

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

On Monday, October 16, 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 Reid Bernard
 Board Member Jane Covart
 Board Member Michael Hiatt
 Board Member Lucas Trossen
 Board Member Michael Valentine

Members Absent: None

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

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated August 21, 2017

Motion by Chairperson Stodola and seconded by Board Member Bernard to approve the regular meeting minutes dated August 21, 2017.

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

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Sketch Plan for Villas at North Fork

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the purpose of the case is to introduce the EPB to the proposed Sketch Plan for the Villas at North Fork. He noted that the proposed development is located along the south side of Alpine Drive, immediately west of the Riverstone project and directly south of Lake Itasca. He noted that more detailed plans, including Landscape and Tree Preservation plans, will be developed in the coming months as part of the Preliminary Plat package. He reviewed details of the Sketch Plan, noting that the proposed plan would require a Comprehensive Plan amendment for the density and to obtain City sewer and water service to the parcel. He compared the property to the natural resources inventory of the City, noting that this would be a semi-natural area. He stated that the zoning code mentions front yard trees, noting that City staff is pushing to make that more specific to call those boulevard trees. He stated that one recommendation could be to require boulevard trees. He stated that other suggestions could be regarding natural landscapes which could eliminate preserved turf and irrigated landscaping. He stated that this is a different way to approach these requests and provide the EPB with an opportunity to provide input earlier in the review process.

Board Member Hiatt stated that the center section is defined as passive park and asked if that implies a native landscape.

City Planner stated that at this point there is not that level of detail but stated that his assumption would be that would be manicured.

Board Member Hiatt stated that there could be potential to encourage a rain garden or landscape that would encourage pollinators. He stated that he could not picture incorporating a tree into the front yard of a townhome where the driveway encompasses the majority of space. He noted that native landscape, encouragement of rain garden and pollinator plantings would be a good fit for that center area.

City Planner Anderson noted that general comment for opportunities is helpful for this stage.

Board Member Hiatt stated that would be a good opportunity for a tradeoff to provide natural landscape or rain garden in return for the high density.

Chairperson Stodola stated that it does not appear there is a neighborhood adjacent this property.

City Planner Anderson identified the adjacent parcel that has been approved for the Riverstone development, which is a combination of small lot single-family residential and two townhome products. He stated that it will realistically take multiple years for all phases of the Riverstone development to be built out.

Councilmember LeTourneau referenced the passive park, noting that it is difficult to determine the size of that parcel. He stated that he likes the idea of incorporating native landscape. He stated that perhaps the ponding areas could be combined with native and/or pollinator friendly plantings. He stated that if the ponds are stormwater ponds, perhaps the development could draw from the stormwater ponds for irrigation to mitigate the water use.

City Planner Anderson noted that would be a possibility. He stated that this development would need to go through the Lower Rum River Water Management Organization (LRRWMO) and that permitting process could allow that activity to draw from the stormwater for irrigation uses. He agreed that this is the time to bring forward those suggestions so that staff can return those suggestions to the developer so they may attempt to incorporate those into the project.

Board Member Valentine stated that perhaps a list of generic goals could be drafted for a developer to incorporate if there is sufficient space. He stated that as the Board discusses these items, there are items the group agrees that they would like to see if there is sufficient space. He stated that if the stormwater ponds are large enough it would be great to see rain gardens and native plantings occurring around that feature as well as the ability to draw on that water for irrigation.

Chairperson Stodola asked and received confirmation that Board Member Valentine would like a global list of suggestions that could apply to developments.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he likes the suggestion as the elements would have financial impact and the developer could then take those suggestions as they create their plans.

City Planner Anderson agreed that these are not codified and therefore this is the opportunity to provide suggestions to the developer prior to the development of more formal plans.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if the EPB would see this plan again during the review process.

City Planner Anderson clarified that this will not be the only time the group will see this plan. He explained that this is an opportunity for the Board to provide comments early on before a lot of money has been spent on creation of the formal plans. He confirmed that the Board would still review the Preliminary Plat.

Councilmember LeTourneau referenced the eastern border of the property, which will be adjacent to the Riverstone development, which has a lower density of housing. He believed the southern edge of the Riverstone development has the lower density single-family housing with the highest density on the northeast border.

