

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

The Ramsey Planning Commission conducted a regular meeting on Thursday, April 27, 2023, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

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

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Planning Manager Todd Larson
 Senior Planner Chris Anderson
 City Council Liaison Matt Woestehoff

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairperson Bauer led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Peters, seconded by Commissioner Gengler, to approve the agenda as presented.

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

5. CONSENT AGENDA

5.01: Approve the March 23, 2023 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

5.02: Consider Request for Extension to Initiate an Amended Conditional Use Permit at 7607 173rd Avenue NW (Project No. 22-119); Case of CenterPoint Energy Minnesota Gas

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

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

6. COMMISSION BUSINESS

6.01: Appoint Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Planning Commission

Chairperson Bauer welcomed new Commissioner Heineman and returning member Commissioner Peters. He stated that the City has adopted a policy which limits the number of terms a person can serve consecutively and therefore he would not be eligible to serve as Chair.

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Van Scoy, to appoint Cheri Gengler as Chairperson of the Planning Commission.

There were no other nominations.

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

Commissioner Gengler was elected as Chairperson.

Chairperson Gengler thanked Commissioner Bauer for his service as Chair noting that he has been a role model and has provided excellent leadership. She opened the floor for nominations for the position of Vice Chairperson.

Motion by Commissioner Van Scoy, seconded by Commissioner Hunt, to appoint Randy Bauer as Vice Chairperson of the Planning Commission.

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

Commissioner Bauer was elected as Vice Chairperson.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS/COMMISSION BUSINESS

7.01: Consider Site Plan for Proposed Building Expansion at 7150 143rd Avenue NW (Project No. 23-100); Case of Soderholm & Associates

Public Hearing

Chairperson Gengler called the public hearing to order at 7:04 p.m.

Presentation

Senior Planner Anderson presented the staff report stating staff recommends approval of the Site Plan, contingent upon compliance with staff's review comments.

Commissioner Peters recused himself from the discussion noting that he is a former employee of this company and current stockholder.

Citizen Input

Brian Soderholm, COO of Soderholm and Associates, commented that they are excited about the project as the company is on a growth trajectory. He hoped that they would bring more jobs and opportunities to the area.

Commissioner Heineman asked what the business does.

Mr. Soderholm replied that they operate with three divisions and provided more details on each division.

Commissioner Bauer commented that the business has been a good neighbor to the church. He stated that the new building expansion will be three times the size of the existing business. He asked for more details on the number of employees.

Mr. Soderholm replied that they currently have 30 to 40 employees at the Ramsey location and an additional 20 or so employees in other areas. He stated that eventually over time he could see them reaching 70 to 90 employees. He stated that they are currently renting two additional facilities. He noted that much of the new space will be used for inventory.

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

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

Chairperson Gengler closed the public hearing closed at 7:14 p.m.

Commission Business

Commissioner Anderson asked what would be done with the septic system that will be abandoned.

Monte Helget, Sharp and Associates, commented that will be crushed and buried per the required process.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that a specific permit will be required for that process that identifies the required steps and crushing and burying is one of the options.

Motion by Commissioner Van Scoy, seconded by Commissioner Heineman, to recommend that City Council adopt Resolution #23-076 Approving the Site Plan.

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

Commissioner Peters rejoined the Commission.

7.02: Public Hearing: Consider Preliminary Plat and Site Plan for Home2Suites Hotel (Project 23-102)

Public Hearing

Chairperson Gengler called the public hearing to order at 7:17 p.m.

Presentation

Planning Manager Larson presented the staff report stating that staff recommends approval of the Preliminary Plat and Site Plan for Home2Suites hotel. He noted that staff received a few letters and provided those to the Commission.

Commissioner Bauer stated that there have been two previous plans for hotels within the COR that did not ultimately materialize. He asked why those did not proceed and now there is another request.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that he believed the pandemic played a role in the most recent proposal prior to this.

Commissioner Van Scoy referenced the COR 2 development standards and questioned whether this would meet those standards in terms of the percentage of building frontage. He asked if there was consideration to rotate the building 90 degrees.

Planning Manager Larson commented that he believes that the request would meet the standards.

Commissioner Heineman provided additional clarification noting that it does appear the building has at least 50 percent of the frontage on Sunwood.

Commissioner Van Scoy apologized noting that he was looking at the wrong street frontage.

Citizen Input

Emily Allegra, applicant, commented that they are a local family and this is an opportunity to assist in building the community.

Commissioner Heineman asked for details on what would trigger the expansion or whether they could ultimately come to the conclusion that an expansion would not be necessary. He asked what would be done with the additional land if the expansion were not to occur.

Ms. Allegra replied that the expansion could add 30 to 40 additional rooms and perhaps a meeting room or additional dining options. She commented that around the five-year mark they would look into whether an expansion would make sense. She stated that if they do not utilize the space for an expansion, they believe a restaurant use would be complimentary.

Chairperson Gengler asked if the applicant has similar businesses in other communities.

Ms. Allegra replied that this would be their first of this kind. She noted their experience in manufacturing and industrial/commercial real estate. She noted that they will work with a professional company for management of the hotel and is also why they partnered with Hilton.

Commissioner Bauer noted that this would be an extended stay hotel and asked who the anticipated clientele would be.

