

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

On Monday, June 19, 2017, the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) met in the COR Conference Room at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive N.W., Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Thomas Stodola
 Board Member Colleen Anderson
 Board Member Jane Covart
 Board Member Michael Hiatt
 Board Member Lucas Trossen
 Board Member Michael Valentine

Members Absent: Board Member Reid Bernard

Also Present: City Planner Chris Anderson
 City Council Liaison John LeTourneau

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

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated May 15, 2017

Motion by Board Member Covart and seconded by Board Member Trossen to approve the regular meeting minutes dated May 15, 2017.

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

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Consider Natural Resources Elements for Greenway Terrace Sketch Plan and Site Plan (Project No. 84): Case of Aeon

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the City has received an application for Sketch Plan, Final Plat and Site Plan for Greenway Terrace, a three story, 54-unit apartment building located on the block bordered by Center Street, 146th Avenue, Traprock Street, and Ramsey Parkway. He stated that the Plan would subdivide the subject property into a buildable lot and an outlot, noting that developer intends to complete a second phase of the project on the outlot in the future. He stated that the purpose of this is to review the proposed Landscape Plan for the project. He noted The COR Design Framework emphasizes landscape improvements for the “streetscape” and is less prescriptive for the private property. Not noted that streetscape elements would include sidewalks, boulevards, and boulevard plantings.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked for details on the elements along the dog run.

City Planner Anderson replied that it would be a type of shrub.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked how this plan would look visually from the street side and asked if it would be similar to the Horton townhome development.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that the streetscape plantings would look similar but noted that this building would be larger than the Horton product. He noted that additional greenspace will be provided between the sidewalk and the building. He explained that this is a slightly different subdistrict of The COR and therefore the regulations are a bit different.

Chairperson Stodola asked if a holding tank would be allowed in this instance because infiltration is not allowed.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that could be done but the applicant is proposing to have the drainage flow directly to the central storm water for this area.

Board Member Hiatt asked for details on the material that would be used for the dog walk area.

City Planner Anderson replied that area would be turf. He noted that the crushed traprock paving would be used in areas of the dog run and around the community garden plantings and the remainder of that area would be turf. He confirmed that this area would fall into the area that allows for surface parking.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he appreciates the plantings in the middle of the parcel to break it up a bit.

City Planner Anderson noted that there is a connection proposed that would eventually connect to the second phase of the project.

Board Member Covart asked if the only access for the parcel would be from 146th Avenue.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that would be the only access point for this development. He was unsure if the second phase of the project would share that access or whether a second access would be provided.

Board Member Hiatt asked if the plans meet the requirements for landscaping.

City Planner Anderson noted that the proposed plans exceed the requirements of the City.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked what the Board is supposed to measure in these types of cases.

City Planner Anderson stated that there are minimum standards for the streetscape that are reviewed as well as ensuring there is not obstruction of sight lines at intersections, reviewing species and size, and providing comment or feedback on the internal landscaping. He noted that this plan goes above the minimum requirements and therefore there are not a lot of issues that require additional discussion in this case.

Motion by Chairperson Stodola and seconded by Board Member Hiatt to recommend approval of the Landscape Plan contingent on compliance with the Staff Review Letter.

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

5.02: Consider Natural Resources Elements for Cole Addition Preliminary Plat (Project No. 17-132)

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He reported that the City has received an application for Preliminary Plat from Bryon and Lynn Cole to subdivide their property at 6951 168th Avenue NW into eight lots, one of which will retain their existing home. He noted that the subject property is zoned R-1 Residential (MUSA) and guided for Low Density Residential. He highlighted the existing drainage and utility easements that would encumber the first four lots and noted that the developer has submitted plans to address the stormwater that are currently being reviewed by the engineering department. He noted that the applicant would need to design the stormwater from the site to meet the existing easement to the east, or work with the neighboring property owner to negotiate additional easement. He stated that staff also requests the construction of a segment of sidewalk to that would connect to the cul-de-sac. He noted that there is an existing row of evergreen trees that runs down the property line and would provide buffering from this proposed development and the existing more rural lots that would abut the development.

Board Member Covart asked for more details on the process to abandon a well and septic system.

City Planner Anderson noted that the Department of Health has regulations for abandoning wells and the City Building Code would have regulations for abandoning septic systems. He stated that one could choose to not abandon the well and instead use that for their irrigation system but noted that these plans choose to abandon and seal the wells.

Chairperson Stodola asked the number of lots.

City Planner Anderson stated that there would be a total of eight homes, one of which would possess the existing home. He noted that the lot for the existing home would be larger than the other seven buildable lots that would be created.

Board Member Valentine stated that it seems the big issue will be the stormwater and easement issues.

