

WEST ST. PAUL PLANNING COMMISSION

The regular meeting of the West St. Paul Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Samantha Green, on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at 7:00 pm at the Municipal Center, 1616 Humboldt Avenue, West St. Paul, Minnesota 55118.

ROLL CALL: Tori Elsmore, Maria Franzmeier Morgan Kavanaugh, Dan McPhillips, Lisa Stevens, Peter Strohmeier, Samantha Green

Also Present: Melissa Sonnek, City Planner; Shirley Buecksler City Clerk, Dan Nowicki Marketing & Communications Manager

Chair Green thanked the commission for entrusting her with the role of Chair. She said that the commission was a great group of people with different experiences and varying opinions. Their recommendations are thoroughly vetted and well thought out.

Adopt Minutes: Minutes from the April 21, 2020 meeting were approved.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PC Case 20-04-Site Plan, Preliminary and Final Plat Review to Allow a Climate Controlled Storage Building at 1665 Oakdale Ave- More Space LLC

City Planner Sonnek reviewed the site plan report for construction of a climate controlled storage building at 1665 Oakdale Avenue. The site is currently vacant with properties to the north, south and west zoned as Light Industrial. The property to the east is the West St. Paul Sports Complex which is zoned Multifamily Residential. The proposed building will be three stories high and is similar (but larger in scale) to the storage building on Moreland Avenue. Interestingly, the site has been vacant for 100 years. Sonnek said that the building and parking setbacks in the plan meet code requirements. The proposed number of parking stalls is 62; this includes 41 proof of parking stalls. There would be 9 stalls inside of the building for loading and unloading. The driving aisle widths exceed minimum requirements. Staff recommends as a condition of approval that the lighting plan be revised because of a small amount of lighting at the property line. The proposal does not have any signage plans. The plan calls for the removal of 104 quality trees. The zoning ordinance requires that 30 percent of the trees be replaced. The plan falls short of the requirement at 210 caliper inches. Staff recommends as a condition of approval that the applicant increase the number of trees or the tree size. The applicant must also construct additional screening toward the Sports Complex. The Environmental Committee has reviewed the plan and is satisfied with the proposed number of trees. They would like the applicant to use pollinator-friendly plants, consider the addition of a green roof and that the applicant adhere to Dark Sky compliance codes. Staff recommends as a condition of approval that the applicant consider the Environmental Committee's recommendations. Sonnek said that the proposed building materials comply with city code. There are no specifications regarding trash enclosures in the plan. Staff recommends as a condition of approval that all trash enclosures comply with city code. Because the site is over one acre, the site plan went under review for stormwater. An outside consultant, WSB, reviewed the site and provided a memo (May 12) outlining recommendations for the site. Staff requires that the applicant adhere to all the items listed in the memo. Dakota County has reviewed the proposal; they requested right of way along Oakdale Avenue and

reducing the number of curb cuts in the plan to one. Staff recommends as a condition of approval that the applicant adhere to the items listed in the Dakota County Plat Commission memo, (April 16.)

Sonnek asked if there were any questions. Strohmeier asked about the height of the proposed building and how much bigger it is compared to the Moreland Avenue storage building. Sonnek replied that the new building would be 44 feet at its highest point; the Moreland building has a 17,000 foot print and the new building would have a 120,000 square foot print. The larger size is not “out of line” with the Industrial Zoning area. Strohmeier asked about the history of the site. Sonnek said that the site is vacant and has not had any development. She is not sure why. Kavanaugh asked about the proof of parking. Sonnek said that the code allows for proof of parking to count toward the minimum; there is no set ratio. Sonnek commented on the Moreland storage facility; there have been no permits for proof of parking and no complaints regarding parking either.

Franzmeier asked if the storage facility would be geared toward personal or commercial use and about the building materials. Sonnek said that it would probably be used for personal use. There would be an increasing demand for storage with the construction of smaller apartment buildings. She would not be surprised if there were another application of this type. There are presently two storage facilities in the City. She said that the applicant could answer the question (commercial or personal use) better during the public hearing. Regarding the building material requirements, it is based more on the zoning district and not the use. Franzmeier said she is okay with the materials used but she does not consider precast the same aesthetic as brick. If the commission sees more buildings like this in a commercial area, she would like the commission to redefine the materials [requirements.] Sonnek said that the City does require higher level materials for commercial areas.

