

**ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY BOARD
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

On Monday, November 21, 2016, the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) met in the Council Chambers at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive N.W., Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Thomas Stodola
 Board Member Reid Bernard
 Board Member Jane Covart
 Board Member Michael Hiatt
 Board Member Lucas Trossen

Members Absent: Board Member Colleen Anderson
 Board Member Michael Valentine

Also Present: City Planner Chris Anderson
 City Councilmember John LeTourneau
 City Engineer Bruce Westby

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Stodola called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Trossen to approve the agenda as submitted.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Member Hiatt, Trossen, Bernard, and Covart. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Anderson and Valentine.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated October 17, 2016

Motion by Chairperson Stodola and seconded by Board Member Covart to approve the regular meeting minutes dated October 17, 2016.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Member Covart, Bernard, Hiatt, and Trossen. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Anderson and Valentine.

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Consideration of Recommending Preliminary City Council Approval of Draft Water Supply Plan

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report, noting that the purpose of the case is to obtain a recommendation from the EPB for preliminary City Council approval of the City's draft Water Supply Plan. He stated that staff recommends that the Board recommend preliminary City Council approval of the draft WSP Plan with or without modifications, as the Board deems appropriate.

City Engineer Westby provided background information on the WSP and the process the City follows to update and receive approval of the plan. He explained that the DNR has streamlined the process to make it easier for the agency to review and noted that the Metropolitan Council will also review the plan once submitted. He noted that the WSP attached to the case is a working document and will be fully completed prior to submission to the DNR, noting that staff plans to submit electronically on Thursday, December 29th. He stated that he is present to address any questions the Board may have and noted that the plan will be shared with the neighboring cities and Anoka County after preliminary approval is granted by the City Council, which is scheduled for December 13th.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if there is a projected timeline, specifically regarding the pressure on the aquifer and how that is changing over time.

City Engineer Westby stated that the City is working cooperatively on a northwest metro groundwater study. He stated that the costs associated with treating surface water is much higher than groundwater and therefore it has been allowed to continue to drill for groundwater wells. He stated that the CIP includes funds for a well study to determine where the aquifer would support an additional well, which is scheduled to be added in 2023. He stated that the water connections continue to increase in correlation with the population being served but noted that the use per person has decreased. He stated that is due to more efficient fixtures, more water conservation efforts, as well as the incentivized tiered water charges.

Board Member Hiatt stated that the general trend is going down and asked what would cause the spikes in usage.

City Engineer Westby explained that there are years of drought compared to wet years where irrigation is less used. He confirmed that irrigation is a major driver of the increased water use.

Board Member Hiatt asked the percentage of Ramsey that is served by sewer and water compared to their own well and septic.

City Engineer Westby replied that the rate is split about 50/50.

Board Member Hiatt asked if there are plans to extend the MUSA line further north.

City Engineer Westby stated that will be a part of the Comprehensive Plan update discussions.

City Planner Anderson stated that the Comprehensive Plan update process has picked up and noted that the Steering Committee will discuss that topic further.

Board Member Trossen asked the rate of demand that would justify a surface water treatment plant.

City Engineer Westby stated that it would be much more than what is currently needed but did not have a one size fits all answer. He noted that a surface water treatment plant would have a cost of approximately \$35,000,000 while the cost for a new well would be about \$1,800,000.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked the return on investment, specifically why a community would build a surface water treatment plant voluntarily.

City Engineer Westby stated that it is all a matter of economics, noting that if the river water could be used rather than pulling from the aquifer that would probably be the “right” thing to do, but it is very costly. He stated that some cities are working cooperatively to partner together in that option but noted that the cities in this area are not interested in that option at this time.

City Planner Anderson stated that Ramsey is positioned in a shelf of the aquifer and therefore is impacted by the water draw from other communities.

Board Member Hiatt stated that may justify a regional solution in the future.

City Planner Anderson commented that the City Council has stated that they would like to address that as a regional effort rather than a community specific effort if the topic comes into play.

City Engineer Westby stated that currently the City treats the water at each of the well sites and does not remove the iron or soften the water, noting that at some point that may need to be done. He noted that the cost would be about \$20,000,000 to build a ground water treatment facility.

Board Member Hiatt asked if there are other communities along the river, outside of St. Paul and Minneapolis that have water treatment plants.

City Engineer Westby replied that St. Cloud has a very nice water treatment plant.

City Planner Anderson noted that some incentives could be developed to retrofit irrigation systems to use less water. He stated that in the future the Board can discuss whether incentive programs should be developed to incentivize on a smaller residential basis.

Board Member Covart asked if the Board will see this again before it goes to the Council.

City Engineer Westby stated that the timeline does not allow the Board to view the WSP again prior to the December 13th Council meeting. He noted that if the Board is not comfortable recommending approval, the Board could simply recommend that this be forwarded to the Planning Commission.

