

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

The Ramsey Planning Commission conducted a work session meeting on Thursday, February 11, 2021, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Randy Bauer
 Commissioner Bruce Anderson
 Commissioner Cheri Gengler (arrived at 5:36 p.m.)
 Commissioner Eric Peters
 Commissioner Gary VanScoy

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Deputy City Administrator Timothy Gladhill
 Senior Planner Chloe McGuire Brigl
 City Council Liaison Debra Musgrove

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Bauer called the regular meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Review Concept Plan for Graw Addition (Lot Split); Case of Gail Graw

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill asked for high level policy direction on a request for a lot split near Central Park. The property owner desires feedback before investing in engineering and surveying to complete a potential land split.

Chairperson Bauer asked for clarification on the lot of discussion.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill identified the lot on the map.

Commissioner VanScoy asked if this property is within the MUSA.

Commissioner Gengler arrived.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill replied that this property is not within the MUSA. He stated that it would be anticipated that there would be sufficient space for private well and septic, both primary and secondary sites. He noted that the issue of discussion would be related to the minimum lot size and lot width.

Commissioner VanScoy asked if staff has an idea of how many one acre lots there are within the rural zoning areas.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill was unsure of the exact number today. He stated that there are 4,100 lots on private well and septic and perhaps half are around one acre as they were developed before the minimum lot standards.

Commissioner VanScoy commented that the City has received multiple requests and perhaps the idea of 2.5 acre lots should be reviewed on a bigger picture discussion.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill noted that would involve the Comprehensive Plan and staff is not prepared for that discussion tonight.

Commissioner Anderson asked if there have been comments from the neighborhood related to this request.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill replied that staff has not yet reached out for public input.

Gail Graw, applicant, stated that she has spoken with the surrounding neighbors and has not received any comments in opposition of her request to split the lot.

Commissioner Anderson asked to see a GIS map of the area in order to see more of the surrounding area.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl asked if any of the neighbors were interested in completing a similar split when Ms. Graw spoke with her neighbors.

Ms. Graw replied that to her knowledge, the home placement on the neighboring lots would not allow for a similar split and therefore approval of her request would not lead to a rash of similar applications.

Commissioner Gengler asked if the intent would be to leave the existing residence and create a new residence on the newly created lot.

Ms. Graw confirmed that the existing residence would remain, and the second lot would become a buildable lot for a new home.

Commissioner Anderson referenced the distance from this parcel to another parcel that would be similar in size and was concerned with how the neighboring property owners would feel about this change.

Chairperson Bauer noted that input from the public would be gained through a public hearing.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that they could do a public comment process without asking the applicant to invest additional cost to move forward in the process.

Commissioner Anderson stated that this would set a precedent in this area. He stated that he would support the suggestion by staff for public input. He asked if this change would make the lot lawful nonconforming.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that it would be permitted but would not be conforming with the standards. He confirmed that the zoning is rural developing with a minimum lot size of 2.5 acres. He stated that a variance would be required should the Commission support the request rather than attempting to make a larger policy change to support a request for one parcel.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he would not want to set a precedent that this could be done in any place.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill provided examples in different neighborhoods, noting that this situation does not come forward very often.

Commissioner Anderson stated that if there can be consensus from the neighborhood in support of the request, he could also support the request.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated that she would like to see input from the overall neighborhood as there are many other lots in the overall neighborhood that are similarly setup and therefore could essentially submit a similar request.

Ms. Graw stated that she would want to work with the City to place a covenant on the lot to place limitations on the type of home that could be constructed, to ensure it would fit with the neighborhood. She stated that in order to stay in her home she needs additional income and saw this as a viable option.

Chairperson Bauer asked if a public input meeting could be scheduled prior to the March meeting.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that staff could queue that up to match that timeframe and from there the property owner could invest the additional funds to submit application. He stated that perhaps the item does not appear on the March regular meeting agenda as it could take a few weeks for the applicant to develop their plans following public input.

