

7.01: Consider Resolution #15-04-092 Granting Preliminary Plat Approval to Harvest Estates, a Major Plat; Case of G S Land, LLC

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the staff report and recommendation to approve the Preliminary Plat prepared by G S Land, LLC for the redevelopment of the former municipal campus located at 15153 Nowthen Boulevard NW as a 44-lot single-family residential development to be known as Harvest Estates. He stressed that if changes are desired in the plat, it should be addressed during consideration of the Preliminary Plat. Community Development Director Gladhill noted the attendance of several Planning Commissioners who can speak to their recommendation to retain the access to Nowthen Boulevard as well as representatives of the developer, and residents.

Planning Commission Chairperson Gary Levine stated the Planning Commission recommended the access to Nowthen Boulevard remain open following discussion relating to access to the school and park across the street, making sure pedestrians do not cross to the park through the ditches, and safety of students walking to the Elementary School. The Planning Commission also addressed whether there was convenient and adequate highway access to residents who live there without winding through the neighborhood.

Planning Commissioner Ralph Brauer presented a chart identifying traffic count data from 1999 to 2013 on Highway 5/Alpine to Sunwood, St. Francis/Alpine to Highway 5; Highway 5/Sunwood to St. Francis; and, St. Francis/Highway 5 to Bunker. He stated the Planning Commission was concerned about the increase in traffic.

Chairperson Levine stated he drives Highway 47 and believes the problem is access during morning rush hour.

Mayor Strommen asked if they discussed the ability of the traffic signals to control traffic flow. She described the traffic that backs up at Highway 5 and Sunwood Drive as it is not signalized and there are conflicting traffic movements. She is concerned about adding additional morning traffic through that area.

Planning Commissioner Randy Bauer reviewed the types of traffic control at intersections and stated he thinks the traffic will even out when a signal is installed at Alpine Drive and Highway 5. He stated when a data center was being considered, residents on the west side were opposed based on noise and other issues not related to traffic. However, residents to the east oppose residential because by closing the access on Highway 5 it directs traffic to small residential streets not designed for additional traffic. Those residents prefer to keep the access open.

Councilmember Riley stated this site operated for 30 years as a municipal center with a good amount of traffic and asked if those traffic counts were considered.

Planning Commissioner Brauer answered in the affirmative and reviewed the past consideration by the Anoka School Board relating to access to the Anoka High School that was not signalized for 25 years. He stated the Planning Commission's recommendation to keep the access open has

to do with the location of the school and safe access to the school. He stated he is bothered by potential consequences should that intersection not receive a signal light. In addition, the school will serve as a park resource for the neighborhood but it would be inaccessible to residents across the road, which will act as a barrier.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked for clarification on a prior statement that the roads currently in place are not designed to handle greater levels of traffic. He noted the Case contains reference to traffic engineering, public safety, and public works all finding that the roads were within the standards without having access to Highway 5.

Planning Commissioner Bauer explained those comments were made by residents indicating access will be an issue as it is a quiet neighborhood.

Councilmember LeTourneau clarified that the roads have been designed, and found by staff to be, adequate and able to handle additional traffic.

Councilmember Shryock stated she understands the neighborhood's perceived concern, which may or may not happen, but she anticipates the majority of traffic will head north and come out on Alpine Drive. She noted the Park and Recreation Commission has worked to improve trail systems within a two-mile radius of the school to provide safe routes for students. Councilmember Shryock stated she would like to keep the access closed for multiple reasons. If open, then she would push to have it realigned with the road across the street. Councilmember Shryock stated she would like that access closed because it will create an additional conflict of access points on Highway 5 given the school is there and more cars coming onto Highway 5 within that short distance by the school will exacerbate that situation. Councilmember Shryock supported signaling the intersection or having a pedestrian actuated crossing at the school and possibly an actuated signal at Alpine Drive for that neighborhood, which will also help the Fire Station when an alarm is received. She supported removing as many access and drive conflicts as possible and to concentrate on actuated signaling when needed.

Councilmember Kuzma agreed and stated the Council had discussed this situation when it was considering a data center for the site but residents made it clear they wanted residential. The City informed residents that one of the fallouts with residential would be additional traffic but the residents strongly opposed a data center. Councilmember Kuzma stated he supports closing the access.

Mayor Strommen thanked the Planning Commission for their deliberation on this case.

