

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

The Ramsey Planning Commission conducted a regular meeting on Thursday, January 25, 2024, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Cheri Gengler
 Commissioner Bruce Anderson (virtual attend)
 Commissioner Randy Bauer
 Commissioner Ryan Heineman (virtual attend)
 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 Matt Woestehoff

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

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

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Hunt	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Peters	aye
Commissioner Heineman	aye

Commissioner Anderson aye
Chairperson Gengler aye

Motion Carried.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

5.01: Approve the November 30, 2023 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

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

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Anderson aye
Commissioner Heineman aye
Commissioner Peters aye
Commissioner Bauer aye
Commissioner Van Scoy aye
Commissioner Hunt aye
Chairperson Gengler aye

Motion Carried.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS/COMMISSION BUSINESS

6.01: Public Hearing: DeeAnn Deiss Variance and Sketch Plan – 15321 Hematite Street NW

Public Hearing

Chairperson Gengler called the public hearing to order at 7:02 p.m.

Presentation

Planning Manager Larson presented the staff report stating that staff recommends approval of the variance.

Citizen Input

DeAnn Deiss, applicant, stated that she is present to address any questions.

William Codere, 6740 154th Lane, referenced the statement that the driveway would come off 153rd in the roundabout. He noted that there are two open ended pipes and asked what would be done with those.

Planning Manager Larson replied that those are survey monuments that are buried in the ground of the lot corners. He stated that the driveway would go between those.

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

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Hunt	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Peters	aye
Commissioner Heineman	aye
Commissioner Anderson	aye
Chairperson Gengler	aye

Motion Carried.

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

Commission Business

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Van Scoy, to adopt Resolution #24-033 Approving a Variance to Minimum Lot Area Northeast of Alpine Drive and Hematite Street Northwest.

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Anderson	aye
Commissioner Heineman	aye
Commissioner Peters	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Hunt	aye
Chairperson Gengler	aye

Motion Carried.

Planning Manager Larson noted that this also included a sketch plan and confirmed that the Commission did not have any issues or additional comments in relation to that element.

6.02: Public Hearing: Consider a Preliminary Plat, Final Plat, and Variance Related to Impervious Surface Regulations in the Rum River Wild & Scenic Overlay District for Lightbridge Academy

Public Hearing

Chairperson Gengler called the public hearing to order at 7:11 p.m.

Presentation

City Planner Martin presented the staff report stating that staff recommends approval of the Preliminary Plat, Final Plat, and Variance.

Commissioner Bauer asked if the DNR and MnDOT were notified and whether they had any comments.

City Planner Martin replied that both agencies have reviewed the request and did not have any comments.

Planning Manager Larson clarified that letters were provided from both agencies stating that they did not have any comments.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked for details on the stormwater plan for this property.

Planning Manager Larson commented that this area is within the drinking water supply management area (DWSMA) and therefore is protected from infiltration. He explained that stormwater in this area is piped to areas outside of the DWSMA. He stated that payment would be provided to the City in lieu of constructing a basin. He confirmed that the infrastructure does already exist for the applicant to connect to.

Commissioner Hunt asked if the Environmental Policy Board reviewed this case.

Planning Manager Larson commented that this was intended to be reviewed by the EPB earlier this week, but the group did not have a quorum and therefore could not provide comments.

Citizen Input

Paul Otto, Otto Associates, spoke in representation of the applicant. He commented that it would be tough to be under 30 percent for a commercial site and noted that the lot combination is a pretty simple request.

Brian Schmitz, 14245 St. Francis Boulevard, commented that he owns one of the condo units south of this property and is the President of the Association for that building. He noted that their dumpsters currently sit between the two lots, and they would be interested in perhaps creating a shared dumpster area for both sites.

Planning Manager Larson stated that the two parties could speak in the lobby following the meeting and confirmed that the City would not prohibit that type of shared facility.

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

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Hunt	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Peters	aye
Commissioner Heineman	aye
Commissioner Anderson	aye
Chairperson Gengler	aye

Motion Carried.

Chairperson Gengler closed the public hearing at 7:22 p.m.

Commission Business

Motion by Commissioner Van Scoy, seconded by Commissioner Hunt, to recommend that City Council adopt Resolution #24-039 Approving a Preliminary Plat and Final Plat for Lightbridge Academy.

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Anderson	aye
Commissioner Heineman	aye
Commissioner Peters	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Hunt	aye
Chairperson Gengler	aye

Motion Carried.

Motion by Commissioner Hunt, seconded by Commissioner Van Scoy, to adopt Resolution #24-040 Approving a Variance to Impervious Surface Regulations in the Rum River Wild and Scenic Overlay District for Lightbridge Academy.

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Hunt	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Peters	aye
Commissioner Heineman	aye
Commissioner Anderson	aye
Chairperson Gengler	aye

Motion Carried.