Chairperson Bauer confirmed the consensus of the Commission to direct staff to schedule a public input session to gather input from the surrounding neighborhood.

2.02: Review Java Properties Concept Plan

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl presented a concept plan from Java Properties for a new commercial building west of Casey's on Sunwood Drive NW. The subject property is owned by the City of Ramsey and is approximately 13 acres in size, noting that the applicant would only be purchasing a plat a portion of that property. She asked the Commission to provide feedback to the applicant on the plan and specifically note any items they would like to see added or removed from the project.

Mark Krogh, Java Companies, stated that they are excited about this project as they continue to build for O'Reilly's Auto Parts. He stated that they are close on the parking calculations but would like to add a few more stalls. He stated that they will work with the City to deliver a great project.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl asked for input on the proposed site layout. She stated that staff is comfortable with the additional parking requested as the business is established and most likely is aware of their parking needs.

Chairperson Bauer asked if the turn lanes and striping would be the responsibility of the City or developer.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated that staff has not gone to that level of detail. She commented that it would not be a huge change but would make the site function better.

Chairperson Bauer agreed that designated turn lanes could be a benefit.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl asked for input on the proposed suggestion for the entrance/exit aspect recommended by staff.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for staff to provide clarification on where vehicles would access and exit the site.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl traced the path vehicles would take to enter and exit the site.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about the potential to move the northern access further south.

Mr. Krogh stated that this is the agreed upon site plan with the tenant and therefore he would want to discuss any modifications with the tenant. He stated that if the access were moved, parking could be placed in that location. He noted that they would work with planning staff on any modifications to see what works best. He stated that he does not mind having the entrance only option for that access.

Commissioner Anderson asked where the loading and unloading of trucks would occur, as that will have a direct impact on the flow of traffic for the site.

Mr. Krogh stated that the loading door is on the south of the building, noting that the business typically utilizes box trucks for deliveries.

Commissioner VanScoy referenced the shared entrance and asked if that would be the main entrance to the outlot and whether it would be adequate.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl replied that the road to the north would also extend south onto the property, as will the road behind the outlot.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that they talked about a master plan for the area when Casey's was developed. He identified additional streets that would be extended to provide access to the other parts of the outlot. He confirmed that there would be adequate access.

Commissioner VanScoy commented that the concern he would have is that the architectural walls near the roads could impact sightlines for pedestrians and traffic. He stated that other than that he is comfortable with the request.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl confirmed that additional review could be done to ensure sightlines are not impacted.

Commissioner Anderson replied that this is a good layout, with the few comments made by the Commission.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated that architectural details were provided of the trash enclosure for comment from the Commission. She stated that the staff report provided specific comments. She stated that staff also recommended a bike rack onsite as staff anticipates people biking to get auto parts if their vehicle needs repair.

Commissioner Anderson agreed that every business should have a bike rack.

Commissioner Gengler agreed.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she was unsure how much of that decision would be of the City as compared to the business owner. She noted that some auto parts would not be able to be carried by someone riding a bicycle. She asked if that would be a requirement or suggestion.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that it is a recommendation within the design guidelines for The COR but not a requirement. She stated that because additional parking is being requested, this could be a negotiation.

Chairperson Bauer asked if EDA staff is concerned with the remaining lot size.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated that Economic Development Manager Sullivan has been working on this project for some time and is not concerned with the remaining parcel size. She asked for direction from the Commission on whether the applicant should move forward to submit the Conditional Use Permit request.

Chairperson Bauer stated that he would rather see additional parking than the business not having enough parking.

Commissioner Peters agreed that it could be helpful to have a few additional stalls for this type of business.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would like to see this type of business come to the community for Ramsey residents.

Chairperson Bauer confirmed the consensus of the Commission to direct the applicant to continue moving forward to the application process.

