

**PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Ramsey Planning Commission conducted a regular meeting on Thursday, September 10, 2015, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Gary Levine
 Commissioner Andrew Andrusko
 Commissioner Randy Bauer
 Commissioner Ralph Brauer
 Commissioner Matthew Maul
 Commissioner Gary VanScoy

Members Absent: Commissioner Cindy Nosan

Also Present: Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill
 City Planner Chris Anderson
 Planning Intern Jeff Salmonson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Levine called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Brauer, seconded by Commissioner VanScoy, to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Levine, Commissioners Brauer, VanScoy, Andrusko, Bauer, and Maul. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Nosan.

4. APPROVE PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

4.01: Approve the Following Planning Commission Minutes:

4.01.1: Planning Commission Meeting Minutes Dated August 6, 2015

Community Development Director Gladhill reported that the minutes from the August 6, 2015 Planning Commission meeting would be approved at the October meeting.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS/COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.01: PUBLIC HEARING: Consider Request for an Amended Conditional Use Permit on the Property Located at 6530 Green Valley Road NW; Case of Green Valley Greenhouse

Public Hearing

Chairperson Levine called the public hearing to order at 7:02 p.m.

Presentation

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report stating that Green Valley Greenhouse, located at 6530 Green Valley Road NW, is currently operating under a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) that was approved on September 27, 2005. The applicant has approached the City with a request to amend their current CUP to allow for an additional 99,176 square feet of building coverage and to reduce a required no-build buffer yard area along the eastern boundary of the property to address an existing encroachment. Staff reviewed the request further and recommended approval of the request for an amended conditional use permit.

Citizen Input

Brad Wolfe, 6421 Green Valley Road, reported he was one of the owners of Green Valley Greenhouse. He explained his business was increasing and was in need of more space.

Commissioner Brauer asked if the applicant supported staff's recommendation. Mr. Wolfe supported staff's recommendation.

Commissioner Bauer anticipated that Green Valley Greenhouse may need additional space in the future. He explained he would support going to a higher percentage of square footage at this time. He then discussed the 65 foot setback/buffer no-build area and asked if this could be reduced.

City Planner Anderson explained the current terms of the CUP were being followed and explained that the 65 foot buffer was agreed upon due to the varying types of uses (commercial abutting residential).

Commissioner VanScoy asked how the expansion property would be used.

City Planner Anderson reported that the property is primarily used for plant production.

Commissioner VanScoy questioned if the applicant required a variance rather than an amended CUP.

Community Development Director Gladhill commented the greenhouse operation required a buffer adjacent to the residential property and for this reason staff was recommending the amended CUP as it offered more flexibility.

Commissioner Brauer inquired if the property should be rezoned.

Community Development Director Gladhill recommended against this due to the fact it would open up the site to too many other uses.

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner VanScoy, to close the public hearing.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Levine, Commissioners Bauer, VanScoy, Andrusko, Brauer, and Maul. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Nosan.

Chairperson Levine closed the public hearing closed at 7:16 p.m.

Commission Business

Commissioner VanScoy questioned if the Commission would support 45% building coverage, which would be equivalent to an employment district.

Community Development Director Gladhill did not object to the Commission making this adjustment but stressed the importance of the buffer zone adjacent to the residential area due to the level of activity on the greenhouse site.

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Andrusko, to recommend that City Council adopt Resolution #15-09-225 approving Findings of Fact #0952.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Levine, Commissioners Bauer, Andrusko, Brauer, Maul, and VanScoy. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Nosan.

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Andrusko, to recommend that City Council adopt Resolution #15-09-226 relating to Green Valley Greenhouse's request for an amended conditional use permit to expand their greenhouse operation and reduce the buffer yard requirement along the eastern boundary of the Subject Property contingent upon submittal of a Certificate of Survey to demonstrate that all existing and proposed buildings will comply with the terms of the amended Conditional Use Permit, allowing 45% building coverage, requiring the site to be surveyed and that a 50 foot setback buffer to remain in place on all four sides of the property.

Further discussion

Commissioner Brauer did not believe that the applicant should be responsible for spillage on the roadway as this was not required of other businesses within the City.

City Planner Anderson explained that the applicant sold bulk landscaping supplies, such as mulch, and the condition was added to address the sales of these materials. However, it was his understanding that the applicant would be phasing out the sales of these materials. He reported that staff would support the elimination of this condition.

Mr. Wolfe indicated that he would be phasing out bulk landscaping materials sales and reported he would continue to monitor the roadway.

Commissioner Brauer did not believe that the City should hold Green Valley Greenhouse responsible for the roadway maintenance as this was not required of the greenhouse located on Highway 10.

City Planner Anderson reported that the Green Valley Greenhouse was a conditional use on its site and one of the previously approved conditions was to keep the roadway clear and free of landscaping debris given the fact it abutted a residential neighborhood. He reiterated that the bulk sales would be phased out and this would become a moot point. He commented that the greenhouse operation on Highway 10 was a permitted use for its zoning district.

Commissioner VanScoy recommended that Condition 11 be removed from the recommendation.

FRIENDLY AMENDMENT: Remove Condition 11 from the staff recommendation.

Commissioner Bauer and Commission Andrusko supported the friendly amendment.

Commissioner VanScoy asked what the buffer zone was for the Employment zoning district.

City Planner Anderson explained the City required a 60 foot buffer zone.

Further discussion ensued regarding the buffer zone and there was Commission consensus to keep the buffer zone at 50 feet around the perimeter of the site.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Levine, Commissioners Bauer, Andrusko, Brauer, Maul, and VanScoy. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Nosan.

