

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES - CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS

Tuesday, May 19, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.
REMOTE MEETING

Chair Maggi called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Pat Simon
Tony Scales
Joan Robertson
Jonathan Weber
Elizabeth Niemioja
Annette Maggi
Brett Kramer
Armando Lissarrague
Dennis Wippermann

Commissioners Absent:

Others Present: Allan Hunting, City Planner
Heather Botten, Associate Planner
Heather Rand, Community Development Director

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the May 5, 2020 Planning Commission meeting were approved as submitted.

OTHER BUSINESS

CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS – CASE NO. 20-14X

Presentation of Request

Allan Hunting, City Planner, asked Commissioners to review four road improvement projects for consistency with the comprehensive plan.

Tom Kaldunski, City Engineer, provided an overview of four proposed projects, including 1) 2015-08, 70th Street from Highway 3 west to Highway 55 in Eagan, 2) 2018-19, Argenta Trail from Amana Trail to 70th Street, 3) 2016-04, Argenta Trail from 70th Street to 65th Street, and 4) 2016-05, 65th Street from the new Argenta Trail to the existing Argenta Trail. A roundabout will be built at the intersection of 70th Street and the future Argenta Trail. The project has an estimated cost of \$42 million, of which about \$28 million is being spent within the Inver Grove Heights city limits. The City's share is about \$8 million and will be funded through Federal and State dollars, and a special local road improvement fund. No assessments are planned at this time for the City's portion of this project. Additional details can be found at the ten-day virtual open house held by Dakota County. The City will hold a public hearing at the May 26 City Council meeting. They are hoping for a construction start in Fall 2021. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission find the projects consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Simon asked for clarification of the timing of the phasing.

Mr. Kaldunski explained the phasing plan and advised that it was available on the City's website. He stated the first phase would begin in Fall 2021 at 65th Street and the future Argenta Trail. Final plans are subject to the final contractor proposal.

Planning Commission Recommendation

Motion by Commissioner Scales, second by Commissioner Wippermann, to recommend that the capital expenditure for the proposed road improvement projects is consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Motion carried (9/0). This item goes to the City Council on May 26, 2020.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

R.J. RYAN CONSTRUCTION INC – CASE NO. 20-11CA

Reading of Notice

Commissioner Simon read the public hearing notice to consider a conditional use permit (CUP) amendment to add a 22,500 gross square foot building along with a one-level parking deck to the existing car sales lot, for the property located at 1055 – 50th Street. 11 notices were mailed.

Presentation of Request

Heather Botten, Associate Planner, explained the request as detailed in the report. She advised that the property is located on the corner of Akron and 50th Street and is zoned B-3, General Business. The applicant is requesting a CUP amendment to construct a 20,666-square foot building with a 2,000-square foot mezzanine on the southwest corner of the site and a one-level parking deck on the northern portion of the site. Access would not change, and a revised landscape plan would be required prior to issuance of a building permit. Staff recommends approval of the request with the 14 conditions listed in the report. Staff did not hear from any surrounding property owners.

Opening of Public Hearing

Jack Grotkin, RJ Ryan Construction, 1100 Mendota Heights Road, Mendota Heights, advised he was available to answer any questions.

Chair Maggi asked the applicant if he read and understood the report.

Mr. Grotkin replied in the affirmative. He explained that Mauer Chevrolet purchased the abutting dealership, which is now Buick GMC. The configuration and circulation on that lot was not ideal; however, so they would like to turn the existing facility into a certified pre-owned facility and build a new updated Buick GMC dealership at 1055 – 50th Street.

Chair Maggi closed the public hearing.

Planning Commission Recommendation

Motion by Commissioner Weber, second by Commissioner Simon, to approve the request for a conditional use permit (CUP) amendment to add a 22,500 gross square foot building along with a one-level parking deck to the existing car sales lot, for the property located at 1055 – 50th Street, with the 14 conditions listed in the report.

Motion carried (9/0). This item goes to the City Council on June 8, 2020.

RON CLARK CONSTRUCTION – CASE NO. 20-10PA

Reading of Notice

Commissioner Simon read the public hearing to consider the request for a comprehensive plan

amendment to change the land use designation on a portion of the property from P, Institutional to HDR, High Density Residential, for the property located at 5590 Babcock Trail. 19 notices were mailed.

Presentation of Request

Allan Hunting, City Planner, explained the request as detailed in the report. He advised that the applicant is requesting to change the land use of approximately 2.14 acres of the total site from Public/Institutional to High Density Residential. The applicant would like to construct a 49-unit apartment building on vacant land on the east side of the Church's property. If the comprehensive plan amendment is successful, an application for rezoning, platting, and conditional use permit would be required before development could occur. This subsequent process provides for public review and comment on the actual site plan. Staff believes there is value to the City in allowing the land use change by providing a housing product that meets goals of varied housing opportunities and brings excess land owned by the church back on the tax rolls and thus providing added tax base. If a comprehensive plan change were approved, it would not take effect until a project was approved. Staff recommends approval of the request.