Board Member Covart noted a grammatical change on page 26, table 13. She also asked if there is a leak detection system.

City Engineer Westby stated that there is nothing planned for that at this time. He noted that there is not a program for checking for leaks but noted that leak checks are completed in conjunction with street reconstruction projects. He noted that a lot of the system is also metered and therefore leaks can be detected in that manner.

Board Member Hiatt asked if the WSP is the right place to strengthen language regarding irrigation use.

City Engineer Westby stated that most likely those types of regulatory controls would be done through ordinances and codes. He noted that this document is more of a reporting tool.

City Planner Anderson stated that if the Board would like to give that direction to staff regarding elimination of the in-ground irrigation requirement for multi-family and commercial developments, this would be an ideal time as the topic is fresh in everyone's mind. He noted that the regulation could then be in code before construction season begins again.

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Covart to recommend preliminary City Council approval of the City's draft Water Supply Plan as discussed.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Member Hiatt, Covart, Bernard, and Trossen. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Anderson and Valentine.

5.02: Consider Landscape and Tree Preservation Plans for Woodlands 4th Addition; Case of Lennar Corporation

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that Lennar Corporation, the applicant, has submitted an application for both a Preliminary Plat and variance for their final phase of the Woodlands project, Woodlands 4th Addition. He reported that the project site is generally located north of Alpine Drive and east of Variolite Street. He advised that a portion of Woodlands 4th Addition has already received Preliminary Plat approval; the applicant has a purchase agreement in place with the property owner to the south to acquire approximately 15 acres that would be incorporated into Woodlands 4th Addition. He noted that this review is specific to this "new" parcel, which is proposed to have 13 lots. He stated that staff finds the Landscape Plan generally acceptable with revisions outlined in the staff review letter. While additional information is needed regarding the Tree Preservation Plan to determine if any reforestation will be needed, staff does not believe that this alone should prevent this request from moving forward. The specific revisions and additional information needed is outlined in the staff review letter and any recommendation for approval can simply be made contingent upon compliance with the staff review letter.

Board Member Hiatt asked if things could be shifted a bit to avoid the variance.

City Planner Anderson stated that option was looked into but did not think that would be an option in this case. He noted that the Planning Commission did follow the recommendation of this Board in the Brookfield case and the two variance lots were combined to create one lot. He

explained that if the variance were not approved the applicant would most likely go back and redraw the Preliminary Plat to split that lot between the remaining lots.

Chairperson Stodola asked why staff is not recommending approval of the variance.

City Planner Anderson stated that there is not a lot of excess side area to accommodate for potential improvements, noting that this is a minor encroachment. He stated that there does not seem to be a justification or practical difficulty to warrant the variance other than it being a minor encroachment. He stated that staff also believes that even though variances are considered on a case by case basis, there should be consistency in application of the rules. He noted that in a previous variance request the lots provided excess area in another portion of the lot.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if Lennar spoke at all about replatting, whether one less lot would prevent the project from moving forward.

City Planner Anderson stated that he did not explicitly state that staff was not supportive of the variance, as staff was still discussing the topic up until today. He stated that from the perspective of staff they did not see the lot meeting the intent of the ordinance. He noted that it is a narrow strip of 125 square feet that encroaches into the wetland setback area, which is smaller than the encroachment that would have existed in the Brookfield case.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked and received confirmation that the encroachment area is outside of the house pad and is the lot itself.

City Planner Anderson noted that the Brookfield request did not include the house pad either, it simply eliminated buildable area on the property.

Chairperson Stodola stated that he believes that the justification from staff makes sense and therefore would support the recommendation to not approve the variance.

Board Member Hiatt concurred.

Motion by Chairperson Stodola and seconded by Board Member Hiatt to recommend approval/denial of the variance request for lot depth on Lot 2, Block 1.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Member Hiatt, Bernard, Covart, and Trossen. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Anderson and Valentine.

City Planner Anderson confirmed the consensus of the Board that the width is the major reasoning of the recommended denial of the variance request as the lot does not have much extra space.

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Chairperson Stodola to recommend approval of the Landscape Plan and Tree Preservation Plan, contingent upon compliance with the staff review letter.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Member Hiatt, Bernard, Covart, and Trossen. Voting No: None. Absent: Anderson and Valentine.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

Chairperson Stodola stated that perhaps it is time to review the ordinance that requires multi-family and commercial development to have in-ground irrigation.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he would like to see some flexibility but would not want to see nothing used at all. He noted that perhaps alternative approaches could be suggested/allowed.

City Planner Anderson provided some feedback on the language that could be discussed and possibly included. He noted that he can bring that item back as a future case for the Board to consider. He noted that the December meeting is scheduled for December 19th and asked if the Board would like to cancel that meeting due to the proximity of the holidays.

It was the consensus of the Board for staff to work with Chairperson Stodola to determine if it will be necessary to hold a December meeting.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Board Member Covart and seconded by Board Member Hiatt to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.