McPhillips asked about the one lane, one turn, one entry, one curb cut versus two curb cuts. Sonnek answered that originally the applicant did plan two curb cuts but Dakota County is very restrictive with their access. They are limiting the access to one entry. The applicant is making it work. Franzmeier said it would be difficult for a truck to get into the facility with only one curb cut and no turn lane.

Green opened the discussion to the public. Don Roth of 1689 Oakdale Ave called in. He welcomed the developer to the neighborhood. He has been watching the lot for 37 years; it was sold in the late nineties. He related that during the Robert Street Reconstruction, Eureka used the lot to stage their equipment. They left two feet of class five dirt behind that blends into his property. It is at a higher elevation than his own property. He would like the class five removed to blend back into his property line. He is concerned about drainage.

With no other callers after Roth, Green closed the public hearing.

The applicant, Larry Koland of 4814 Blaine Avenue, Inver Grove Heights called into the meeting. He was happy to answer questions. Kavanaugh asked about the snow removal plan. Koland does have a plan. He will [plow] the drive-through on light snow days; on heavier snow days the snow will be removed and taken offsite. He had a similar problem at his other location which is also a constrained location. Removing the snow from that location has not been a problem. Kavanaugh asked about the actual number of parking spaces needed for the building. Koland said that one of the cars at the More Space facility is his onsite employee. The new space is a “drive-through opportunity”; customers would travel to the back and through the facility to load and unload. It will be a very “quiet” use. He said that if there were four cars on the site it would be a busy day. The parking units in the front would be for people to reserve a space and to check-in. Kavanaugh said that if not many spaces were needed in the front, stalls could be converted into proof of parking and then meet the code tree requirements and the minimums for trees. Koland said that he was open to this; he defer this to city staff and the architects.

McPhillips asked about the leftover soil; Koland has looked at this with Engineering City Staff and with the architects; it has been accounted for in the plan. The drainage would be better [after construction.] Koland said that Quinn with C& H Architects can also talk about this from a professional perspective. Stormwater will not be an issue for the neighboring residents.

As there were no more questions, Green thanked the applicant for his participation.

Commission members commented on the plan. Kavanaugh said he had no issues as pertains to the code; he does have concern with the City parking requirements. It is a good example of how, “out of whack,” the parking requirements are in the City. This is a large building that does not require a lot of parking stalls and we are trying to “jam in” a lot of proof of parking that is not needed. Kavanaugh said that as a condition of approval, the applicant should work with the neighbor on the soil and elevation issue. He recommends that Council rework the parking requirements. The Commission needs to work on this. Stevens said this is a great example of some place where they could lose parking. It is not a retail building. She prefers that the commission worry more about the aesthetics, as opposed to more concrete or tar. Franzmeier asked the parking stalls that would be lost. Kavanaugh said he was referencing the site plan and to the front of the building. It is a “blank wall” on the plan. It would be nice to line up trees on this wall. The site would look a lot better. It is about 8-9 parking stalls. He would refer to staff on the number. McPhillips says this would make good sense. Stevens asked if there were any side street parking. Sonnek said there is no parking along that side of Oakdale. Sonnek said the side street would be Lothenbach to the south, Wentworth to the north, fixed in middle of these streets. It would be a long haul if they parked on these streets. Kavanaugh asked about the retention pond; Sonnek said there would be a retention pond along the east property line.

A motion was made to approve the site plan with added condition number 11, that the applicant adjust the parking to accommodate for additional trees and proof of parking (per staff recommendation depending on what makes design sense,) and number 12, a condition to make sure the applicant addresses the soil elevation question raised by a neighboring resident, (with the recommendations made by staff). The motion carried. All Ayes.

A motion was made to approve the preliminary and final plat review as recommended by staff. The motion carried. All ayes.

NEW BUSINESS-NA

OLD BUSINESS-NA

OTHER BUSINESS-NA

ADJOURN

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 pm. The motion carried. All ayes.

Respectfully submitted, Sharon G. Hatfield