Chairperson Stodola asked if the highest density for Riverstone would be along the highway.

City Planner Anderson stated that Riverstone Sketch Plan had attached townhomes on the southern and northeast borders but as the Preliminary Plat came forward, because of the market study, the attached townhomes along the railroad line were eliminated and replaced with single-family residential which transition into detached townhomes. He stated that the northeast portion would still have attached townhome units.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if there would be interest in discussing transitioning between the two properties, specifically along the eastern edge. He noted that transitioning could be landscaping or a berm.

Board Member Valentine agreed that transitioning of some type would be good.

Board Member Hiatt asked if the eastern border has a north/south road.

City Planner Anderson replied that is simply the property boundary. He noted that part what they would look at is the density of the two developments, noting that the density ranges would be fairly close to one another. He noted that although Riverstone was approved as a PUD, it follows 3-7 units per acre with an overall density compliant with the R-2 standard. He stated that the density for this parcel would be similar and therefore if the density ranges fall within the same range, transitioning is not typically an element. He noted that if the density falls outside of the 3-7 units per acre range, the property would be required to have a transitioning element.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that it would then make sense that transitioning be brought forward so that the developer is aware.

Board Member Hiatt stated that it would be to the advantage to the developer so that the two developers could work together to make the products cohesive, which would benefit both properties.

City Planner Anderson stated that overall it seems that there is consensus that where appropriate for all requests incorporation of native landscaping and/or pollinator friendly plantings should be encouraged, use of a rain garden(s) should be suggested, and if possible, the reuse of stormwater ponds for irrigation should be suggested. He stated that specific to this request there seems to be consensus to encourage native landscaping near the ponds, the suggestions for the passive park, and near the eastern border the density of the adjacent projects should be reviewed and the use of transitioning should be encouraged if applicable.

Board Member Anderson stated that she Googled passive park/recreation area and read aloud the definition.

Chairperson Stodola stated that he lives in townhomes on Sunfish and there is an area that he would envision as passive, which is a minimum maintenance area that is mowed to provide greenspace between the adjacent developments.

City Planner Anderson noted that the zoning code requires greenspace in the development for density in this range.

Board Member Hiatt stated that there is a golf course neighboring this property. He stated that the pond location is a barrier to the golf course but noted that additional plantings could be used to provide a larger barrier. He stated that the ponds would provide the view of the golf course without the golf balls.

Board Member Covart stated that there appears to be trails throughout this development and asked if those would connect to other trails in the area.

City Planner Anderson stated that staff is presuming that the development would have privately maintained trails. He stated that there will be sidewalk in the development that would connect to Alpine in two locations and staff would work to adjust one or both access points for the development, for visual safety purposes and alignment with the road to the north.

Board Member Covart stated that there tends to be additional guest parking with townhomes and noted that does not appear to be provided. She asked if the guest parking would then eat into the greenspace currently provided.

City Planner Anderson replied that it is his understanding, that much like Riverstone, the road would be proposed as a 29-foot width road with parking allowed on one side of the street. He noted that request has not yet come forward but staff is assuming that would be part of this package. He stated that although these are detached townhomes, they would be similar to a single-family home on a more compact footprint, and would have a 29-foot wide driveway which would allow for parking. He stated that the internal greenspace would not be converted to parking without the loss of a few lots.

City Planner Anderson asked if there is any additional input, noting again that this is not the last time the Board will see this item.

Board Member Valentine stated that there was discussion regarding boulevard trees versus front yard trees. He stated that while boulevard trees are great, it would be hard to determine if there would be sufficient space for that.

City Planner Anderson noted that there would be sidewalk along one side of the road which would preserve four to six feet of boulevard. He stated that may not be enough space for each home to have a boulevard tree but there could be a boulevard tree every so many feet. He stated that on the side of the road without a sidewalk there would still be right-of-way area, which would in essence provide more space for boulevard trees and therefore a requirement could be made for a tree within ten feet of the back of curb. He confirmed the consensus of the Board to support the suggestion for boulevard trees. He stated that perhaps in the future the Board can create a list of overall goals to suggest to developers to provide in these instances.

