

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

On Monday, July 17, 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: Acting Chairperson Michael Valentine
 Board Member Colleen Anderson
 Board Member Reid Bernard
 Board Member Jane Covart
 Board Member Michael Hiatt

Members Absent: Chairperson Thomas Stodola
 Board Member Lucas Trossen

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chairperson Valentine 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 Bernard to approve the agenda as submitted.

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated June 19, 2017

Motion by Board Member Anderson and seconded by Board Member Covart to approve the regular meeting minutes dated June 19, 2017.

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

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Consider Landscape Plan for Jasper Industrial Park

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He noted that the City has entered into a Purchase Agreement to sell a portion of the property located at the southeast corner of Jasper Street NW and 143rd Avenue NW for a new industrial development. He stated that the Site Plan shows two proposed multi-tenant buildings on Lot 1 and would create two outlots (one that is part of the land transaction and the other that would be retained by the City for a future Public Works Campus). He noted that this review is limited to the proposed improvements on Lot 1 only and provided additional details on the proposed Landscape Plan.

Acting Chairperson Valentine asked if the developer would be responsible for researching to determine if there is a special classification for the cemetery.

City Planner Anderson noted that the cemetery is a separate parcel and the City staff will be researching that item to determine if any special protections will be needed.

Board Member Hiatt asked if there is potential to create an access to the cemetery from the east.

City Planner Anderson highlighted the existing access to the cemetery, which is a dirt path. He did not believe that there is a lot of traffic in and out of the cemetery site but noted that the existing public access would be retained. He recommended approval of the Landscape Plan contingent upon compliance with the Staff Review Letter.

Board Member Hiatt asked if the City has experience with this developer.

City Planner Anderson provided examples of other projects the developer has completed in the City and the developer's experience with preserving oak trees.

Board Member Hiatt asked if the developer would be sensitive to the needs of the cemetery.

City Planner Anderson stated that the developer has been open to the suggestions of staff and one condition would be to preserve the existing access to the cemetery. He stated that staff has confidence that the developer would be able to preserve the oak trees on the cemetery site.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that Sharp and Associates is very reputable, very sensitive and has been a good partner to the community.

Board Member Hiatt stated that selling industrial units is a good business decision for the City and he would like to support good quality projects.

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

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

Acting Chairperson Valentine recognized that the stormwater design is not the purview of the Board but asked for some details.

City Planner Anderson highlighted the proposed stormwater pond and provided additional details.

5.02: Consider Landscape Plan and Tree Inventory for Bunker Lake Business Park

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the purpose of the case is to review the Landscape Plan and Tree Inventory for a new Business Park being proposed near the southeast corner of Bunker Lake Boulevard and Puma Street. The total area is about 45 acres in size, but only a portion of that is being proposed for initial development. He noted that the City Council has approved a Tree Clearing and Grading Agreement for the developer to allow some of the site preparation work to begin in advance of final approvals to aid in getting the pads for Lots 1 & 2 ready as soon as possible. He provided additional details on the proposed Landscape Plan. He recommended approval of the Landscape Plan and Tree Inventory Plan contingent upon the revisions outlined in the Staff Review Letter.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked for clarification on which plan is displayed currently on the monitor.

City Planner Anderson replied that the plan shown on the screen is the Landscape Plan proposed by the applicant.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that the trees shown seem to exceed the requirements and asked where the missing trees would be.

City Planner Anderson noted that the inches fall short, as the applicant is proposing about 700 inches of trees which falls well short of the 2,500 inches required. He noted that when the remainder of the site is developed, each site will have additional landscaping for each site which will contribute towards the total number needed.

Board Member Hiatt asked if there is a suggestion of staff as to where additional trees could be planted.

City Planner Anderson stated that the southern boundary of the parking lot and around the ponding basin could use additional trees but noted that payment into the City forestry fund would also be an option.

Acting Chairperson Valentine asked if a memorandum of understanding could be used to keep the developer on their toes as the business park builds momentum and continues to be built out.

City Planner Anderson replied that the details would be included in the development agreement. He stated that certain percentages of landscaping could be designated for the future parcels.

Board Member Hiatt asked if the City has experience with this developer and whether the developer is attempting to aggressively market the remainder of the site for development.

City Planner Anderson stated that the developer is comfortable that there is a market for this development, as they have heavily invested their own funds. He confirmed that the City has positive experience with this developer.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that the developer is great and although he has trust in the developer, the details are also memorialized in the agreements. He stated that this is a reasonably wooded area that will not be very wooded as it develops because it will be an industrial setting. He stated that he likes the idea that the developer has knowledge on the site lines and where trees should be placed. He stated that the developer wants the business park to be visible from the highway, which he also agrees is well thought out. He stated that he agrees with the option of payment in lieu; meaning that if the necessary inches are not provided, the City have the payment into the forestry fund.