6.03: Public Hearing: Connexus Energy – Rezone a Portion of the Ramsey Landfill from I-1 to CL Northwest of Sunwood Drive and Sunfish Lake Blvd. NW

Public Hearing

Chairperson Gengler called the public hearing to order at 7:24 p.m.

Presentation

Planning Manager Larson presented the staff report stating that staff recommends rezoning a portion of the property from I-1 to CL and for the Site Plan Review of the Solar Garden.

Citizen Input

Brian Burandt, Connexus Energy, commented they have partnered with the MPCA to ensure that the solar array would work with the continued monitoring of the closed landfill and would also preserve building pads for future economic development. He stated that with the natural screening and trees that would be planted, the array would not be visible from the road. He stated that this station would be connected to their substation and all the power generated from the local systems remains local. He stated that they would also plant deep prairie grasses and pollinator habitat.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked for thoughts on pollinators.

Mr. Burandt commented that is their standard practice.

Commissioner Bauer commented that there seems to be a growing demand for solar and asked if there could be potential to expand as this seems to be a good use for the property.

Mr. Burandt agreed noting that they first looked at the property in 2016. He stated that they continue to look at landfill sites, noting that this will be the pilot in Minnesota. He explained that they attempt to create solar that stays local. He stated that this would be the third project within Ramsey and would maximize the substation capability.

Commissioner Bauer commented that he does not see anything objectionable related to the view of a solar array and did not see the need for additional screening. He commented that visibility would seem to be an advantage, encouraging others to pursue solar as well.

Mr. Burandt commented that they are taking advantage of the existing berms on the property and appreciated those comments.

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

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Anderson aye
Commissioner Heineman aye
Commissioner Peters aye
Commissioner Bauer aye
Commissioner Van Scoy aye
Commissioner Hunt aye
Chairperson Gengler aye

Motion Carried.

Chairperson Gengler closed the public hearing at 7:33 p.m.

Commission Business

Commissioner Heineman commented that this is a great use of the space and appreciated the sentiment from Commissioner Bauer related to screening. He stated that as a neighbor, if he did think differently about solar energy, he would appreciate the screening and therefore supports the screening as proposed. He noted that additional trees are always a benefit.

Chairperson Gengler agreed that while she appreciates the look of solar, some may not and therefore the screening proposed would be adequate.

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Peters, to recommend that City Council approve of rezoning from I-1 to CL at the northwest corner of Sunwood Drive and Sunfish Lake Boulevard NW.

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Hunt aye
Commissioner Van Scoy aye
Commissioner Bauer aye
Commissioner Peters aye
Commissioner Heineman aye
Commissioner Anderson aye
Chairperson Gengler aye

Motion Carried.

6.04: Public Hearing: Consider a Preliminary Plat and Site Plan for Waterfront Village – Centra Homes

Public Hearing

Chairperson Gengler called the public hearing to order at 7:36 p.m.

Presentation

City Planner Martin presented the staff report stating that staff recommends approval of the Preliminary Plat and Site Plan, contingent upon compliance with Staff's review comments.

Commissioner Bauer asked if the Commission made previous recommendations related to some of the lot sizes.

Planning Manager Larson believed those recommendations were related to Harmony Farms.

Commissioner Anderson commented that he expressed concern with the number of homes along the new parkway, and still has that concern.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked if the size mentioned was related to the structure size or the lot size.

Citizen Input

David Pattberg, Centra Homes, commented that the 20 feet by 70 feet is the home size, noting that there would be ten feet between the homes in setbacks.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he is opposed to the project as proposed. He stated that while he would support some residential on the site, he would prefer to hold the area near Ramsey Parkway for retail development. He confirmed that his issues related to blocks five and nine.

Planning Manager Larson noted that since the original review, the City Council adopted zoning changes and new zoning map while changed this zoning to COR-4, therefore this request matches the current zoning of the property.

Mr. Pattberg commented that he has been working with the City on land within the COR for many years, noting their existing development, Cottages at the COR. He stated that they are a residential home builder and three or four years ago he approached staff about this land but was told the City was not ready and was waiting for retail. He stated that since that time he has spoken with the broker and others about potentially bringing in other uses on the site and did not find market interest. He stated that it was just in the last six months to one year that Centra pursued the residential proposal as presented at the direction of staff.

Chairperson Gengler recognized that all the garages would face to the internal streets. She referenced lot one, block eight and lots eight and nine of block seven and asked for more information on that spacing as the units look very close together.

Mr. Pattberg replied that those lots are 110 feet deep whereas the home is 70 feet deep. He explained that there will be greenspace of the yards along with a common sidewalk that will go between those lots. He estimated that edge of porch to edge of porch would be 50 to 60 feet.

