

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ST. CLOUD PLANNING COMMISSION

A meeting of the St. Cloud Planning Commission was held on February 14, 2012, at 6 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. Members present were Anderson, Andzenge, DeVine, Holtberg, Radaich and Thometz. Chirhart was absent.

Open Forum: No one was present to speak at the open forum.

Consent Agenda: Andzenge moved to approve the consent agenda as follows:

Acceptance of staff reports for February 14, 2012, as part of the official record.

Approval of minutes from the January 10, 2012 Planning Commission meeting.

Holtberg seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Land Development Code (LDC) Amendment/ Increase Screening and Buffering Requirements Between Residential and Non-Residential Land Uses (Article 17). Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, explained that the City Council asked that the Planning Commission consider an amendment to screening and buffering requirements. Three options were prepared by staff. With Option A, buffering would have a minimum height standard of 6' and a minimum opacity of 90%, but allows broad discretion in the type of materials used to achieve those buffers. The screening is from commercial/industrial properties to any adjacent residential use. The types of functions on the property that must be screened has also been expanded to include off-street parking, loading facilities, and drive lanes. Option B incorporates screening and buffering concepts. It includes similar height and opacity standards as outlined in Option A. It also would require a minimum setback of 25' from any property line abutting a residential use. Option C would be the inclusion of the language from the original LDC draft which establishes varying levels of massing and design specifications for screening and buffering. Glaesman pointed out that Option C language was drafted

by Camiros, the consultant for the LDC process. DeVine asked why the screening and buffering requirements are being revisited. Glaesman answered that in the past year, the City has had several rezoning requests, in particular, one on 25th Ave. and Division St. where a number of existing businesses would be demolished and two larger commercial buildings would be constructed. That request prompted questions about screening requirements. Glaesman stated that the City had little discretion because the property was already zoned C5 which requires very little screening between commercial and residential properties. DeVine asked if Option C may be too restrictive. Glaesman stated LDC amendments that have been adopted since 2008 have been less restrictive. Camiros had drafted very comprehensive language. Holtberg asked if Option C covers signs and lighting, and Glaesman responded that it does not. Holtberg questioned if the language would apply to any type of development that abuts residential development. Glaesman explained that Option A states that where commercial and industrial uses abut residential use, minimum screening would be required. He added that other sections of the LDC state that in multiple family residential districts, the parking must be screened from other residential uses. Radaich asked staff if there are any foreseeable issues with Option C that would prevent someone from developing a property. Glaesman answered that the CMBA forwarded comments from one of its members, Tim Torborg, which stated that Option C would involve significant costs, but expressed concerns about all of the options having a burden on development interests. Chairperson Anderson opened the public hearing and invited testimony on an ordinance amending Article 17 of the LDC to increase screening and buffering requirements between residential and non-residential land uses. There being no one wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed. Radaich questioned if motor vehicle sales and motor vehicle rental operations with outdoor display area would be required to be screened so that they cannot be seen. Radaich also asked if the new regulations would apply to someone applying for a permit for an existing operation. Glaesman stated that existing operations would not be impacted by an ordinance revision. Any existing nonconforming properties that want to make improvements that do not relate to buffering and screening would be allowed to do so without meeting provisions of the new language. In regard to

screening for off-street parking areas, the options vary in the level of the standards; however, the intent of all of the options is to prevent lights from shining onto adjacent uses.

