

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

The Ramsey Planning Commission conducted a regular meeting on Thursday, October 26, 2023, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Cheri Gengler
 Commissioner Bruce Anderson
 Commissioner Randy Bauer
 Commissioner Ryan Heineman
 Commissioner Tom Hunt
 Commissioner Eric Peters
 Commissioner Gary Van Scoy

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Planning Manager Todd Larson
 City Planner Adam Martin
 City Council Liaison Michael Olson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Gengler called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairperson Gengler led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

5.01: Approve the September 28, 2023 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Van Scoy, seconded by Commissioner Peters, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Gengler, Commissioners Van Scoy, Peters, Anderson, Bauer, Heineman, and Hunt. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS/COMMISSION BUSINESS

6.01: Public Hearing: Consider a Home Occupation Permit for Calabrese Tree Care LLC at 16201 Nowthen Boulevard

Public Hearing

Chairperson Gengler called the public hearing to order at 7:01 p.m.

Presentation

City Planner Martin presented the staff report stating that staff recommends the City Council adopt Resolution #23-266 approving a Home Occupation Permit for Calabrese Tree Care LLC at 16201 Nowthen Boulevard.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked if this business operated for multiple years without complaints.

City Planner Martin confirmed that the City has not received complaints or concerns from the business operations. He stated that the complaint arose from the sign and that is how the noncompliance was determined.

Citizen Input

Steven Calabrese, applicant, was present for any questions.

Commissioner Bauer commented that part of the violation showed more vehicles and equipment stored outdoors than would be allowed and parked on unimproved surfaces. He asked if there would be any issues with the applicant being able to comply with those items.

Mr. Calabrese replied that there would not be any issues.

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Hunt, to close the public hearing.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Gengler, Commissioners Bauer, Hunt, Anderson, Heineman, Peters, and Van Scoy. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

Chairperson Gengler closed the public hearing closed at 7:09 p.m.

Commission Business

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Van Scoy, to recommend that City Council adopt Resolution #23-266 Approving a Home Occupation Permit for Calabrese Tree Care LLC at 16201 Nowthen Boulevard NW.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Gengler, Commissioners Bauer, Van Scoy, Anderson, Heineman, Hunt, and Peters. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

6.02: “Waterfront Village” Sketch Plan for Approximately 110 Detached Townhomes by Centra Homes

Planning Manager Larson presented the staff report stating that staff recommends advancing the sketch plan to the Preliminary Plat phase with any additional comments the Planning Commission has.

Commissioner Heineman referenced the north side and asked why the road proposed would not continue to Bunker as it would seem that another entrance/exit would be helpful.

Planning Manager Larson replied that Anoka County would not allow an entrance/exit onto Bunker, even if it were a right-in/right-out. He commented that Anoka County felt that the two entrances proposed would be sufficient.

Chairperson Gengler asked the location of 147th Street as mentioned in the narrative.

Planning Manager Larson identified where that roadway alignment would be and where both entrance/exits would be.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked for an update on the zoning code update process.

Planning Manager Larson commented that the issue will go before the Council at the November 14th meeting for final adoption. He confirmed that the rezoning of this property is included in that rezoning of the city.

Commissioner Hunt asked if the issue of the County was with the number of entrance/exit points. He believed that it would make more sense to connect to Bunker rather than one of the other entrances.

Planning Manager Larson replied that the County has spacing guidelines and therefore this would not align with that plan as the existing roads (Armstrong, Zeolite, and Center) already match that spacing and adding another roadway between would be a large deviation. He stated that the County asked for a traffic analysis to see if this would trigger a need for a traffic signal at Zeolite and they are still working with the County on that.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked if there is a purchase agreement for something the Planning Commission has not looking at but that has been reviewed by the EDA and City Council. He asked if the plans would still come before the Planning Commission.

Planning Manager Larson confirmed that there is a purchase agreement, and the plans will come before the Commission perhaps in February.

Commissioner Van Scoy commented that it would seem unusual that the Council would approve something that has not yet gone through this Commission.

Planning Manager Larson replied that the City Council is the regulatory body but also the landowner and, in this case, it was the role of the landowner, and the EDA had the job of vetting that request and making a recommendation to the Council. He stated that the process will now follow the typical review process. He clarified that the Council has not yet approved the project, only the potential land sale.

Commissioner Anderson replied that he thinks the process is broken. He commented that the EDA and City Council can sell the land. He noted that this Commission deals with land use. He asked why the process should even be followed if this has already been approved by the City Council. He stated that before that project goes further, the City Council should work with the Planning Commission to determine a land use. He did not think the current layout follows what is within the COR framework. He understood the things have changed, including the wetland area, but noted that the whole parcel is still designated as retail. He stated that they had agreed that the southern portion of the property would be retail. He stated that he does not have a problem with the concept north of the road that comes from Zeolite. He stated that the Council has already approved this plan along with an apartment building that the Commission has not heard of until today. He stated that there is currently a moratorium on apartments and believed that an apartment would fit better near the other apartments.

