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

Minutes September 2, 2011

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, September 2, 2011, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present:	Mmes. Halverson, Merrigan, Perrus, Porter, Thao, Wang, Wencl, Young; and Messrs. Commers, Fernandez, Gelgelu, Kramer, Nelson, Oliver, Spaulding, and Ward.
Commissioners Absent:	Ms. *Reveal and Messrs. *Connolly, *Ochs, *Schertler, and *Wickiser. *Excused
Also Present:	Donna Drummond, Planning Director; Tom Beach, Department of Safety and Inspections, Patricia James, Christina Morrison, Sarah Zorn, Luis Pereira, Anton Jerve, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes August 19, 2011.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Ward moved approval of the minutes of August 19, 2011. Commissioner Thao seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

II. Chair's Announcements

Chair Commers had no specific announcements; however he was glad to be back after some traveling abroad and is hopeful those experiences will add to whatever contributions he can make to this commission.

III. Planning Director's Announcements

Donna Drummond announced that the City Council has introduced an ordinance that would make an amendment to the Sheppard Davern Residential Overlay District. Before the City Council can adopt the ordinance amendment it has to be reviewed by the Planning Commission. This item will be at the Neighborhood Committee meeting next Wednesday.

IV. PUBLIC HEARING: Red Rock Station Area Plan – Item from the Transportation Committee. *(Christina Morrison, 651/266-6546)*

Chair Commers announced that the Saint Paul Planning Commission was holding a public hearing on the Red Rock Station Area Plan. Notice of the public hearing was emailed to the citywide Early Notification System list on July 25, 2011 and area residents on July 29, 2011.

Christina Morrison, PED staff, talked about the highlights of the station area plan centered at Lower Afton Road and Highway 61. Ms. Morrison outlined the geographic constraints, and discussed drawings of the station area concept plan. The long-term station area plan would place a two-story park and ride ramp on the north side of Lower Afton Road, with a pedestrian bridge over Highway 61. She also noted proposed trail improvements and connections.

Commissioner Spaulding asked what necessitated an above-grade connection over Highway 61, rather than a below-grade connection by Battle Creek Park.

Ms. Morrison stated that there are several reasons for an overhead connection, including providing a safe, visible pedestrian walkway, and that the infrastructure could double as vertical circulation for the parking ramp.

Commissioner Wencl asked how likely is it that this site will be built, given corridor priorities.

Ms. Morrison stated that this station would mainly serve commuters heading to downtown Minneapolis, and its construction would depend on the timing of that phase, as well as various cost-effectiveness and ridership requirements for funding.

Commissioner Wencl also asked how likely it is that the park and ride on the south side will be shifted to the north, whether or not Red Rock is funded.

Ms. Morrison noted that Metro Transit recently submitted a site plan for expanding the existing lot on the south side of Lower Afton Road, which was met with some opposition from the neighborhood, which cited the vision from this plan. The plan has aided the neighbors in discussing some short-term issues at the park and ride, and that will influence both short- and long-term investment.

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

No one spoke.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Spaulding moved to close the public hearing, leave the record open for written testimony until 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, September 6, 2011, and to refer the matter back to the Transportation Committee for review and recommendation. Commissioner Gelgelu seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.***

V. Zoning Committee

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

One item came before the staff Site Plan Review Committee on August 30, 2011: Scusi parking lot located at 1820 St. Clair Avenue, new parking lot (mostly paved already).

Two items to come before the Site Plan Review Committee on September 6, 2011: Urgent Care Animal Clinic located at 1546 West 7th Street, new construction of St. Paul Satellite Facility; Remo Convenience & Gas Station located at 1200 Rice Street, new 2,496 sq. ft. gas station and deli.

