning from R4 (single-family residential) to VP (vehicular parking). 835 Hawthorne Avenue East, between Arcade and Mendota. (Luis Pereira, 651/266-6591)

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

#09-259-976 Twin Cities Real Estate Partners – Re-establishment of legal nonconforming use as a 4-plex. 1112 Albemarle Street, between Geranium and Jessamine. (Emily Goodman, 651/266-6551)

MOTION: *Commissioner Morton moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the re-establishment of legal nonconforming use. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

Commissioner Morton announced the items on the agenda for the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, September 24, 2009.

VI. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Bicycle Parking Ordinance – Recommendation to release draft ordinance for public review and schedule a public hearing on October 30, 2009. (Kate Reilly, 651/266-6618)

MOTION: *Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen moved the Comprehensive Planning Committee's recommendation to release the summary for public review and set a public hearing for October 30, 2009. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

Commissioner Donnelly-Cohen announced the items on the agenda for the next Comprehensive Planning Committee meeting on Tuesday, October 6, 2009.

VII. Neighborhood Planning Committee

Commissioner Wencl announced the items on the agenda for the next Neighborhood Committee meeting on Wednesday, September 23, 2009.

VIII. Communications Committee

Commissioner Smitten had no report.

IX. Task Force Reports

None.

X. Old Business

None.

XI. New Business

None.

XII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Approved _____
(Date)

Allan Torstenson for Donna Drummond
Planning Administrator

Marilyn Porter
Secretary of the Planning Commission