

WEST ST. PAUL PLANNING COMMISSION

WORK SESSION

The West St. Paul Planning Commission work session was called to order by Chair Kavanaugh at 5:36pm on Tuesday, February 19th, 2019, in the Municipal Center at 1616 Humboldt Ave, West St. Paul, MN 55118.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Chair Kavanaugh, Commissioners Green, Franzmeier, Stevens, Strohmeier, McPhillips, and Leuer.

ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Assistant Community Development Director/City Planner Ben Boike, Community Development Coordinator Melissa Sonnek, Public Works Director Ross Beckwith, County Engineer Mark Krebsbach, and City Council Liaison John Justen.

ITEMS OF DISCUSSION

County Roads Discussion with County Engineer Mark Krebsbach and West St. Paul's Public Works Director Ross Beckwith

Asst. Director Boike started the discussion by explaining when the county would get involved with City projects, primarily with plat applications that abut a county road. Through the platting process, both the City and the County are able to identify right-of-way needs, easements, and access points or limitations. Engineer Krebsbach added that when the county plat commission reviews applications, it then makes recommendations to the County Board, who then makes the final decision. The recommendations and approvals made by the County are based upon their own sets of plans and ordinance regulations.

County Engineer Krebsbach and Asst. Director Boike provided a few examples of recent developments throughout the City and how each property was affected by the platting process; a map was shown on the projector screen as a visual aid.

Commissioner Fransmeier asked how platting works for existing and established parcels and what would trigger the property to need to come into compliance. Asst. Director Boike stated that an expansion of an existing building would trigger the need for the property to be platted and brought into compliance; however, sites that are already established can be more difficult to fully bring into compliance. County Engineer Krebsbach added that for these situations, the county wants to make sure that the property is still usable to the property owner after the platting process. More specifically, the rules and standards apply to the county as a whole; however, what might work in Apple Valley, might not work in West St. Paul. This is where the County works with the business or property owner to determine what is most appropriate for that individual property.

Commissioner Fransmeier asked how the Planning Commission could be proactive with upcoming applications that are denser than the existing use. County Engineer Krebsbach noted that the County works in

conjunction with each City in updating planning documents such as the Comprehensive Plan to look at items like traffic volumes, safety concerns, lane additions etc. For example, if a very dense development comes in that might need additional traffic lanes or traffic controls, the County would also look at improving that area through their capital improvement plan. The County monitors the traffic flow and safety on its roads through the long term planning process, which indicates what the traffic counts might be in 20 years, as well as the individual platting process, which might cause a sudden increase in traffic. County Engineer Krebsbach added that the County regularly meets with City Staff and welcomed the Planning Commission to speak to him if they had any concerns or questions on a specific area or plan.

Commissioner Fransmeier then asked how the Planning Commission could communicate the need for additional pedestrian resources for a site. Asst. Director Boike mentioned that the Commission could continue the application to the next meeting to discuss the proposal with the County or condition the approval of the application on adding pedestrian infrastructure.

Chair Kavanaugh asked if the County reviews the proposed use of the site in addition to the right-of-way and access. County Engineer Krebsbach stated that they do review each project as not all necessary improvements for a site are the responsibility of the developer or business owner, for example a sidewalk improvement across the street from a new development.

Commissioner Fransmeier inquired about how Metro Transit fits into the redevelopment process. County Engineer Krebsbach explained that while Metro Transit is a separate entity, they often work with the County. Commissioner Fransmeier explained her concern with the new HyVee development and the expected increased amount of riders to and from the site, further saying that she would like to see a more robust station for that location.

Commissioner Strohmeier asked who would be the best person to contact if a transit facility is in need of assistance, such as the snow needs to be shoveled. Public Works Director Beckwith stated that people should call the county.

County Engineer Krebsbach mentioned that there has been an increased need for both bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and safety measures, and explained some of the different safety measures and options that the county currently uses.

B2 Zoning Overlay District

Asst. Director Boike started the Smith/Dodd B2 Overlay Zoning District discussion by recapping the history and general content of the two small area plans done for the Smith/Dodd area, one done in 2011 and one in 2018. One of the recommendations within the Smith/Dodd Small Area Plan was to create an overlay district to create regulations specific to the area.

Commissioner Fransmeier inquired about the re-alignment recommendations listed in the plan and why that was not being implemented. Asst. Director Boike stated that re-alignment is not being implemented due to limited funding.

Comm. Dev. Coordinator Sonnek gave a summary on when and why overlay districts are used over traditional zoning districts, specifically overlays are often used for historic or downtown areas as a supplement to the underlying zoning district.

Chair Kavanaugh mentioned that parking is unique in this area. Asst. Director Boike agreed by stating that the general parking requirements/minimums may need to be re-evaluated and that Staff has started collecting numbers and requirements that other surrounding cities are using. Similarly, the Commission has seen a few Planned Development applications to accommodate for denser applications that might not otherwise be allowed by the code. The PD tag allows for additional flexibility from the code.

Transitioning into the specifics of the overlay, Asst. Director Boike stated that the recommendation from the plan was to allow additional flexibility beyond the current B2 zoning requirements while requiring a pedestrian scale. This can be done through having parking to the rear of the property with sidewalks and building built up to the front of the property, while still allowing room for outdoor seating, landscaping, and pedestrian friendly features such as blade signs, larger windows, awnings, etc.

Commissioner McPhillips asked what St. Paul had done since the adoption of the plan done in 2011. Asst. Director Boike mentioned that St. Paul had done some sidewalk improvements.

1.06.49

Chair Kavanaugh asked Staff to confirm that the parking minimums are based on use, Asst. Director Boike confirmed. The Commission continued to discuss parking logistics in relation to the recent development of Food Smith, businesses may or may not be comfortable with little to no parking. Asst. Director Boike gave the history of the site and stated that the site was already occupied primarily by building and little to no parking available on site.

Council Liaison asked about the Officer Patrick memorial that was mentioned in the plan, and since it was now established in Mendota Heights, if the site in West St. Paul was going to remain or be removed. Asst. Director Boike mentioned that the Smith/Dodd Small Area Plan was written prior to the memorial being placed in Mendota Heights, and that content might no longer be accurate.

Chair Kavanaugh expressed his desire to revamp the parking requirements and how important it is to future development of the area. The Commission discussed similar areas in the metro that are similar to the Smith/Dodd area such as Grand Avenue in St. Paul or Stillwater.

Asst. Director Boike asked the Commission to review the draft ordinance language over the next few weeks and submit their comments back to staff.

ADJOURNMENT

The February 19th, 2019 Planning Commission Work Session was adjourned at 6:57pm.