Chairperson Stodola agreed perhaps that could be placed on a future agenda to create that list of goals. He noted that the Board tends to make similar suggestions to the plans that are reviewed and therefore it would be helpful to have that list, noting that the Board would still make specific suggestions to the plans they review.

5.02: Sketch Plan for North Fork Meadows

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the purpose of the case is to introduce the EPB to a proposed Sketch Plan for North Fork Meadows. He noted that the proposed development is located along the south side of Alpine Drive, immediately east of Puma Street, and adjacent to the Riverstone project. He stated that this review is similar to the previous case. He stated that this development would include 97 units with a mix of small lot single-family homes and townhomes. He stated that this project has gone through multiple iterations, noting that this is concept five and includes less density than originally proposed. He stated that the developer would be requesting a PUD for this development and advised that density transitioning would be required between this parcel and the neighboring development. He stated the developer for this project and the previous case is the same. He noted that the developer is proposing 80-foot wide lots along the adjacent boundary along with a 45-foot zone that would provide additional transitioning buffer. He noted that at the Planning Commission meeting the previous week the developer went on record stating that they would be willing to contribute additional trees for the

homeowners to the east to plant on their own property as well, to provide additional buffer. He identified adjacent features including Lake Itasca and the planned greenway corridor. He stated that the property owner is open to conveying the necessary land for a greenway corridor and enough upland for a trail in return for the PUD, which would allow the requested zoning and flexibility in lots widths. He stated that this property is similar to the previous parcel in regard to the natural resources inventory and provided details. He stated that because this is a similar development and parcel, he would assume the overall suggestions from the previous case would carry forward along with the transitioning zone to the east. He asked for suggestions on the transition zone to the east, as that would be a requirement in addition to suggestions for the greenway corridor.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if there was public input at the public hearing the previous week held by the Planning Commission.

City Planner Anderson noted that there was a public open house the hour prior to the public hearing where the Sketch Plan was displayed and a mailing invited residents within 700 feet of the property boundaries. He noted that there were a lot of residents present that expressed some comments outside of the topic, using the example of the need for more schools. He stated that one neighbor was appointed as a spokesperson who summarized that there has been compromise between the developer and residents and therefore they were generally pleased with the changes but were also disappointed because they did not feel they were adequately informed that the residents could have pushed to keep the underlying zoning and instead felt that this was the best they would be able to get out of this. He stated that staff felt that they did a good job expressing the options but acknowledged that the sentiment was expressed. He stated that WSB created a mock scenario to demonstrate, in concept, what a typical R-1 development could have looked like that would have included about 70 lots that met the minimum standards. He noted that concept would not have included the land donation for the greenway corridor. He stated that one resident stated that if they would have known that was an option, they would have pushed for that.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if there were any public comments more related to the discussion tonight.

City Planner Anderson noted that the density transitioning is key. He stated that the developer has amended their plan on the eastern portion of the parcel to meet the straight R-1 zoning and then transitions from there.

Chairperson Stodola stated that seems like a good compromise.

City Planner Anderson stated that the neighborhood acknowledged that both the neighbors and the developer have compromised to get to this point. He stated that there is not a homeowners' association proposed with this, so each resident would be responsible for their own snow removal and turf maintenance. He confirmed the consensus of the Board to apply the same overall goals and suggestions from the previous case.

Board Member Hiatt stated that the greenway corridor appears to cut through the southwest corner and asked if the plan will need to be adapted for the pond.

City Planner Anderson noted that the pond is in that location on the concept but may not be in that location on the Preliminary Plat. He noted that the greenway would be a contiguous trail to Lake Itasca because of the connection through Riverstone. He highlighted the path the greenway corridor would travel to The COR.

Board Member Hiatt stated that he would encourage the greenway and believes that to be a good tradeoff for the requested density. He noted the benefit to having that trail not adjacent a roadway not only for health purposes but also for safety purposes.