Commissioner Heineman referenced a letter from a resident, Missy Luck, which spoke of concerns with the safety of Bunker and Zeolite and property taxes. He noted that he would address those concerns later. He stated that there is also a statement that a majority of the letters have contradicted what was sent earlier or in town meetings, noting that does make sense after what was just said about this Commission being left out of the loop. He asked for input from the Council liaison.

Councilmember Olson replied that the Council deals with the things that come before it. He stated that the decisions on this were made based on the information received. He stated that to the best of his recollection the land sale was proposed, but the apartment use is still on hold at this time through the moratorium.

Commissioner Heineman commented that then the land was sold to a developer for apartments and townhomes for property not yet zoned for apartments and townhomes.

Planning Manager Larson replied that is not correct. He stated that there was an approved purchase agreement, similar to what existed with COR Trust Bank, which was later denied. He stated that the Planning Commission reviews things in a judicial manner while the City Council reviews things in a legislative manner. He stated that even though it is a land use deal, it was under the purview of the City Council. He stated that the role of the Planning Commission is not whether the land is sold, as that falls to the EDA. He stated that at the May 11, 2022 worksession there was discussion about sites that do not seem to be developing under the current framework and the question was asked where there would be openness to additional residential development. He stated that the consensus was that this site would be supported for residential development and

developers then came forward. He stated that for this site there were two townhome developers that came forward with proposals, one of which did not want to follow the COR-2 standards while this one did follow those regulations. He stated that the luxury apartments also came forward with its plans. He stated that the EDA and City Council review a high-level concept similar to a sketch plan and as they delve into the details of a site plan, a proposal will then be reviewed for approval or denial. He noted that the bank followed that same process and was ultimately denied. He asked that the Commission focus on this project tonight and he can speak with the Council to determine if the Commission could be looped in better in the future.

Commissioner Heineman commented that this entire site has dirt moving, so it is understandable how residents could think that all the plans are already approved and stated that perhaps staff could provide an explanation of what is occurring in this area today.

Planning Manager Larson stated that waterfront park was proposed as a centerpiece for the area, which will require a large hole to be dug to create the lake. He stated that the dirt removed is then being spread onto the other sites in order to bring them to grade for future development. He noted that any future development would be easier. He confirmed that this is just site preparation using the material that is being excavated and no development plans have yet been approved.

Commissioner Anderson commented that he has heard from some of his neighbors and came to the conclusion that the process is not clear to the residents as they think the Council has approved these things without the review of other commissions.

Commissioner Van Scoy commented that he likes the general layout for the area and asked about the setback for the wetland.

Chairperson Gengler invited the applicant to come forward.

Paul Tibone, Centra Homes, stated that the standard setback from wetlands is 15 or 16 feet and they have taken that into account, with the trail and then buildings behind that. He noted that they could meet the required wetland setback.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked if the setback would be to the trail or building.

Planning Manager Larson replied that the setback would be to the trail. He stated that for this purpose they would consider the trail to be the street, under COR standards, and therefore there could be no more than 15 feet between the trail and the home.

Chairperson Gengler asked for more details on the construction materials for the trail. She commented that it appears the trail that goes between the wetland and homes has an abrupt end and does not go to the street.

Mr. Tibone commented that the trail would be bituminous, and they have been working with the City on the storm drain that prevents the connection of the trail to the road. He stated that as they go into preliminary plat, they will finalize the details on location, and they would connect the trail to the road. He stated that he is present to receive input from the Commission, noting that he does

not have technical details as of yet because this is sketch plan. He stated that they are following the process and desire of the EDA and City Council and have also incorporated the comments from staff and engineering to get to this design. He noted that additional details will be flushed out through preliminary plat.

Commissioner Anderson commented that the trail would end on Bunker to go across the street which would not be a good idea. He believed the trail should go to the stop sign and the pedestrian crossing could happen at that location, near property four.

Mr. Tibone commented that the sidewalk has been extended along Bunker to Armstrong.

Planning Manager Larson commented that this is sketch plan and therefore the Commission is meant to give input.

Mr. Tibone clarified that the dashed line is watermain, not trail.

Commissioner Anderson noted that would answer those questions. He stated that he is not in favor of this sketch plan as he believes that houses 1-10, 27, 28, 29, and 30 should be eliminated and then he could support the remainder of the plan. He believed that the southern portion of the property should be reserved for retail.

Chairperson Gengler asked and received confirmation that this is all one parcel.

Commissioner Anderson noted that the entire site is zoned retail. He stated that if the Council changes the zoning in the next month and the request comes through at that time, there would be no choice but to approve.

Planning Manager Larson commented that if it were not for the zoning code update process, this plan would be accompanied by a rezoning request.

Commissioner Peters asked and received confirmation that Ramsey Parkway would be a split road, noting that the angled parking spots should be angled the other direction.