Board Member Hiatt referenced the residential properties to the north and asked if they are aware that the land is zoned for industrial.

City Planner Anderson replied that the parcel to the north was originally planned for Legacy Christian Academy, but that project never materialized and there was a Comprehensive Plan amendment which involved public input for the rezoning of that property. He stated that the applicant, PSD, and the neighboring parcel owner, Capstone, have been working together to ensure there will be adequate screening provided between the two sites.

Motion by Board Member Covart and seconded by Board Member Hiatt to recommend approval of the Landscape Plan and Tree Inventory Plan contingent upon compliance with the Staff Review Letter.

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

5.03: Discuss Potential Zoning Amendment for Solar Improvements

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He explained that Connexus Energy has applied for a Zoning Amendment and a Conditional Use Permit to construct a new solar garden on the property legally described as Lot 3 Block 1 River Crossing Addition. He stated that the subject property is owned by Anoka County and would be leased by Connexus Energy. He noted that when the City contemplated solar energy systems several years ago, the Zoning Code was amended to consider ground or building mounted solar energy systems as a permitted accessory use in any zoning district; However, it did not account for or address the possibility of a solar energy system being the principal use of a property, as would be the case with Connexus' proposal. He asked for input the Board may have on a potential Zoning Amendment that would allow for solar energy systems to be a principal use on a property with the issuance of a Conditional Use Permit. He stated that the intention would be to bring forward a zoning amendment in August, noting that he would coordinate with the Community Development Director and Economic Development Manager to determine if the City would like to see this as a principal use. He displayed a sketch

that Connexus provided with their application, noting that staff would also coordinate with the Fire Department to ensure public safety measures are considered in the design as well. He asked the Board to think about this topic and be prepared for a more thorough review at the August meeting.

Board Member Hiatt stated that perhaps other cities are further along in their zoning that could perhaps provide some insight. He stated that he likes the idea of using a Conditional Use Permit, as that would leave the City with the highest level of discretion.

City Planner Anderson stated that the Connexus representative has offered access to their consultant that has numerous ordinance examples that are being used across the nation for staff to review.

Board Member Anderson asked if there are environmental impacts to the ground mounted solar arrays.

City Planner Anderson stated that there has not been a presentation from Connexus on this large of a scale. He stated that Connexus is one of the few solar gardens that have converted the area to a sustainable native landscape and are now raising honeybees on the property. He stated that he is unsure whether there are environmental impacts but noted that there can also be environmental benefits, as Connexus has shown on their site.

Acting Chairperson Valentine stated that in his experience one of the complaints for these types of uses is nuisance noise and asked the proximity of the closest residential development.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked the type of noise.

Acting Chairperson Valentine replied that there could be noise from fans or adjusting equipment.

City Planner Anderson replied that the panels can be designed to follow the arc of the sun but is not aware if this proposal will include that technology. He noted that most of the adjacent parcels are currently used for agricultural purposes, although zoned residential, and currently the parcel is somewhat of an island in itself. He believed the closest residential development would be on Bowers Drive.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that perhaps the EPB should ask for the environmental impact and environmental benefits. He stated that the native prairie planting that Connexus did on their own campus near the solar array is interesting.

City Planner Anderson stated that the current existing solar array on the Connexus campus has been in place for a few years and there have not been any complaints from the neighboring residential developments, which are much closer in proximity than the proposed site.

Board Member Covart asked if a six-foot fence would block the solar array.

City Planner Anderson replied that a six-foot fence would not block the equipment but would more likely be used for security purposes. He stated that this is an exciting project which demonstrates that their original solar project was successful.

Board Member Anderson asked if Connexus would provide the City their future marketing plan.

City Planner Anderson stated that he did not have a direct answer but assumed that Connexus would be preparing a marketing plan to promote this. He noted that while the City could request to see the plan, it would not be a requirement. He noted that perhaps Mr. Burandt could come back to provide additional details via a presentation, as he did in the past for the solar array on the Connexus property.

Acting Chairperson Valentine asked if a required environmental review would be triggered, such as an EAW.

City Planner Anderson replied that he did not believe the size of the parcel would trigger those items but noted that he would double check.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- **Organics Drop-Off Recycling Program Update**

City Planner Anderson reported that the City has the organics program up and running, with 20 to 25 residents participating. He stated that this is most likely going to attract the die hard recyclers and that even folks that recycle on a regular basis may not be thrilled to store food scraps and drop them off at a designated location. He noted that as they continue to work out the details of the program they will continue to promote the program to increase participation.

- **Summer Recycling Event**

City Planner Anderson stated that the City is offering a summer recycling event on Saturday, July 29th, from 8:00 a.m. to noon, which will be a replica of the spring and fall events.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Amanda Staple, *TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*