2.03: Receive Update on Trott Brook North Planning Area – Makowsky and Hunt Property Projects

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl provided an update on the status and timing of the projects generally known as “Trott Brook North” which is the area between Variolite Street and Nowthen Boulevard NW, north of Trott Brook. The two properties are separately owned, and the City is working with two separate applicants, the Excelsior Group and Platinum Land LLC. Both applicants are working towards formal applications with 80-foot-wide lots.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill provided details on the shared infrastructure that would be needed, similar to what was done with Riverstone.

Chairperson Bauer asked for input from Councilmember Musgrove related to the previous direction for 80-foot lots.

Councilmember Musgrove confirmed the direction from the Council for 80-foot lots. She asked if there would be any issues with easements for utility lines.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl provided details on the utility lines and how those are being worked into the plans.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that it would seem that 80 foot lots would be more acceptable from the existing neighborhoods, although those residents may want to see some larger lots. She did have concern with easement placement and how those could possible encumber lots.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that there are known utility easements on the properties. He stated that if there are any conservation or density transition easements, that land would be taken by the City through fee title.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he has been plowing snow for the City this winter and commented that cul-de-sacs are difficult, especially for snow storage. He stated that he likes the plan, and that the developer adjusted their plans, but asked if this could be done with less cul-de-sacs.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl asked if it is easier to plow nub type cul-de-sacs compared to a typical cul-de-sac.

Commissioner Anderson replied that it would depend on the amount of land around the cul-de-sac and where driveways are situated. He stated that there is often no other place to put the snow other than someone’s yard.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that the driveways could be shown on the plat and Public Works could be consulted prior to this going forward to the Commission.

Commissioner Anderson agreed that would be helpful and noted that outside of the number of cul-de-sacs, he likes the layout.

Chairperson Bauer commented that this does seem to meet the main objectives that were expressed at the previous public hearing and City Council review. He confirmed the consensus of the Commission for this to continue to move forward.

2.04: Review Concept Plan for Saint Katherine Drexel Addition (Remnant Developable Area); Case of Saint Katherine Drexel Catholic Church

Chairperson Bauer and Commissioner VanScoy recused themselves from the discussion as members of the Commission as they will be representing the applicant.

Commissioner Anderson agreed to act as Chair for review of this concept.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that the intent of this item is to have a high-level policy review. Staff needs initial policy direction from the Commission before formulating a recommendation. Nothing in this case should be interpreted to mean that the City is considering the project, it is simply reacting to a request to consider potential land use alternatives.

Randy Bauer, representing the applicant, commented that the church owns slightly more than 32 acres, noting that the City previously expressed interest around 2010 in acquiring a portion of the property. He stated that they are aware that the only option to expand Central Park would be in this property. He noted that the church is working on a capital campaign to improve the building and therefore the discussion also includes the remainder of the property. He stated that they have worked with City staff, who solicited input from the athletic association and ultimately determined only a small portion would be desired for park expansion. He stated that the church has also received interest from a developer for the other portion of their property. He noted that the concepts sketches were developed by City staff. He stated that the developer is interested in townhomes and therefore the church wanted input from the Commission and Council as to whether they would be open to rezoning to allow townhomes for the property between the park and church.

Acting Chairperson Anderson stated that the property to the south was discussed earlier in tonight's case related to a potential lot split. He asked staff for clarification on the different lot sizes in this area.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that to the east there are quarter acre lots, to the south there are 2.5 acre lots, to the west is Central Park and to the north there are one and two acre lots.

Acting Chairperson Anderson stated that he would support the expansion of the park but would not be comfortable with townhomes. He stated that there would definitely need to be a public hearing, noting the large opposition from residents for similar projects.

Commissioner Gengler asked if the addition to Central Park would connect to the roadways in the park or only connect through the neighborhood.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that has been discussed. He noted that previously there was a larger need for that type of connection as the park was lacking in parking. He stated that issue has essentially been solved with the parking expansion that occurred and therefore was unsure that a road connection would be critical. He stated that one of the options show a parking lot to the north that would benefit that area but would still not connect. He stated that many of the concepts attempted to avoid the connection as that typically causes additional opposition from the neighbors.