City Planner Anderson agreed that will be a large issue but noted that there are solutions and explained that it will simply come down to whether the solutions are feasible for the development.

Board Member Hiatt asked if the developer initially provided the narrative on the easements.

City Planner Anderson stated that the applicant did not provide the information in their narrative but when staff mentioned that item the applicant was able to turn that information around quickly, therefore he believes that they had the information ready. He noted that the engineering staff is reviewing the plans to determine if the proposed plans would be sufficient.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he does like the plan but expressed concern with the drainage issue, noting that the issue should be resolved not just for the subject parcels but the surrounding parcels as well.

City Planner Anderson noted that the engineering memorandum that addresses that issue would become a part of the Staff Review Letter that moves forward to the Planning Commission. He noted that the plans would also be subject to the approval of the Lower Rum River Water Management Organization.

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Valentine to recommend approval of the Tree Preservation and Landscape Plans contingent upon compliance with the Staff Review Letter.

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

5.03: Consider Natural Resources Elements for Estates of Silver Oaks 2nd Addition Preliminary Plat

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He reported that the City has received an application for Preliminary Plat for a proposed eight lot subdivision to be known as Estates of Silver Oaks 2nd Addition. He stated that the site is located east of TH 47 and north of 162nd Lane. He stated that the site is currently zoned R-1 Residential (Rural Developing) and thus, as proposed, a Zoning Amendment and Comprehensive Plan amendment would also be needed. He noted that the EPB reviewed certain aspects of this request at their May meeting. He provided additional details on density transitioning that would be needed, noting that most often developers choose landscaping and provided additional details on what would be needed. He asked for feedback on the impact to the oak stand and the density transitioning on the eastern portion of the plat.

Chairperson Stodola asked for additional details on the impact the future connection would have on the oak stand.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that further fragmentation of the natural corridor would occur if the parcel to the north develops.

Board Member Hiatt stated that perhaps staff could work with the developer to add additional landscaping to the larger western lot because of the impact to the oak stand that will occur on the eastern side.

City Planner Anderson stated that is a possibility that staff could request. He confirmed that the element could not be required. He stated that the developer has to work with the existing access to expand that which puts a challenge on the developer. He stated that the oak forest could not be recreated and therefore perhaps they are more specific on what would be proposed and attempt to go above and beyond that. He noted that perhaps oaks, and native trees, could be emphasized for the density transitioning.

Board Member Valentine stated that it is unclear to him whether they have exhausted all possibilities of preserving that oak forest or whether there are additional options that could be reviewed to preserve more of the forest without destroying the development value of the property.

City Planner Anderson replied that looking at the natural topography he is unsure that there is a lot more that could be done, short of custom grading the lots and attempting to work around trees. He noted that can be costly and sometimes setup the future home owner to have the cost of removing a tree that should've been removed to begin with, as the root system can receive damage during the construction period. He stated that staff can approach the developers in attempt to carve out more of the trees that could be preserved.

Board Member Hiatt stated that it appears unlikely that the parcel to the west would develop further in the future because of the issue of access.

City Planner Anderson agreed that it would be highly unlikely that the parcel to the west could develop because of the access issues.

Councilmember LeTourneau referenced the idea of custom grading and asked if this would be a spec development or whether it would be custom development.

City Planner Anderson replied that it is his understanding that the developer is looking to create the lots and sell those the builders. He was unsure whether the builders would be doing spec homes or custom homes.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that perhaps the new homeowner could be given the option of custom grading in attempt to save some of the existing oaks on their property as a method to mitigate the loss.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that this could be moved forward and staff could continue to explore that option with the developer and the engineering department prior to the review of the Preliminary Plat by the Planning Commission.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he drove through the development portion to the south and noticed that it is fairly open, although meeting the requirements of the City.

Board Member Covart asked and received confirmation that a pond would be created with this development as part of the stormwater management requirements.

City Planner Anderson noted that per the City ordinance, the trees needed to be removed for the stormwater pond are not counted towards the total loss of trees. He noted that required trails and major/connector streets are also exempt from the tree removal total.

Councilmember LeTourneau referenced the lots that meet up with more rural lots from the development southeast of this parcel and received confirmation that the density transitioning required for those lots would be similar to what is required for this development.

Chairperson Stodola asked if there is consideration to making these lots larger.

City Planner Anderson replied that the City does not have to approve a zoning or Comprehensive Plan amendment, but noted that there is something to be said that these lots would be consistent with the existing portion of the development.

Board Member Hiatt stated that if there is a way to preserve that oak forest, it should be. He noted that if two to three homes were constructed under the current zoning, that would preserve more of the oak forest.