Ms. Allegra commented that the benefit of an extended stay is that people in town for business will have more space and can spend more time. She stated that overnight guests would also be welcome and noted that this option would accommodate all users more comfortably.

Commissioner Hunt noted the safety concerns mentioned in the letters they received from the Commission and asked the applicant to address those concerns.

Ms. Allegra acknowledged the concerns regarding safety and the clientele that may come in. She noted that this would be upper mid-scale, with a daily rate of about \$134. She noted that will help to weed out the problematic clientele. She stated that Hilton has quality assurance standards as a partner and has not had issues with the extended stay concerns of other extended stay hotels.

Commissioner Heineman asked if they would be franchising the brand.

Ms. Allegra confirmed that they would be building and operating, and this will be a Ramsey owned and operated company.

Commissioner Hunt asked if the applicant would anticipate taller signage along Highway 10.

Ms. Allegra commented that they have not discussed that. She noted that the building would be four stories high and therefore did not have any concerns with visibility.

Kevin Ealain, 16254 Kamacite Street NW, asked if the applicant had selected a general contractor. The applicant replied that they are in the bidding process. Mr. Ealain commented that he is concerned with the recent attention to unfair labor practices and asked what would be in place to ensure fair labor practices.

Ms. Allegra replied that they are working with the general contractor and will ensure there are measures in place to ensure those practices do not occur.

Mr. Ealain asked what actions the applicant would take if there were to be unfair labor practices on the site.

Ms. Allegra replied that she could not answer that as it would depend on the situation, but they would take appropriate action.

Catherine Bean, 14790 Xenolith Street NW, commented that she is very concerned with the proposal. She stated that she has researched the reaction in other communities which has not been good. She stated that hotels in general negatively impact the communities they are in. She commented that the height of the building, lighting, large parking lot, and increased traffic are a concern. She noted that transient populations often bring crime. She stated that she is against this request.

Gary Olson, commented that the applicant stated that their market study showed a need for this product. He asked if the impact on existing residents was concerned, noting that he shares the same concerns as the previous speaker.

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

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

Chairperson Gengler closed the public hearing closed at 7:50 p.m.

Commission Business

Commissioner Anderson asked staff for input from public safety.

Planning Manager Larson stated that the Police Chief did not have any concerns based off the activity of the other hotel in Ramsey, which has less crime than several apartment buildings.

Commissioner Heineman stated that the height has been mentioned and asked the number of stories in the apartment buildings in that area.

Planning Manager Larson replied that the apartment buildings in that area are also four stories in height. He stated that scale wise this will be smaller than the apartment buildings.

Commissioner Peters commented that Elk River has one hotel and Ramsey will now have two hotels.

Motion by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Peters, to recommend that City Council adopt Resolution #23-059 Approving the Preliminary Plat of "Ramsey Properties Addition" and Site Plan for a hotel at 7895 Sunwood Drive Northwest.

Further discussion

Commissioner Van Scoy noted that this is a permitted use in the COR and therefore the Commission cannot simply deny the request as the requirements of Code are met. Commissioner Anderson again noted the input of public safety has been solicited and they are not concerned.

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

7.03: Ferrellgas – Site Plan Review for a New Structure and Site Improvements at 7255 Highway 10 NW

Presentation

Planning Manager Larson presented the staff report stating that staff recommends approval of Resolution #23-090 for a Site Plan Review for a building and site improvements at 7255 Highway 10 NW.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if the retaining wall on the plans is part of the highway project and whether the height is known. He asked if that would impact visibility of the building from the frontage road.

Planning Manager Larson replied that the retaining wall is part of the highway project. He noted that westbound traffic will most likely not see the building because of the bridge and retaining wall but eastbound traffic should be able to see the building.

Citizen Input

Kevin Gardner, representing the applicant, commented that this project has been collaborative with the City and County and City staff has been very helpful. He noted that there is an existing pylon sign that would be relocated on the site.

Commission Business

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Hunt, to recommend that City Council adopt Resolution #23-090 for a Site Plan Review for a Building and Site Improvements at 7255 Highway 10 NW.

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

7.04: Zoning Code Update Check-In

Presentation

Planning Manager Larson noted that the information was provided in the packet and welcomed any comments. He noted that they are planning to hold a public hearing on this topic at the June Planning Commission meeting.

Commission Business

Commissioner Van Scoy referenced the change to conditional use permits as recommended and stated that he would like to see input from the City Attorney related to State law.

Planning Manager Larson explained that a conditional use is a use that would be permitted subject to the conditions that can be placed against it in order for the use to be a better neighbor. He explained that a conditional use is not a discretionary tool.

Commissioner Bauer thanked staff for taking the initiative and putting the work into this update.

8. COMMISSION / STAFF INPUT

Senior Planner Anderson noted the Business Expo that will be held this Saturday, with the spring recycling event to follow on May 6th.

Planning Manager Larson noted that the planning items considered tonight will move forward to the next Council meeting.

Commissioner Peters asked if the recycling event would accept furniture.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that they would accept mattresses and box springs but outside of that there are very few opportunities to recycle other furniture.

Councilmember Woestehoff thanked Commissioner Bauer for his services as Chair, noting that he appreciated the leadership that he provided over the last 12 years.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Van Scoy, to adjourn the meeting.

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

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Larson
Planning Manager

ATTEST:

Dana Verbeek
Planning Administrative Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.