Chair Maggi thanked Mr. Hunting for clarifying that tonight's discussion was regarding the comprehensive plan designation only, not about the detailed layout of the property and apartment building. She noted that Commissioners received emails from two neighbors who were opposed to the request and had traffic concerns.

Mr. Hunting advised that many ideas were discussed regarding access and the proposed location off Upper 55th Street was ultimately determined to be the best. He noted that the County has jurisdiction over Babcock Trail and likely would not support an access point there.

Chair Maggi asked if the vacant property directly north of the proposed apartment building location was owned by CHS.

Mr. Hunting replied in the affirmative.

Commissioner Simon asked if this change would require Met Council approval.

Mr. Hunting replied in the affirmative.

Commissioner Niemioja asked how many high-density housing units the City was supposed to have.

Mr. Hunting replied that over the next 30 years the City should try to construct 571 new affordable workforce housing units.

Opening of Public Hearing

Mike Waldo, Ron Clark Construction, 7500 West 78th Street, Edina, advised he was available to answer any questions.

Chair Maggi asked the applicant if he read and understood the report.

Mr. Waldo replied in the affirmative. He advised that this will be their seventh affordable housing building, with three of them being in Dakota County. He thinks this will be a great addition to the nearby church and daycare, is a good location from a transit perspective, and would be a good transition between the single-family to the south and west and the heavy uses to the north and east. It will also provide an improved pick up/drop off area for the church and will give them a couple additional handicapped parking spots.

Commissioner Wippermann asked how the proposed building compared to one they built in Rosemount.

Mr. Waldo replied that it was almost identical in size and layout.

Commissioner Wippermann asked who would own the building.

Mr. Waldo replied himself and Ron Clark.

Commissioner Wippermann asked for clarification of their involvement with the County.

Mr. Waldo replied that the County would be involved with the initial financing and allocation of tax credits. The County also inspects properties every 1-3 years for 30 years to make sure the building is kept up to their standards. From that perspective this is better than a market rate project in that buildings are maintained at a higher level than you would see in most market rate buildings.

William Bader, 1925 Upper 55th Street, stated he lived across the street from the church was concerned about the additional traffic this project would bring to an already busy area. He was also concerned about crime and the potential for the church to sell and be replaced by more multi-family housing.

Chair Maggi closed the public hearing.

Planning Commission Discussion

Chair Maggi noted that at this point they are only addressing the comprehensive plan amendment but will eventually be looking at the access point, which is a concern because Babcock Trail and Upper 55th Street is a busy intersection.

Commissioner Niemioja stated she agreed with the traffic concern; however, in her opinion this is the right location for a project of this type, especially with its access to transportation and surrounding properties that do not have a conflict. She supported moving forward with the application knowing that they will be looking at it more closely down the road.

Commissioner Weber asked if they would be creating a new parcel and if so, would the parking lots be on the church's property.

Mr. Hunting replied that they would eventually create a new lot which would have its own parking, as well as some shared parking in another area.

Commissioner Weber stated that for clarity reasons he believed everything tied to this building should be put on one lot and guided High Density Residential.

Chair Maggi asked if the new lot would be sold to the applicant with the remainder being owned by the church.

Mr. Hunting replied in the affirmative and asked the applicant to address proposed boundaries.

Mr. Waldo showed where the lot would be split, and noted that the parking in front of their building would be on their property and the church's parking would stay on the church property. There would also be a shared easement for access and parking, in addition to 19 proof of parking stalls that would be kept as green space until parking needs deemed them necessary.

Commissioner Weber asked if 2.14 acres was the accurate size of the proposed lot.

Mr. Waldo replied in the affirmative, stating the lot line is defined based on that acreage.

Commissioner Simon noted that according to the applicant's narrative there will also be 61 underground parking spaces.

Commissioner Robertson stated in her opinion this is an ideal location for an affordable housing project and it addresses the City's commitment to respecting the integrity and needs of individuals across all housing types.

Commissioner Kramer stated there is a need for this type of housing; however, this particular location feels a little bit forced. He also had concerns about the access point. At this point he would support the comprehensive plan amendment to let it continue to evolve and get into greater detail.

Commissioner Niemioja stated the church/cemetery property would likely stay intact as it would be difficult to move a cemetery.

Commissioner Robertson stated she agreed with the access concern but would support the proposal because tonight's decision was only on the guiding and not specific details of the plan. She also felt this was a good location for this type of project.

Commissioner Scales supported the request, stating it was a good location to have affordable housing next to a church with daycare and access to public transportation. He agreed that there were traffic/access challenges but stated they could be worked out at a later date.

Planning Commission Recommendation

Motion by Commissioner Scales, second by Commissioner Robertson, to approve the request for a comprehensive plan amendment to change the land use designation on a portion of the property from P, Institutional to HDR, High Density Residential, for the property located at 5590 Babcock Trail, with the conditions listed in the report.

Motion carried (9/0). This item goes to the City Council on June 8, 2020.

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Fox
Recording Secretary