Holtberg stated that there is a need for buffering and screening regulations and moved to recommend Option B to the City Council. DeVine seconded the motion. Glaesman stated that one of Mr. Torborg's concerns was the requirement in Option B for a minimum 25' setback from any property line that abuts a residential use. Currently, the commercial zoning districts allow a 0' setback in some instances or the same setback as that of the adjacent residential property. The correspondence from the Mr. Torborg stated that the minimum 25' setback requirement would devalue the property if the adjacent residential property has a lesser setback. DeVine commented that 25' may be a little excessive for off-street parking, but it would be acceptable for buildings and mechanical equipment. City Council representative Goerger agreed that 25' seems onerous and could hamper small lot development. He added that the provision in Option B regarding berming would also decrease potential development area because for every 3' in height for an earthen berm, the base must be expanded. Goerger said he would be in favor of combining Option A and B but making berming optional. In addition, he could not support the provision for a 25' setback in Option B. Radaich stated that he believes the Planning Commission should make a recommendation they feel is appropriate regardless of what action they anticipate the City Council may take. Chairperson Anderson inquired if staff is aware of screening/buffering requirements in Sauk Rapids and Sartell. Glaesman stated that there are differences in the regulations among the three communities. For example, St. Cloud has no landscaping requirements, but Sartell and Sauk Rapids have significant landscaping requirements. They also have screening standards; and in some cases, the setback requirement is greater than 25' in commercial zoning districts. DeVine asked Holtberg, as the maker of the motion, if he would be willing to reduce the 25' setback requirement. Holtberg asked for input from staff. Glaesman noted that currently the LDC requires commercial/industrial properties abutting residential properties to meet the setback requirement of the residential zoning district. He pointed out that if the 25' proposal were cut in half, it would be virtually ineffective in some cases. DeVine suggested eliminating the off-street

parking from the 25' setback requirement. In response to the comment made by Radaich, Council representative Goerger said he was only expressing his opinion as to what requirements he would support and would expect the Planning Commission to make a recommendation based on their opinions. Anderson asked Holtberg for his reasoning in recommending Option B versus Option A. Holtberg said he recommended Option B because of the inclusion of the increased setback requirement. DeVine proposed removing off-street parking from the 25' setback requirement. Holtberg offered a friendly amendment to his motion only requiring buildings and mechanical equipment to have a minimum setback of 25' from any property line abutting a residential use. DeVine seconded the amendment. The motion as amended carried by a vote of 4-2 (Andzenge, DeVine, Holtberg, and Thometz in favor; Anderson and Radaich opposed).

Vacation Request/Mark Hoppe on behalf of Greskoviak & Arseneaux, LLC (VAC-2012-11): Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, explained that the request is to vacate the easternmost segment of 8th St. No. Due to the grade change between 5th Ave. No. and the top of the bluff, the City cannot make a public road connection between the two existing road segments. The adjoining property owners have requested vacation of the public right for street access across the end of their roadway. Glaesman noted that there is public infrastructure within that road segment; therefore, staff is recommending vacation of the public right-of-way subject to the City retaining rights to the public infrastructure. Holtberg moved to recommend to the City Council approval of the vacation subject to the Engineering memo dated February 7, 2012. The motion was seconded by Andzenge and carried unanimously.

Westwood Parkway Plat 12/Final Plat: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, explained that in 2011, the City Council approved a PUD General Development Plan amendment to change the permitted land use from 13 single family lots to a 20-unit elderly housing building and a corresponding revision to the Westwood Parkway preliminary plat. Glaesman noted that there are a number of issues to be resolved prior to consideration by the City Council. Radaich moved to approve the final

plat of Westwood Parkway Plat 12 subject to conditions of the February 7, 2012 Engineering memo. The motion was seconded by Devine and carried unanimously.

Vacation Request/Mike Braulick on Behalf of Monumental Sales, Inc. (VAC-2012-02):

Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, stated that the request is for vacation of 22nd Ave. No. from 6th St. No. to the BNSF rail yard. Applicant owns both properties abutting that right-of-way segment and is requesting the vacation to use the right-of-way for off-street parking for improvements on the property. Because the City sees no need for people from the public to use that corridor as it does not cross the railroad tracks and applicant owns the abutting properties, staff does not believe the City has the responsibility of maintaining that roadway. However, a utility easement is necessary for underground utilities. Devine moved to approve the vacation of 22nd Ave. No. from 6th St. No. to the BNSF rail yard subject to the Engineering memo dated February 7, 2012. The motion was seconded by Thometz and carried unanimously.

Planning Commission Review of the 2012 Community Development Block Grant

Applications: Matt Glaesman, Community Development Director, stated that applicants will make a brief presentation on their request with a public hearing to be held in March. Chairperson Anderson stated that the presentations themselves will be limited to five minutes followed by five minutes for questions and answers.