Chairperson Stodola stated that there are a lot of trees being removed with this plan and therefore he would not support the Tree Plan and Landscape Plan as proposed.

City Planner Anderson stated that the request meets the minimum requirements under City Code. He stated that the application is not deficient in meeting the minimum standards and therefore if this were challenged legally the City would have no legs to stand on.

Board Member Hiatt agreed that this is too many oak trees going away from a mature area and the City should fight hard to preserve that. He noted that the zoning would need to be changed to support this plan and therefore he would ask that the zoning amendment not be approved further along in this process.

Board Member Trossen asked how many trees would be saved with fewer lots.

City Planner Anderson stated that you likely would preserve more trees but you would still need stormwater treatment and septic system drain fields, which would both require tree removal. He stated that he was unsure that the rate of removal would be considerably less than that proposed. He stated that the Board could state that because of the zoning and Comprehensive Plan amendment are required and that the oak forest was identified as moderate value, the Board could recommend denial of the request

Motion by Chairperson Stodola and seconded by Board Member Hiatt to recommend denial of the Tree Plan and Landscape Plan because of the impacts to the oak forest and the need for the zoning and Comprehensive Plan amendments.

Further discussion: Board Member Hiatt stated that he would love to see a comparison development plan that would meet the current zoning and Comprehensive Plan guiding to determine the extent of the oak forest that could be preserved. Board Member Covart stated that she likes the idea of larger lots and asked if the proposed plan would have individual septic systems. City Planner Anderson stated that this proposed plan would have City sewer and water while lots developed under the current zoning would require individual septic. Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he has heard the support from the Board to preserve the oak forest. He stated that there is a tree preservation policy in place that helps to guide development in the City but noted that an exception could be made to that policy in this instance. He provided an example of how he had to clear a lot of trees from his lot to build but now 30 years later his lot looks great. He noted that there is a large section of the community in this quadrant that is under pressure from a lot of things. He stated that there are a lot of people in that quadrant that would like to have the commercial node viable and more rooftops will be needed in order to make that happen. He stated that this is another step along that path and noted that while it is unfortunate that there is a tree stand in that area, this is a step in the right direction for that quadrant of the community. He provided an example of another route a developer could take in the future to provide a connection to the lot to the north. Board Member Hiatt stated that the tree preservation policy assumes that all trees are equal and maybe a future improvement to the policy should put prioritization on certain species. City Planner Anderson stated that the tree preservation standards do identify a definition for significant trees. Board Member Valentine asked whether the tree preservation is a policy or ordinance. City Planner Anderson replied that it is an ordinance. He noted that the Natural Resources Inventory includes four levels, noting that moderate falls just above low and there are two higher quality categories. Board Member Valentine stated that this seems to be a very common contention between development and preservation and the solution often falls in finding a balance point for each of the parcels as they come forward. He asked the type of progress that should be anticipated because this does not have the ordinance behind for support. City Planner Anderson replied that he does not think the developer would be supportive. He stated that perhaps the better choice would be to open the dialogue to determine how the preservation could be maximized while still meeting the requirements of the City Code. He noted that the requirements of the Code are being met and therefore the better approach would be to attempt to work with the developer to attempt to maximize what could be protected. He stated that the Planning Commission has already reviewed the Sketch Plan and did not raise any issues from that perspective, so the developer used that initial feedback to further guide their design plans. Board Member Valentine stated that he likes the idea of going back to the developer to determine if additional trees could be preserved. Board Member Covart asked if the Staff Review Letter would be changed to reflect that statement. City Planner Anderson confirmed that he would update the Staff Review Letter that will go before the Planning Commission and City Council. He noted that the lengthy discussion regarding this oak forest would be included in the packet information.

Motion failed. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Member Trossen. Voting No: Board Member Anderson, Covart, Hiatt, and Valentine. Absent: Board Member Bernard.

Motion by Board Member Hiatt and seconded by Board Member Valentine to recommend approval of the Tree Plan and Landscape Plan contingent upon compliance with the Staff Review Letter and direct staff to work with the developer in attempt to preserve additional portions of the oak forest.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Board Member Hiatt, Valentine, Anderson, Covart, and Trossen. Voting No: Chairperson Stodola. Absent: Board Member Bernard.