5.02: Adopt Resolution #15-09-224 Finding Compliance with the City's Comprehensive Plan Compliance for Proposed Tax Increment Finance District No. 15 Creation

Presentation

Community Development Director Gladhill presented the staff report stating the City received a request from Life Fitness to create Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District No. 15 to facilitate the redevelopment of the former HealthQuest site located at 14100 Sunfish Lake Boulevard NW. As part of the creation of the district, the TIF Plan must be found to be in compliance with the City's land use plans. The District will be created to capture new increment created by future development within the District. Staff requested the Commission review the plan to determine if it was in compliance with the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Commission Business

Commissioner Bauer was pleased that this corner would be improved as it was highly visible and the building was currently in poor condition.

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Maul, to recommend that City Council adopt Resolution #15-09-224 finding that the creation of Tax Increment District No. 15 and its associated TIF Plan conform to the general plans for the development and redevelopment of the City.

Further discussion

Commissioner Brauer stated he typically did not support the use of TIF, however, in this instance, he deemed it appropriate.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Levine, Commissioners Bauer, Maul, Andrusko, Brauer, and VanScoy. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Nosan.

5.03: Consider Recommending Approval of The COR Development Plan Comparison Document

Presentation

Community Development Director Gladhill presented the staff report stating the purpose of this item was to review a comparison document between the original Ramsey Town Center Master Plan and the current COR Development Plan as requested by the City Council and Planning Commission on May 26, 2015. Staff reviewed the previous discussions and proposed revisions offered by the Planning Commission. He discussed several adjustments that Commissioner Brauer offered as amendments to the document.

Commission Business

Commissioner Brauer explained that he believed the Commission and Council should move forward to a new vision away from the original concept.

Chairperson Levine agreed with this assessment and understood it was a big change.

Commissioner Bauer asked what the intent was of the current document.

Community Development Director Gladhill reported that he intent of the document was to take a look at the major components of the original plan when compared to the new plan.

Commissioner VanScoy understood that the core of The COR originally was to be commercial and retail. He believed that this goal was no longer in place as the focus has shifted to residential.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated the value of this document would be to speak with planning groups and economic specialists along with advisory boards to find common trends in order to develop the goals for this area.

Commissioner Bauer understood that the big box retailers were not interested in coming to this area. For this reason, the City would have to look at creating other reasons to make Ramsey a destination.

Community Development Director Gladhill reported that input from the public will be gained to see what the public's vision is for this space.

Chairperson Levine appreciated the questions presented by Commissioner Brauer and believed these questions would gain valuable feedback.

Motion by Commissioner VanScoy, seconded by Commissioner Maul, to recommend that City Council adopt the Comparison Document for The COR with Commissioner Brauer's amendments.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Levine, Commissioners VanScoy, Maul, Andrusko, Bauer, and Brauer. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Nosan.

5.04: Discuss Framework for Future Amendments to COR Sign Standards

Presentation

Planning Intern Jeff Salmonson presented the staff report stating the purpose of this case was to discuss the COR signage standards due to a number of requests starting to come in from businesses as a result of Armstrong Boulevard interchange. The intentions of this case are to clarify and simplify the category types of signs, their height, and square footage allotments as well as address the Commission's comments that it desires to develop a more flexible sign package for The COR. Staff reviewed the item further and requested comment from the Commission on what signs could be approved at the staff level and which should be reviewed by the Commission and City Council.

Commission Business

Discussion ensued regarding the current COR sign standards.

Commissioner Andrusko discussed his experience with evaluating signs from the highway perspective. He believed that the number of signs within The COR should be limited as there were numerous signs along Highway 10. It was his hope the signs within The COR would be interesting and lower. He wanted to see the COR area conservative and attractive to the community.

Chairperson Levine supported varying signs sizes and understood that some corporations wanted larger signs than others.

Commissioner VanScoy supported the presented parameters and believed that all other sign requests should come before the Commission for review and approval. It was his hope that the City would assist with driving retail into the City and signage greatly enhanced local businesses.

Commissioner Maul asked from where the 75 foot sign height was measured.

Community Development Director Gladhill reported this was typically taken from the grade of the centerline of the roadway.

Commissioner Brauer feared that retailers did not view The COR as a viable retail market at this time.

Planning Intern Salmonson thanked the Commission for their input.

5.05: Receive Copy of 2030 Comprehensive Plan: Transportation Chapter

Presentation

Community Development Director Gladhill presented the Staff Report stating the purpose of this case was to receive a copy of the Transportation Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

Commission Business

Commissioner Andrusko inquired how the Comprehensive Plan had changed over the past 10 years.

Community Development Director Gladhill discussed the focus and adjustments that had been made to the Comprehensive Plan from 2020 to 2030. He reported there was a new focus on safety and the Northstar Commuter Rail.

Commissioner Andrusko discussed the increase of rail cars and the necessity of rail safety throughout the State and the City of Ramsey.

Commissioner Brauer believed the City had a lack of east/west roadways.

Commissioner Andrusko agreed this was a concern and recommended the City speak with the County in order to create a partnership in order to create increase mobility for Ramsey residents. He commented this was a concern for him as he lived less than a mile from the railroad.

Chairperson Levine explained he worked for the railroad for a number of years and believed that the railroad was going over and above to address safety.

Community Development Director Gladhill appreciated both sides of this conversation and anticipated that further discussion would be held regarding rail safety.

6. COMMISSION / STAFF INPUT

The Staff Update was noted.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner VanScoy, seconded by Commissioner Brauer, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Levine, Commissioners VanScoy, Brauer, Andrusko, Bauer, and Maul. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Nosan.

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Gladhill
Community Development Director

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Assistant

Drafted by Heidi Guenther
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.