Ken Berry, Director of Property Management for Accessible Space, Inc. presented his request for improvements to their 24-unit wheelchair accessible building at 2051 Quarry Rd., which houses very low-income people with physical disabilities. The total cost of the improvements is \$80,500; the CDBG request is for \$55,000. The project would involve window replacement to improve energy efficiency, replacement of common area flooring, replacement of water heater, boiler pumps and leaking fire sprinkler lines. Berry stated that Accessible Space has signed a regulatory agreement which is a 40 yr. commitment to maintain this as affordable housing for this particular population. DeVine asked if there are residents that come from outside the tri-county area. Berry answered that he doesn't have that specific information, but believes at least 90% of the residents are/were from this

area. He added there is an extensive waiting list for this property. Anderson asked if most of the residents are receiving assistance, and Berry answered that they do receive assistance and that 30% of their adjusted gross monthly income is applied to rent. Anderson asked if there are priority improvements if they received less than what is requested. Berry answered that window replacement would be the priority.

Tony Kellen, Director of Operations and Technology for the St. Cloud MTC, stated that the MTC is seeking to purchase the former Tri-Cap building at 700 W. St. Germain St. from the City for use as a training center for staff as well as their community outreach program. The total Phase I project cost is \$675,000; the MTC is requesting \$75,000 of CDBG funding to help pay for elevator improvements. Although the elevator would not be necessary until the second floor improvements are made, DeVine stated that it is logical to include the elevator improvements in the first phase of the renovation. Kellen pointed out that the current elevator location is not acceptable; in addition, the roof needs to be replaced, and the new elevator would require a protrusion through the roof structure.

Scott Zlotnik, City Park & Recreation Director, stated that his request is for funding assistance for parking lot improvements at Raymond Park including a 5,000 sq. ft. bituminous parking area and provide for rain gardens and drainage to support stormwater management. The total project cost is \$50,000; he is requesting \$25,000 of CDBG funding. The park serves many LMI individuals, and the focus is on youth and healthy family activities. Holtberg asked if any improvements could be made if the project is not funded. Zlotnik responded that a request was made in 2010 for \$50,000 for these improvements when the HRA was handling CDBG funding. This request is half of that amount with a match from the Park and Recreation Fund. Zlotnik stated that the improvements will probably not happen this year without CDBG funding.

Laura Hood, City of St. Cloud Aging Services Director, explained that the purpose of her request is to replace old accordion room dividers at the Whitney Senior Center with new dividers that provide a better sound barrier. The total project cost is \$36,000, and she is requesting full funding with CDBG dollars. Whitney Senior Center space is available for rent, and the existing room dividers

have exceeded their expected life span and do not provide an adequate sound barrier. The project would replace two sets of room dividers with modern soundproofing and acoustical movable wall sections and systems. Whitney has had to turn away potential renters due to the incompatibility of uses with the existing dividers which do not provide adequate soundproofing. Anderson asked if research has been done relative to soundproofing effectiveness of the new dividers. Hood answered that there are various levels of soundproofing systems that can be purchased. Radaich asked if it is possible to divide the space into two spaces with one divider rather than having to replace two dividers. Hood explained that required creation of a new track would affect the cost.

Mark Sakry, Director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central MN, explained that the request is for \$175,000 of CDBG funds for a \$700,000 project. The project involves a building expansion of 4,000 sq. ft. at 345 30th Ave. No. to add a commercial kitchen, dining area, teen center, check-in area, and restroom facilities. There are a growing number of kids that need this club. The neighborhood is becoming more diverse with 33% of residents living in rental housing. Sixty-one percent of the children served by the Club are from single parent families. The kitchen is extremely small yet the Club serves meals to 80 children/day. Sakry stated that it is virtually impossible to give the teens their own space due to the limited size. In the past, CDBG funding has been the catalyst for private donations. Anderson asked how many more kids can be served with the new addition. Sakry answered that they could go from serving 90 kids/day to 120 or 125. Thometz asked if the Boys & Girls Club at that location currently has to turn children away due to the size. Sakry responded that they do not turn kids away. However, he believes that the lack of teen space has impacted teen attendance.

