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

Minutes September 24, 2010

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, September 24, 2010, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present:	Mmes. Halverson, Merrigan, Thao, Wang, Wencl, Young; and Messrs. Alton, Commers, Connolly, Fernandez, Gelgelu, Kramer, Nelson, Spaulding, Ward, and Wickiser.
Commissioners Absent:	Mmes. *Donnelly-Cohen, *Porter and Mr. *Schertler *Excused
Also Present:	Donna Drummond, Planning Director, Allen Lovejoy, Department of Public Works, Lucy Thompson, Merritt Clapp-Smith, Colleen O'Dell, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes September 10, 2010.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Gelgelu moved approval of the minutes of September 10, 2010. Commissioner Wickiser seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

II. Chair's Announcements

Commissioner Commers, who is the Commission's first vice chair, chaired the meeting. He had no announcements.

III. Planning Director's Announcements

Donna Drummond announced that she had attended the Upper Midwest Regional Conference in Mankato which was also a joint conference with the Minnesota APA Chapter. Ms. Drummond spoke along with three other women who have been in the profession at least 25 years at a session about women in the planning profession.

IV. Zoning Committee

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

One item to come before the Site Plan Review Committee on September 21, 2010. Hamline University Student Center, a new building with underground parking located at the northeast corner of Snelling and Englewood.

NEW BUSINESS

#10-797-728 2446 University Appeal – Appeal of staff determination that 10 parking spaces on the east side of the building at 2446 University Avenue cannot be used or counted for zoning purposes because the only access to these parking spaces is across the adjacent property. 2446 University Avenue West. *(Tom Beach, 651/266-9086)*

Commissioner Kramer reported that the Zoning Committee laid this case over to the October 14, 2010 meeting.

Zoning Code Application Fees – Approve resolution initiating study of Sec. 61.302 regarding application fees.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Kramer moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the resolution initiating a zoning study. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

Commissioner Kramer announced that the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, September 30, 2010 has been cancelled.

V. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Commissioner Commers announced that the next meeting is on Tuesday, October 5, 2010.

VI. Neighborhood and Current Planning Committee

Small Area and District Plan Guidelines and Plan Template – Approve resolution adopting new guidelines for neighborhood planning. *(Merritt Clapp-Smith, 651/266-6547)*

Merritt Clapp-Smith gave a presentation on the Small Area and District Plan Guidelines and Plan Template. She said the guidelines document provides an overview of the district and small area plan process for use by district councils, lead neighborhood organizations, City staff and the Planning Commission. The guidelines were first developed as a document in 1999 and adopted by the Planning Commission. They were revised in 2001 and are being proposed for an update today. The content of the guidelines includes a description of the purpose and use of district and small area plans, an outlined 30-step process for creating plans, status and review of adopted plans, how to request district and small area plans and the plan content and format. Ms. Clapp-Smith talked about the purpose of a district plan and the purpose of a small area plan. The phases of the planning process are: initiation of the plan, establishing a community steering committee or planning task force, initiating the process and conducting meetings, drafting and submitting the plan for review by the Planning Commission, and forwarding the plan to City Council for review and potential adoption.

Plans adopted as addenda to the Comprehensive Plan retain their status for ten years and then expire. So as the ten year mark is approaching, staff and the community that worked on the plan should evaluate what the appropriate next step is, with Planning Commission input. To request a plan, a community should contact the Director of Planning to discuss ideas, needs and options for the plan with City staff. They then submit a work plan to PED. PED evaluates the request and work plan and likely approves it and assigns staff. The revised guidelines and plan template will

provide a clear process, expectations and structure for future small area and district plans. They will assist in implementing the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan at the neighborhood level and will foster closer communication and partnership between the community and the City throughout the plan process.

Commissioner Nelson said that he attended the last meeting with the Como 2030 Plan and one question that came up was within the implementation table. They were concerned that rating something a "low" priority would not be appropriate or wise.

Ms. Clapp-Smith said that she had heard this concern and it is therefore recommended that the implementation table identify either the "timeline" for implementation or "priority" of the item. The idea with defining this is that it helps the community and the City identify which things to work on first or that are more important than others.