5.04: Consider Natural Resources Elements of Pearson Place Preliminary Plat

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He reported that the purpose of this case is to review various elements of a Preliminary Plat, prepared by Otto Associated and dated May 24, 2017, for a proposed 12 lot residential subdivision near the southern/eastern end of Bowers Drive. He stated that a key decision occurs at Preliminary Plat, in which the layout can be approved, subject to approving final construction plans and Final Plat documents. He noted that the majority of the project area is cropland and thus, there should be minimal impact to trees. He noted that there is a row of trees along Bowers Drive (within the right-of-way) and also in the southeastern corner of the project site (Lot 11, Block 2) but nothing beyond that. He noted that the applicant has verbally stated that the only impacts to existing trees would be from providing access to each lot via a driveway. He provided additional information on the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Areas (MRCCA) and the existing rules, compared to the new State rules that have yet to be adopted by the City. He noted that the developer has proposed a PUD in order to bridge the gap between what is in place currently and what will be in effect after the rules are adopted. He highlighted a strip of heavily wooded area that would be preserved to create a buffer from the existing homes on Bowers Drive. He stated that while the area is within the MUSA, the nearest connection is not close and therefore this development would have lots served by private septic and water service. He stated that the proposed lot sizes would fit the character of the existing homes along Bowers Drive. He noted the exception of the homes directly across the street that have 200-foot lot widths compared to the 100-foot widths proposed in this development. He stated that he proposal appears to avoid removal of any significant trees and noted that the additional trees proposed would exceed the requirements. He stated that at the direction of staff, the developer would provide Outlot C, which could serve as a future road connection should an adjacent parcel develop.

Board Member Valentine stated that he does not have any concerns.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he has had a few conversations with people from his neighborhood and their concerns were outlined in the memorandum. He stated that the residents would like to see that buffer preserved and it seems the developer is in favor of that as well. He stated that this appears to be low impact development. He noted that the buffer area is very low quality and is mainly brush.

Board Member Hiatt asked why this area has remained undeveloped for this long.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that the land has been farmed and is currently farmed.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that there is a very thin line of vegetation that acts as a buffer.

Board Member Hiatt stated that perhaps the additional landscaping and development could improve the quality of the existing lots.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that the 50-foot buffer is a nice addition to the project. He stated that the neighborhood is talking about creating a discussion with the City to acquire the woods to protect that from development in perpetuity.

City Planner Anderson stated that he is not requesting formal action because the information was submitted to close to the meeting date and therefore the Board did not have time to thoroughly review the information as it was just presented tonight.

5.05: Receive Update on The COR Interim Development Plan

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the purpose of this case is to review a preliminary draft of The COR Interim Development Plan, which essentially puts into motion a more formal amendment to the Master Plan. He noted that details of the recommendations prepared by the Planning Commission over a series of workshops were attached to the case. He noted that the direction from the April 25, 2017 Joint Work Session was to review this draft with the advisory Boards and Commissions. He stated that the draft was reviewed by the Economic Development Authority on May 25, 2017 and by the Parks and Recreation Commission at their June 8, 2017 meeting. He advised that staff will be seeking authorization for public comment on the draft in July.

Board Member Valentine commented that the plan is coming along nicely.

Chairperson Stodola asked for more information on the boundaries of The COR.

City Planner Anderson provided the boundaries of The COR, explaining that some of The COR zoning extends past those boundaries.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that one of the driving factors of the Council is the market, noting that the development will have to be market driven. He explained that the big box retail that was originally desired will not fit into The COR because of the challenges that exist lying between two retail nodes and other market factors. He noted that the other factors that bring in business is density and that is why additional housing is being considered.

City Planner Anderson stated that while residents have said they do not want more apartments in The COR, additional rooftops are needed to attract business and that is the quickest method. He noted that the original plan for The COR included apartments because that would concentrate density and allow other portions of the City to remain more rural.

Councilmember LeTourneau noted that this has been a balance approach with market rate apartments.

Board Member Valentine stated that the planning for growth in the community has been done well.

Board Member Hiatt stated that the challenge in The COR is the density focus and balancing that with an environmental aspect. He provided examples of additional plantings that the Board has been able to negotiate on more dense projects. He noted that often with big box retail there is less landscaping and stated that in smaller retail settings you are able to maintain that landscaping to make it more appealing.

City Planner Anderson provided additional details on the Lake Itasca Greenway Corridor which plays into the concepts.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- **Summer Recycling Event**

City Planner Anderson reported that a summer recycling event will be held on July 29th, noting that this will be a carbon copy of the spring and fall events to determine if there is a desire for this additional event.

- **Pilot Organics Drop-Off Program Update**

City Planner Anderson stated that the planning intern is working to finalize details on a pilot organics drop-off program. He noted that additional information will soon be distributed through the newsletter and website.

- **Comprehensive Plan Update Natural Resources Workshop Update**

City Planner Anderson stated that a workshop was recently held for the natural resources chapter of the Comprehensive Plan update. He noted that it was not heavily attended, but advised that he did not anticipate heavy attendance. He welcomed any additional input from the Board on the topic.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.