Councilmember Riley stated the recommendation of the Planning Commission is to approve it with the access left open as long as possible and until the existing Fire Station is torn down.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated the access would remain open this year, during Phase 1, and then be closed during Phase 2 when the Fire Station is torn down.

Councilmember Riley asked about the potential of County turn back of Highway 5, which will change the rules.

City Engineer Westby provided a definition of a turn back and explained there is no set time for that turn back to occur but it is within the County's long-range plan.

Councilmember Riley stated if the access is closed, what type of traffic calming can be considered at 152nd and the frontage road at Highway 47.

Community Development Director Gladhill explained there is no study underway to look at those alternatives but staff has discussed ways to reduce traffic conflicts and create calming. He commented on the importance of considering a broader study for both of these corridors, as identified by the Council in its Strategic Plan. He explained the importance of the land swap to provide options and flexibility in the future.

Mayor Strommen stated that is an important point because there is no long-term plan for Highways 5 or 47 so that corridor continues to be considered project-by-project rather than as a vision. She preferred to close this access but noted that whether closed or left open now, it is a decision that can be reversed. She commented on the importance of working with the County to address this corridor.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated there will be a signal at Alpine Drive so that will result in higher speeds past this driveway. Staff prefers to realign the access points but long term, the Highway 5 corridor needs to be addressed.

Mayor Strommen agreed that if the access is closed now, it can be opened in the future if an aligned access and part of a broader corridor plan that makes sense.

Councilmember Shryock agreed and welcomed this discussion to continue during Phase 1.

Motion by Councilmember Shryock, seconded by Councilmember LeTourneau, to Adopt Resolution #15-04-092 Granting Preliminary Plat Approval of Harvest Estates.

Further discussion: Councilmember Riley stated a remaining issue is the work hours, which was raised by several residents. He noted the allowable work hours are from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., which he finds to be unreasonable so he would support amending the ordinance to shorten the length of time. Mayor Strommen agreed and suggested it also be addressed in this Development Agreement. Community Development Director Gladhill stated such an ordinance amendment will take significant policy discussion about time thresholds, locations, and types of construction. Neil Kryzaniak, NIK Management representing the developer, stated 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. is a standard and something they can live with. Councilmember Shryock stated the motion to adopt the resolution would result in closing the access. Community Development Director Gladhill confirmed that the access is closed in the Preliminary Plat as drawn.

Mayor Strommen opened the floor to the audience.

Brian Holcomb, 15216 Krypton Terrace NW, stated he has heard a lot about safety on Highway 5 but what has been forgotten is safety within the neighborhoods when there is additional traffic

speeding through. He stated there is another safety issue relating to fire, EMS, and police access, which also needs to be considered. Mr. Holcomb noted the light at Highway 47 and Alpine Drive has no dedicated right turn lane, resulting in traffic backing up when a vehicle is waiting to turn. He stated he would be willing to purchase the lot and give the City easements to the utilities and driveway if the access remains open.

Bob Hartman, 5475 151st Avenue NW, asked questions relating to the cost to keep the access open, distance from 152nd through Outlot A to get to Nowthen Boulevard, the number of accidents reported in this area, and having only one access (Helium Street) for emergency access. Mr. Hartman also commented on the traffic generated by Lord of Life on 150th Lane and the school access.

Community Development Director Gladhill answered questions raised by Mr. Hartman and described the multiple means of egress for emergency vehicles should there be a closure on Helium Street. He clarified the City does not own the parcel where the access and easements are located. It is owned by a developer.

Mayor Strommen described the multiple locations and alignments of accesses, which creates a safety concern. She thanked Mr. Hartman for his questions and invited him to address additional questions with staff.

Councilmembers Shryock and LeTourneau accepted the friendly amendment offered by Councilmember Riley to add that staff should revise the Development Agreement to limit work hours to 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Mayor Strommen noted the Park and Recreation Commission recommended park dedication in lieu of land dedication as it found Solstice Park and Ramsey Elementary School are sufficient. She noted this has been discussed previously by the Council but she does not think those are viable or sufficient options for young children when considering the need to cross County Road 5 so she would have preferred a small unstructured play area over taking a park dedication fee.

Amended motion carried. Voting Yes: Mayor Strommen, Councilmembers Shryock, LeTourneau, Johns, Kuzma, Riley, and Williams. Voting No: None.