5.03: Consider Sketch Plan for Rum River Prairie

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the purpose of tonight's case is to introduce the EPB to a proposed Sketch Plan for Rum River Prairie. He advised that the proposed development is located along both sides of Armstrong Boulevard, north of Tiger Street. He stated that the proposed development would include 21 single-family lots that would meet the requirements of the underlying zoning district and therefore would not appear to require a Comprehensive Plan or zoning amendment. He reviewed information on the natural resources inventory in relation to the property. He identified a potential lot width concern with one five-acre lot and the size of Outlot A. He noted that this request seems pretty straight forward with the potential for one variance for the lot width on the five-acre lot on the cul-de-sac. He noted that there are wetlands on the site that will need to be delineated. He stated that the developer is working hard to minimize the amount of impact.

Board Member Anderson asked for input on a symbol used on the sketch.

City Planner Anderson noted that he would follow up to determine the meaning of the symbol. He reviewed the elements that would be part of the next phase of review.

Chairperson Stodola asked and received consensus that the overall goals for the last two cases would carry forward.

Board Member Hiatt asked if the developer has a positive history with the community.

City Planner Anderson provided details on the developer's experience within Ramsey.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked for a refresh on the criteria that were recommended for the previous cases that could carry forward to this case.

City Planner Anderson noted that in the past cases there was a mention of the possibility to reuse stormwater pond water for irrigation. He stated that element may only be applicable for cases with a homeowners' association and not so much in this type of case where the properties are individually owned and there are not common areas. He summarized the other comments including the use of rain gardens and native plantings. He noted that the boulevard trees and density transitioning may not be applicable in this situation.

5.04: Update on Various Natural Resources Based Projects through the Resilient Communities Project (and Check-in with EPB Work Plan)

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He noted that the City was selected as the Community Partner by the University of Minnesota's Resilient Communities Project (RCP) for the 2017-2018 school year. He stated that the City proposed approximately 20 potential projects to RCP, ranging in topics from housing to water supply to natural resources. He explained that the RCP then seeks out upper level undergraduate and masters level courses that may be a good match for the various projects. He noted that with significant oversight by the professors, the study groups work on a project, or an aspect of a project, as part of their coursework. He noted that several projects have already been matched with classes for the fall semester. He noted that three of the RCP projects directly relate to the EPB's Work Plan and provided details. He stated that the remaining item is related to the organic recycling program, noting that the pilot program has been in operation for three months and provided an update. He stated that he invited the student groups to the Board's scheduled December meeting but noted that does not line up with the end of the semester and therefore there may not be good participation in that meeting. He noted that some students were excited to have the opportunity to present because these are real world projects. He stated that there has been a large time commitment from staff in order to fully communicate the desires of the City to the professors and the students. He stated that both the students and professors seem very excited with this partnership, as is staff.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if there would be interest from the Board in meeting earlier in the month of December in order to fall within the window of the school semester.

City Planner Anderson stated that the Board's December meeting is scheduled for December 18th, which is relatively close to Christmas. He noted that the Council typically cancels their second meeting of September. He noted that the Board could look to bump up the meeting date, but noted that finals could be another factor. He stated that the Board could change to December 4th or 11th and he could provide those dates to see if there are move available students.

Board Member Hiatt stated that perhaps December 4th would be a better date.

It was the consensus of the Board to change the December meeting date to December 4th or 11th, depending upon which date would fit best for the students.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- **Fall Recycling Event**

City Planner Anderson stated that this year was the first attempt to hold three recycling events, with the most recent on September 30th. He reported that there were about 230 vehicles, which was about 30 fewer vehicles than the summer event. He noted that there was still quite a bit of material generated from the event. He noted that even with the summer event, the fall average was still met and the addition of the summer event did not detract from the fall event. He stated that he will still complete the final numbers but it is likely that the City will hold three events the following year as well. He explained that as long as they are not detracting from participation, they would hold the additional event.

Board Member Hiatt stated that perhaps this is also training residents in the more regular schedule of recycling events and therefore there will be more steady participation.

- **Comprehensive Plan Workshop (October 26th)**

City Planner Anderson stated that a Comprehensive Plan workshop is scheduled for October 26th and noted that all the Board Members should have received an invite for the event.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that the Comprehensive Plan workshops are great interactive events with the community.

City Planner Anderson stated that he has been involved in at least one Comprehensive Plan process before this and noted that there are a lot of new faces and younger families getting involved in the process, which generates new ideas. He stated that it is worthwhile to hear what people are saying and what is important to the residents.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.