Commissioner Gengler stated that she would be open to having townhomes in this area because it is set apart from the other neighborhood but recognized that she may be in the minority.

Gary VanScoy, representing the applicant, referenced the concepts provided by the City noting that the church had no input on those sketches. He stated that the church envisions that there would be a strip between the park and church for future development, estimating that as 20 acres. He stated that the residential development would be well buffered by the church, the park, and the mature trees.

Acting Chairperson Anderson stated that he would want to hear from the developer. He stated that he would prefer smaller lot single family homes over townhomes in order to be consistent with the overall neighborhood.

Commissioner Peters commented that if homes were to be built, they should match the character of the neighborhood to the east and did not think townhomes would match the look of the surrounding neighborhoods and would see a lot of opposition from those residents.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the concepts show new driveways off the existing street.

Mr. Bauer stated that when the new church building is constructed there would be access and egress off 161st, with one closer to the Variolite intersection and the other closer to the street to the south. He noted that those would come into play later in the process noting that the church building and parking lot on the City sketches do not match the desires of the church. He stated that City staff expressed a desire for shared parking and therefore that concept remains for further discussion.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that the attempt of City staff was to create some ideas that could facilitate discussion for the park and whether expansion would be desired. He noted that the residential developer could provide a sketch for review related to residential development. He stated that he does hear some opposition to medium density residential. He stated that input will be solicited from the City Council. He recognized that only three of the active five members of the Commission can provide input on this topic. He noted that additional public comment could be solicited as well.

Acting Chairperson Anderson agreed that input from the neighborhood would be helpful because this would be a change.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that with the traffic to the park, she would want to see fewer driveways on that road.

Mr. Bauer commented that the desire of the church tonight was to see if the City would be open to townhomes before the developer invests additional expense.

Acting Chairperson Anderson stated that there were two members opposed and one member open to townhomes. He believed that additional data would be helpful before providing direction to the developer on whether townhomes could be supported.

Mr. Bauer asked if the developer could bring forward a townhome proposal that the Commission would be open to, or whether those two members were adamant that townhomes would not be a good fit.

Acting Chairperson Anderson replied that he does not believe that townhomes fit the character of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Peters agreed that townhomes would not fit with the character of the neighborhood.

Mr. Bauer confirmed that is the direction the developer was looking for before spending additional funds developing a sketch.

Commissioner Gengler stated that she could support townhomes as she believes it could provide a variety of housing options on a parcel that is set apart from the existing residential homes.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill asked if input should be received from the City Council as to whether the Council would support this type of development and if so, should that be in worksession or regular session.

Acting Chairperson Anderson commented that he would love to hear the input of the Council and left the format to staff, as to whether that would be better in worksession or regular session.

Commissioner Peters agreed that it would make sense to get input from the Council.

Councilmember Musgrove agreed that the Council should provide input on both potential park expansion along with the residential development. She recommended a worksession discussion for the Council.

Mr. Bauer recognized that this is an awkward position as it is hard for him to be objective. He stated that if someone else came in with a proposal to place townhomes between a park and church, he would be open to it as that development would not be directly against existing residential.

Mr. VanScoy agreed and stated that is why he wanted to be clear that the residential development would occur in an isolated area between the park and church that would not be against the existing residential development.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that this could go forward on a Council worksession in March to gain their input.

Mr. Bauer stated that he believed that Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent is bringing the potential park expansion concept forward and asked if it would make sense to bring this discussion forward at the same time.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that the park discussion will help to make this subject clearer as the direction has changed on the needs for the park since the last time the Council reviewed that topic.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that he believes that the topics could go forward together in the same discussion as they are interwoven. He stated that staff can work with the church to gain additional input before it goes to the Council.

3. OTHER

No additional comments.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chloe McGuire Brigl
Senior Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.