Commissioner Wang said that the City has a new public art ordinance that calls for a public arts plan which they do not have and the city Comprehensive Plan has a reference to public art in the land use section. As the district and small area plans are underway in the coming years, how will they address public art?

Ms. Clapp-Smith said that staff are making a resource document to accompany the guidelines that will identify priority strategies from the Comprehensive Plan for considered implementation at the local level. Public art would be an example of the type of strategy that communities would be asked to consider and possibly address in their plans.

Commissioner Alton asked if staff had or would be updating the document on Small Area Plan Task Force Procedures to coincide with the revised Plan Guidelines.

Ms. Clapp-Smith said that she had not seen or reviewed that document, but would do so and make sure that it was made consistent with the revised Guidelines.

Commissioner Nelson, referring to the handed out chart of all current district and small area plans, said it appears that there is one small area plan which is currently out of date/expired. The Shepard Davern Gateway Small Area Plan and there are a number of others that are within the 2010/2011 expiration period. With an estimated 24-month process for creating plans, how will staff be able to evaluate and address all the plans nearing expiration?

Ms. Clapp-Smith said there are a lot of plans that are coming due and the Planning Director has been studying the list carefully to consider how we may approach it. There is going to be a meeting of staff that might be involved in some of these updates and they will map out a schedule and work plan of how to go about it.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, explained that what they need to do for each group of plans is to figure out which plan recommendations have been accomplished and which are still valid or things that the community wants to work on and then incorporate these into the appropriate district plan or into an amended small area plan. Staff will determine a recommended game plan on how to deal with aging plans for an area and discuss the plan with the district council, with the intent of making sure that there is an evaluation of all plans at least once every ten years.

Commission Ward noted that the approval of the revised Guidelines and Plan template should include the recommendation from Commissioner Alton to review the Small Area Plan Task Force's procedures and make them compatible.

Ms. Clapp-Smith agreed.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Wencl moved the Neighborhood Planning Committee's recommendation to approve the resolution. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

Commissioner Wencl announced the next Neighborhood Committee meeting on Wednesday, September 29, 2010.

VII. Transportation Committee

Commissioner Spaulding said they had their second meeting last week and they continued their introductory phase to the committee work and looking at the City's transportation plan in some detail.

VIII. Holman Field Zoning Update – Informational presentation by Allen Lovejoy, Department of Public Works. *(Allen Lovejoy, 651/266-6226)*

Allen Lovejoy, Department of Public Works, gave an update about the Holman Field Zoning process. Mr. Lovejoy said the mandate for doing zoning around the airport is in State Statutes 360.063-071 and deals with all airports in the state. In this metropolitan area, the Metropolitan Airport Commission (MAC) is the key player in the development of these zoning ordinance recommendations, and implementation is through local zoning codes. In addition, State Statutes state that such zoning provisions require "...a balance between the social and economic costs to surrounding communities and the benefits of strict [land use] regulation."

State statutes require two basic sets of provisions: height regulations on lands in proximity to the airport; and land use provisions near the ends of runways. In the height regulations the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) defines an airspace that emanates out from the airport in all directions at a 100:1 slope for a distance of 20,000 feet. The FAA evaluates new developments that are higher than this airspace for aviation impacts on the airport. In the Holman Field case, the distance from the airport has been substantially modified to include only those areas within the Mississippi River valley, except for proposed buildings of 200' or taller.

The land use regulations are limited to areas off the ends of the three runways, within the "A and B Zones." Proposed land use regulations endeavor to limit the number of people on the ground who are exposed to potential hazards from the aircraft operations, and to limit ground coverage to allow spaces for landings in emergencies. Specifically, provisions in Zone A prohibit new development. In Zone B, which extends beyond the A Zones, certain uses are defined which are to be prohibited in the Zoning Code. Prohibited uses include three categories of use: those that create a specific ground hazard (such as above ground fuel tanks), those that attract large numbers of users (such as an amphitheater) or those that attract large numbers of birds that could cause obstructions to aircraft.