NEW BUSINESS

#11-255-877 Rolando Aguilar et al – Rezoning from RT1 Two-Family Residential to T2 Traditional Neighborhood. 833 York Avenue NE corner of Arcade at York. *(Luis Pereira, 651/266-6591)*

Commissioner Kramer reported that this is a rezoning of a portion of a RT1 Two-family residential lot to T2 Traditional Neighborhood. There is an existing business facing Arcade on the T2 parcel, and the applicant wants to expand the T2 zoning into the RT1 area primarily for parking. There is also a lot adjustment boundary involved.

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

#11-260-156 Meridian Industrial Appeal – Appeal to Planning Commission by Union Park District Council of a staff decision made on July 20, 2011 to approve the site plan. 650 Pelham Blvd. *(Tom Beach, 651/266-9086)*

Commissioner Kramer reported that the resolution before them includes an analysis by the Site Plan Review staff, Tom Beach of the Department of Safety and Inspections, responding to the substantive issues raised in the appeal. The Zoning Committee recommended a few changes to the site plan related to pedestrian and sidewalk access issues, but beyond those changes the committee recommends denying the appeal.

Commissioner Nelson said that part of the discussion had to do with pedestrian and bicycle access to the site. The site plan had no east-west sidewalk along Wabash Avenue. The committee felt a sidewalk should be put into place if feasible. The other issue was access to the site from the south. Tom Beach looked at those issues and came back with proposed additional conditions to put on the resolution for denial of the appeal and approval of the site plan.

Commissioner Kramer pointed out that those conditions are listed as items #1 and #2 on page three of the Planning Commission resolution. The resolution denies the appeal, but adds two additional conditions to the site plan approval.

Commissioner Fernandez said that sometimes development just for development's sake is not the right answer, and they have to do their best to get the full use out of that site. This plan does not do this, so he will be voting in opposition to the resolution.

Commissioner Spaulding discussed the reasons for the denial. This site has been through a lot of planning as part of the Central Corridor Development Strategy and the station area plan. Initially the site looked to be more pedestrian-focused and better suited to traditional neighborhood development. But, as the Comprehensive Planning Committee looked at the zoning recommendations for the Central Corridor Zoning Study earlier this year they looked at the issues, the plans for the property, the potential of the property, the fact that it's outside the station area and right at the edge of the quarter mile walking radius, and that it backs right up to the recycling facility, which is a very heavy industrial use. It therefore seemed better used as light industrial transition area. Legally, site plan review ties back to the zoning. Most of the appeal grounds were outside the purview of what site plan review as designed to address. Within that

limited scope, the Zoning Committee found the two items that Commissioner Nelson addressed in terms of pedestrian flow, which is important considering the proximity to the station area.

Commissioner Merrigan added that as the Comprehensive Planning Committee looked at the Central Corridor Zoning Study recommendations, they looked at the broader policy for industrial property, not just this site. There was discussion about the fact that industrially zoned land typically does not get replaced in the city if the zoning is ever changed. They talked about the job implications of that, its history to the City of Saint Paul, the logistical proximities to the highway and Rock Tenn, and all that was part of their decision. She again stated that the meetings and discussion about the zoning study were well-noticed.

MOTION: ***Commissioner Kramer moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to deny the appeal. The motion carried 15-1 (Fernandez) on a voice vote.***

Commissioner Kramer announced the items on the agenda for the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, September 8, 2011.

VI. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Commissioner Merrigan announced the item on the agenda for their next meeting on Tuesday, September 13, 2011.

VII. Neighborhood Planning Committee

Commissioner Wencl announced the items on the agenda for their next meeting on Wednesday, September 7, 2011.

VIII. Transportation Committee

Commissioner Spaulding announced that their last meeting was cancelled and since this Monday, September 5th is a national holiday there will not be a committee meeting on that day.

IX. Communications Committee

Commissioner Thao had no report.

X. Task Force Reports

Commissioner Kramer reported that the Near East Side Task Force will be meeting on Tuesday, September 13, 2011.

XI. Old Business

None.

XII. New Business

None.

XIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:02 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 9-16-2011
(Date)

Anthony Fernandez
Secretary of the Planning Commission

PED\Butler\planning commission\minutes\September 2, 2011