

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

Minutes February 8, 2013

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, February 8, 2013, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present: Mmes. Perrus, Reveal, Thao, Wang; and
Messrs. Connolly, Edgerton, Gelgelu, Lindeke, Makarios, Nelson, Oliver, Ward,
and Wickiser.

Commissioners Absent: Mmes. *Merrigan, *Noecker, *Porter, *Shively, *Wencl, and Messrs. *Ochs,
*Schertler, and *Spaulding.

*Excused

Also Present: Donna Drummond, Planning Director; Patricia James, Josh Williams, Scott Tempel, Bill Dermody, Hilary Holmes, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Swearing in of New Commissioners

New Planning Commission member Kyle Makarios was sworn in by Shari Moore, City Clerk.

II. Approval of minutes January 25, 2013.

MOTION: *Commissioner Perrus moved approval of the minutes of January 25, 2013. Commissioner Thao seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

III. Chair's Announcements

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

IV. Planning Director's Announcements

Donna Drummond reported that on Wednesday the City Council had approved the appointment of Kyle Markarios to serve on the Planning Commission and the reappointments of Commissioners Pat Connolly, Gene Gelgelu and Paula Merrigan for another term. City Council also approved the District del Sol Small Area Plan and West Side Community Plan as amendments to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan.

V. 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, February 12, 2013.

- 1000 University Avenue Building, addition to existing building and improvements to parking lot at 1000 University Avenue.
- Roosevelt Homes, new 6-plex at 1580 Ames Avenue.

NEW BUSINESS

#13-142-919 Keith Jacobson & Patricia Jacobson – Rezoning from B2 Community Business to BC Community Business (Converted). 1836 – 1838 Grand Avenue between Fairview and Howell. (Scott Tempel, 651/2666-6621)

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

#13-143-806 Dairy Queen (Craig Thaemert/Maureen Herring) – Rezoning from B2 Community Business to T2 Traditional Neighborhood. 1537 White Bear Avenue North between Hoyt and Montana. (Bill Dermody, 651/266-6617)

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

#13-143-820 Allen Plaisted (Dairy Queen) – Conditional use permit for fast food restaurant with drive-through service, with modification of entrance/exit distance from residentially zoned property, and access from street Primarily serving residential property, and T2 design standards for amount of windows. 1537 White Bear Avenue North between Hoyt and Montana. (Bill Dermody, 651/266-6617)

Commissioner Nelson drew Commissioners' attention to an updated site plan at their places, showing the recommendations from the District 2 Community Council added to the site plan. He stated that all the changes were acceptable to the applicant.

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.

#13-143-460 Saint Paul Department of Parks & Recreation – Conditional use permit for placement of fill and grading in the flood plain and variance for wetland impact in the River Corridor (Lilydale Regional Park improvements). 720 Water Street West area between Smith Avenue bridge and Union Pacific Railroad bridge. (Josh Williams, 651/266-6659)

Commissioner Edgerton abstained from voting due to a conflict of interest.

MOTION: Commissioner Nelson moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the conditional use permit subject to additional conditions. The motion carried on a 13-0 vote with 1 abstention (Edgerton) on a voice vote.

Commissioner Nelson announced the item on the agenda for the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, February 14, 2013.

VI. Central Corridor 2012 Development Update – Informational presentation by Donna Drummond, PED. (*Donna Drummond, 651/266-6556*)

Donna Drummond, Planning Director gave an update on current development activities along the Central Corridor in 2012. The projects she discussed included: Lofts at Farmers Market, Rayette Lofts, Union Depot, Lowertown Ballpark, Pioneer & Endicott, Penfield, Old Home Plaza, Central Exchange, Brownstone, Hamline Station, Midway Commons, Midway Pointe, Habitat for Humanity, Prior Crossing, Meridian Industrial Center, Chittenden & Eastman, and City Limits.

Ms Drummond said that the market strength is moving west to east and is a little stronger to the west. There is a lot of current activity with nonprofit housing developers on the eastern part of the corridor. There continues to be a lot of interest in making sure there is affordable housing along the transit corridor. In general, there are not enough affordable housing financing resources for all the projects that are currently on the books to move forward with this year. The Central Corridor planning work identifies new green spaces and streets, but there are not sufficient financial resources for those investments. Also, the cost of building structured parking is still a barrier to getting TOD densities. Land values have to increase to the point where it is cost effective to build structured parking rather than surface parking. Finally, developer site inquiries are picking up.

Commissioner Nelson said that the sidewalks along University Ave. are narrow. He recalled that the zoning requirements require a wider sidewalk when new development goes in. Is that occurring in all these developments?