Andrew Michaelson, Senior Housing Development Manager at Common Bond Communities, stated that Common Bond is proposing the creation of 35 units of new construction of affordable housing for veterans that are homeless or under the threat of homelessness. This construction would occur on the VA Medical Center campus. The project cost is \$400,000, and the CDBG request is for the full amount. Holtberg asked if that amount would be primarily for infrastructure, and Michaelson

answered that is the primary target for the funds. Radaich inquired if the VA is offering any monetary assistance other than donation of the land. Michaelson answered that the VA has not committed any dollars but understands the project would require further government assistance. The total project cost is \$5.8 million. Holtberg asked for an explanation of need for this type of housing in the St. Cloud area. Michaelson stated that a market study indicated there is a demonstrated need for this type of housing. It is estimated there are 100-200 homeless veterans on any given night in this area. Thometz asked if the VA would refer veterans who could live in these units and asked if Common Bond is planning to build this type of unit on any other VA sites in the area. Michaelson answered that they were selected to create a similar housing project at the VA campus at Fort Snelling using existing historic structures. He added that they would use the VA Supported Housing (VASH) voucher which is similar to a Section 8 voucher which would pay for the individual's rent. The individual would have to meet certain eligibility criteria. Therefore, the VA would be the primary source of referral; however, if there is someone who is not already in the system, they will be referred to the proper agencies to determine eligibility. Thometz asked if veterans from outside the tri-county area would be eligible to live in the units. Michaelson answered that current place of residence is not a consideration factor.

Mike Haehn, St. Cloud HRA, stated that their request is for \$200,000 of CDBG funding for single family housing rehabilitation. The primary objective is for health, safety and weatherization of homes. The HRA provides loans for up to \$20,000 on a 0% interest, 30 year deferred basis. Payment is not required until the person moves, sells the home, or the 30-year term has expired. There are currently 25 people on the waiting list. All families must meet the HUD 80% area median income for the St. Cloud metropolitan area. Since 1976, 450 houses have been rehabbed. Anderson asked what was allocated for single family housing rehab last year, and Campion responded that they had been approved to receive approximately \$200,000; however, they received \$117,000 due to a reduction in the City's overall total allocation.

Conni Orth of the St. Cloud Area Crisis Nursery thanked the Planning Commission for its support last year for \$5,000 of CDBG assistance; however, she did not receive those dollars. The

mission of the Crisis Nursery is to prevent child abuse and neglect. They serve children 0-12 years of age living in Stearns and Benton Counties with no consideration of income. She cited some examples of how they have helped children/parents. Radaich asked if Lutheran Social Services (LSS) is the Nursery's sponsor, and Orth answered that LSS is the fiscal agent. Radaich asked the sources of funding for the Nursery. Orth responded that they have applied to several foundations for assistance. Champion clarified that last year the City Council did approve funding of the Crisis Nursery, but did not receive the funding due to the reduction in public service dollars that can be awarded. Orth stated there is one full time position; the remainder of positions are volunteer. It has become increasingly difficult for her to find funding. The request is for \$10,000 with their total budget being \$86,313.

Amy Weston of Diversity Thru Colors stated that their request is to assist in funding the creation of Our Town, a summer/fall youth jobs program. The Our Town program will focus on at-risk and low-income youth in the Seberger/Roosevelt Neighborhood, Talahi/Lincoln elementary areas, and the South Side neighborhood for the purpose of neighborhood beautification, financial education and civic development. The program targets 10-14 year olds. The first year they will have 10 openings; she already has a list of 7 kids who would like to participate in the program. The total activity cost is \$20,000; they are requesting \$13,000 of CDBG funding. DeVine asked if Diversity Thru Colors works cooperatively with the Boys & Girls Clubs. Weston answered that they do.

Glaesman stated that the public hearing will be held at the March meeting for recommendation to the City Council for their public hearing in April.

Other Business: Glaesman noted that one of the 2012 work program projects is the Community Development Strategic Plan update. He asked that the Commission consider allocation of \$80,000 of Development Fund monies to hire a consultant to review the City's operations from a permitting and procedural perspective, review the codes, and discuss if St. Cloud is competitive with other cities relative to economic development. Glaesman pointed out one of the top 10 objectives in the community visioning process is to streamline government to provide for a more business friendly

environment. The Planning Commission agreed that staff should develop a scope of work budget and how it relates to the Development Fund balance for the March agenda.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

Emil Radaich, Secretary