The process specified in state statutes is elaborate, requiring establishment of a Joint Airport Zoning Board, drafting of provisions by that Board, two public hearings and review/approval by the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). Once the final recommendation is made, the City may begin to craft specific language to be inserted into its Zoning Code. The process for adoption by the City follows the regulations governing rezonings. Mr. Lovejoy anticipates that the Planning Commission will take up the rezoning in the Summer, 2011.

Commission Nelson asked about the elevations shown on the code maps and on what the elevations are based.

Mr. Lovejoy said that the base elevation is the elevation at the end of the runways. Definition of the FAA airspace emanates out from that elevation.

Commissioner Nelson asked about the heights shown on the maps and the elevation of the runways.

Mr. Lovejoy said that the numbers on the code maps are actual calculation of heights that can be built without a review by the FAA. Those heights are based on the elevation of the runway, distance from the runway, the allowable slope from the end of the runway and the elevation of the subject property/parcel.

Commissioner Ward said that, even though this regulatory process started on the basis of safety, might there be future conditions that require more drastic measures to protect public safety. He wondered specifically whether the future of regulations might become a product of the size of aircraft and the overall land side development within the airport itself. At some point is it possible that all development might be prohibited because of the air traffic volumes at the airport? And at what point could the FAA or MAC assert a prohibition on all land development around the airport?

Mr. Lovejoy stated that safety evaluations begin with the 100-1 slope cone -- a universal metric the FAA uses for all airports. A FAA review initially looks at whether the proposed building would be higher than what the cone would suggest. The FAA then analyzes the operational protocols at the airport to determine if there would be any negative impacts on the glide paths and flight tracks. If operations are not impacted by a proposed building, it is likely the FAA would be O.K. with the development.

As for longer-term impacts of air traffic, the situation around Holman Field is not likely to get worse. The land available to support more air traffic at Holman Field is extremely limited, and thereby has a limiting effect on air traffic. So, although flight volumes might increase somewhat, it is not likely to cause a rethinking on heights and land development restrictions. In addition, the gradual shift to jet aircraft is beneficial, because jet aircrafts are better able to use a steeper glide path on approach and takeoff than prop aircraft. This also suggests that land development requirements will not become more stringent over time.

As for the City losing its land use authority around the airport, the state statutes actually vest most of the land development planning in the hands of the City, rather than the FAA, MAC or MnDOT. So adoption of such zoning regulations by the City gives greater local control over use of land.

Mr. Lovejoy stated that there are only a few areas where likely development might possibly be impacted by regulations, including a couple of industrial sites near the west end of the east-west runway.

Commissioner Kramer asked if there are remaining realistic scenarios where such zoning regulations might interfere with expected development.

Mr. Lovejoy stated that this is unlikely. There are areas where it is conceivable lighting may be an issue, and those can usually be mitigated through proper design. Second, it is likely that there will be isolated proposals that might require more detailed analysis – such as the wind turbine at Metro State University. And in that case, approvals were ultimately given.

IX. Communications Committee

Commissioner Commers reported that they are looking for someone to serve as chair of the Communication Committee and if anyone is interested to contact Planning Commission Chair Donnelly-Cohen.

X. Task Force Reports

Commissioner Wencl reported that the Smith Avenue Task Force met and the issue talked about was branding and coming up with ideas for how the avenue would be identified by anyone coming into the area and by the people themselves.

Commissioner Commers reported that the West Midway Task Force met earlier this month and they had two very compelling presentations, one by Kyle Uphoff who is an economist with the state Department of Employment and Economic Development, and the other by planning staff Luis Pereira and Penelope Simison, who gave a presentation on what kinds of firms are clustering in the Midway. The next meeting is on Monday, October 11, 2010.

XI. Old Business

None.

XII. New Business

None.

XIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by
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Respectfully submitted,

Donna Drummond
Planning Director

Approved 10/8/2010
(Date)

Marilyn Porter
Secretary of the Planning Commission

PED\Butler\planning commission\minutes\September 24, 2010