Mr. Tibone commented that they got that alignment from engineering, so perhaps that should be addressed to staff as that was a premature City alignment.

Planning Manager Larson replied that back in angled parking is being pursued for the spot near the east as it would create a safer situation for people getting in and out of vehicles. He recognized that is not common in Minnesota, but it exists in other states.

Commissioner Peters noted that some vehicles will get stuck backing into a stop like that in the winter. He asked if there would be training for people that do not know how to back into a parking spot.

Commissioner Bauer commented that the sketch plan sounds similar to the current development at Bunker and Ramsey boulevards. He asked the number of units in the existing development.

Mr. Tibone was unsure and estimated 30 to 40.

Commissioner Bauer commented that there are 110 units in this proposal and would most likely attract the same type of buyer as the current development.

Mr. Tibone confirmed that the target market would be young families, but could also be great for seniors or young professionals.

Commissioner Bauer asked the length of time to complete the original development and have the homes sold.

Mr. Tibone commented that he was not with Centra at that time and therefore does not have that information. He stated that the typical build cycle for a unit is four to six months, and they would typically aim to sell two units per month. He noted that would be all market driven and upon demand. He stated that they could potentially sell 18 to 24 units per year with a lag time to build those. He stated that for 100 home sites perhaps it would be a four to five year build out depending on interest rates and the market demand.

Commissioner Anderson referenced the northwest corner of the property which has a dead-end street and asked where snow storage would occur. He stated that he would not want to see big snowbanks against Bunker. He stated that as the layout is currently, he would not support this without some significant changes.

Mr. Tibone asked what those changes would be.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he would want to see the homes on the southern portion eliminated to preserve that space for retail.

Planning Manager Larson stated that the stormwater pipe is being installed now and further south than identified on the sketch plan, noting that it would be under the street as it created more developable land.

Commissioner Bauer stated that he recalled a discussion where the Commission voiced the thoughts of Commissioner Anderson that the northern portion could be residential, but the southern portion should be retail.

Planning Manager Larson identified an area along Armstrong and Sunwood that is still being preserved for retail. He commented that he would be concerned the retail down Ramsey Parkway would not be as successful because there would be much lower traffic counts and retailers like visibility.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked is 27.5 would be the length of the driveways.

Mr. Tibone commented that the minimum driveway length would be 25 feet to ensure that a truck could be parked without hanging into the street. He noted that some driveways would be a little longer while some would be around the 25-foot mark.

Planning Manager Larson replied that a typical parking space is 9 by 18, and therefore 25 would be sufficient. He noted that the sideway is on the other side of the homes.

Commissioner Heineman summarized the input tonight that the property is not yet zoned for this use but would be, that the property has not yet been sold but there is a purchase agreement, that the site was previously designated for retail but now would be residential, and the job of the Planning Commission is to provide input on the sketch plan. He asked if the plan would advance to the Council regardless of the recommendation of the Commission.

Planning Manager Larson stated that the sketch plan provides input to the developer on how to better design the preliminary plat application. He stated that the Commission provides its input to the Council for consideration.

Commissioner Heineman commented that this seems to be pageantry at this point. He stated that while he does not support this, it will move forward either way.

Planning Manager Larson commented that there is no vote on a sketch plan, it is just meant to provide input. He stated that no recommendation is made, the Commission is simply meant to provide input prior to preliminary plat consideration.

Commissioner Bauer commented that there are no trees on this plan.

Planning Manager Larson commented that sketch plan typically does not include trees and landscaping, but those details would come forward.

Chairperson Gengler asked the general price range for the units.

Mr. Tibone replied that the market has been changing quite a bit and therefore is not comfortable providing an estimate. He stated that he can check that and get back to the group.

Commissioner Anderson commented that he would prefer a different sketch plan.

Commissioner Heineman agreed.

Chairperson Gengler commented that she is relatively comfortable with this sketch plan and disagreed that the bottom half should be retail. She believed that the retail to the west is a better fit.

Commissioner Heineman again referenced the letter from Ms. Luck and commented that adding homes expands the tax base which lessens the tax burden for existing residents. He stated that Anoka County is also aware of the traffic concerns and the traffic study that will be completed will ensure the proper improvements occur if they are needed.

7. COMMISSION BUSINESS

8. COMMISSION / STAFF INPUT

Planning Manager Larson identified the land use items that will go before the City Council at its next meeting. He also noted items that will come before the Planning Commission at its November meeting which is scheduled for November 30th because of the holiday.

Commissioner Anderson commented that he will attend the November meeting remotely but will be back for the December meeting.

Planning Manager Larson provided details for the process of remote attendance.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Anderson, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Gengler, Commissioners Bauer, Anderson, Heineman, Hunt, Peters, and Van Scoy. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Larson
Planning Manager

ATTEST:

Dana Verbeek
Planning Administrative Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.