Ms.Drummond said that in the Central Corridor Zoning Study one of the requirements adopted by City Council requires new development to be set back 4 feet from the property line along University. Although the City cannot require that property owners dedicate that as an easement for public sidewalk, we are hoping that is the case and in most situations that is working out. Property owners could put in landscaping in that 4 foot area if they didn't want to dedicate an easement.

Commissioner Nelson commented on structured parking being of impediment. He noted that everything being built in Minneapolis has structured parking and nobody is doing anything surface. He wondered whether that has more to do with the number of projects being built by affordable housing developers.

Ms. Drummond replied yes, that is part of it but even for the 2700 University project they're still struggling with a financing gap, which is why they needed a Met. Council Livable Communities grant to help fill that gap. It will be interesting to see how quickly that balance shifts, so that we can see totally private market development happening without the need for public assistance to finance those gaps.

Commissioner Lindeke asked whether the planned new streets would be public or private. He also asked about minimum parking requirements along the corridor, noting that Minneapolis is relooking at parking requirement in Dinkytown, where parking demand is less.

Ms. Drummond answered the last question first saying that the city eliminated minimum parking requirements totally within ¼ mile of the LRT alignment. Plus, there have never been any minimum parking requirements downtown. It's up to the developer to decide how much parking is needed. Regarding new streets, the plan is that these would be largely public.

Commissioner Ward asked what the total dollar value of all the new investment was.

Ms. Drummond did not have the figures with her but said she would email that information to commissioners.

Commissioner Ward said that a lot of the projects are for nonprofit developers. And he disagrees with the comment that gap is needed because if the gap isn't available they will find the money in order to get the project done. The only difference is a lot of those projects may not be driven by being an affordable project. With all of this real estate along University if it continues to go along at the same pace of development they'll get a lot of private investment coming in. There will be parking structures because there's nowhere for people to park. If they want to be on the avenue and there aren't TOD grants available the private firms will find the money to do the development. He thinks there should be an even balance of profit and not for profit development. He is in favor of different incentives like the relaxation of minimum parking requirement and allowing higher building heights and more density to help get projects done.

Ms. Drummond agrees that the market will get stronger once LRT starts running. It will be interesting to see how quickly the market responds.

Commissioner Perrus asked for some perspective on existing businesses along the corridor and how this has impacted them and the cultural diversity that is there. Will these new developments change that, especially on the eastern part of the corridor?

Ms. Drummond talked about the Central Corridor forgivable loan program for small businesses that provided up to \$20,000 for businesses for losses due to construction. This has helped quite a bit.

Commissioner Perrus asked about plans to work with developers to incorporate these small businesses into new developments to keep them. She is concerned about keeping these small businesses and wonder if they will be able to continue in the many one-story buildings along the corridor.

Ms. Drummond said one fact will mute the impact of this a little. There are a lot of little properties along the corridor and site assembly is complicated and difficult. Realistically, we are not going to see wholesale redevelopment of big blocks of the corridor. In some key places we'll see some sites put together for a larger development but not corridor-wide.

Commissioner Thao added that there are a lot of efforts by many small business owners to redevelop. The board that she chairs, the Asian Economic Development Association, has been working with a number of small businesses around the Western and University area that are looking to expand. For example, the Mai Village parking lot is being looked at for potential new housing. Another issue she hears about from small business owners is the property taxes.

Commissioner Lindeke asked what percentage of small business owners actually own their property.

Commissioner Thao did not have hard numbers but she thought for Asian businesses more than half probably own their own buildings. They have not gathered the general demographics for that but many of the ones around Western and University are owner occupied.

VII. Comprehensive Planning Committee

No announcements.

VIII. Neighborhood Planning Committee

Commissioner Oliver announced the items on the agenda for the next Neighborhood Committee meeting on Wednesday, February 14, 2013.

IX. Transportation Committee

Commissioner Wang reported that at their last meeting they provided comments on an early draft of the Complete Streets Manual. Commissioner Wang also announced the items on the agenda for the next Transportation Committee meeting on Monday, February 11, 2013.

X. Communications Committee

2012 Planning Commission Annual Report

Commissioner Thao announced that the 2012 annual report has been completed and copies were distributed to the commissioners. The report is four pages and summarizes the major projects the Commission worked on over the year. It also includes graphics such as a map of neighborhood specific planning projects and a chart of the number of zoning cases reviewed throughout 2012. Commissioner Thao thanked her fellow committee members and staff for their work on the plan.

XI. Task Force/Liaison Reports

Commissioner Reveal announced that the West Side Flats Task Force will have their first meeting on February 21, 2013.

XII. Old Business

None.

XIII. New Business

None.

XIV. 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
Planning Director

Approved February 22, 2013

(Date)



Daniel Ward II
Secretary of the Planning Commission

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