Commissioner Van Scoy commented that the driveways seem to be consistent in length and asked the range.

Mr. Pattberg commented that there is a minimum of 25 feet from the curb to garage door, where there may be a few that are slightly longer.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked if there are sidewalks on both sides of the structures.

Mr. Pattberg replied that there would be sidewalks only on one side, with walkways to the front doors.

City Planner Martin provided details on the proposed sidewalk locations.

Commissioner Van Scoy wanted to ensure that vehicles parked in driveways would not be blocking the sidewalk.

Planning Manager Larson confirmed that the sidewalks would not cross driveways.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked and received confirmations that there would be windows on the sides of the homes.

Mr. Pattberg explained that the windows will be strategically placed to ensure that one person does not look into the window of the next home. He stated that home orientation is also flipped when adjacent to prevent that situation.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked if the fire department had any issue with the spacing of the homes.

City Planner Martin replied that there is no minimum distance between homes in the Fire Code, explaining that the distance between structures determines the material that would need to be used to create a fire wall. He noted that would be further reviewed during the building permit review process.

Planning Manager Larson replied that these are the same setbacks required in the single-family zoning district.

Chairperson Gengler asked if the development would be managed by an HOA.

Mr. Pattberg confirmed that the HOA would manage the private streets, private walks, irrigations, snow removals, lawn care, architectural controls, etc.

Commissioner Heineman asked if there would be a sidewalk along Bunker Lake Boulevard on the north side.

Mr. Pattberg replied that there is a sidewalk that is wider than a typical sidewalk and therefore is more akin to a trail. He stated that their plan takes the path to Zeolite Street, recognizing that beyond that is outside of their control.

Commissioner Anderson asked what would occur from Zeolite running north/south.

Mr. Pattberg commented that appears to be part of the City plan for Zeolite.

Planning Manager Larson confirmed that the sidewalks on Zeolite and West Ramsey Parkway are part of the City projects that will occur this year. He also noted the trail along Bunker from Zeolite to Armstrong.

Commissioner Peters referenced the parking that was previously discussed along lot five which had a not typical orientation and received confirmation that is still part of the plan. He asked and received confirmation that no parking would be allowed on Bunker.

Mr. Pattberg recognized that there are a lot of moving parts and the City has been a good partner in the work that the City is currently doing with grading and the roads. He stated that they are still working on the noise rating from Bunker Lake Boulevard and whether mitigation would be needed through building materials and noted that they are still working on that. He stated that there was a question of renaming Outlot H to a lot and block, noting that is a technical clarification they are working on. He stated that they also spoke with staff to receive clarification on the frequency of street sweeping during construction. He stated that staff is asking for updated side elevations on homes that open to streets or park trail corridors, therefore they are going through a number of iterations to address that.

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

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Hunt	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Peters	aye
Commissioner Heineman	aye
Commissioner Anderson	aye
Chairperson Gengler	aye

Motion Carried.

Chairperson Gengler closed the public hearing at 8:00 p.m.

Commission Business

Councilmember Woestehoff commented at the most recent Council Work Session the Council received a presentation from Anoka County on a preliminary draft of its housing study. He stated that there is a strong need for housing in the area, including single-family, apartments and senior housing. He recognized the desire of some for retail but acknowledged that housing is a need.

Commissioner Heineman asked if that was specific to Anoka County or Ramsey.

Councilmember Woestehoff replied that the study included both the overall Anoka County and more specifically Ramsey. He stated that the numbers for Ramsey were 2,000 single family homes and 1,400 apartment units between now and 2030. He stated that the County updates the study every 10 years ago. He commented that Ramsey was one of the higher growing cities and it looks like that trend will continue through 2030.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he is strongly opposed to this plan but because the City Council and Centra Homes have ignored his questions he would have no choice but to support this as it complies with zoning.

Chairperson Gengler noted that opposition.

Motion by Commissioner Van Scoy, seconded by Commissioner Peters, to recommend that City Council adopt Resolution #24-041 Approving the Preliminary Plat and Site Plan Review for Waterfront Village.

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Hunt	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Peters	aye
Commissioner Heineman	aye
Commissioner Anderson	aye
Chairperson Gengler	aye

Motion Carried.

7. COMMISSION BUSINESS

None.

8. COMMISSION / STAFF INPUT

Commissioner Bauer commented that he will be traveling prior to the next meeting and although he plans to attend, if his flight is delayed, he may be late or miss the meeting. He noted that he has concerns with the date of the March meeting as that will fall on Holy Thursday, which is a conflict for those that are members of church but is also a concern as Katherine Drexel is meant to be on that agenda as well. He noted that both he and Commission Van Scoy would need to recuse themselves from that item which could cause issues with quorum. He thought that meeting had been proposed to be held on March 21st rather than March 28th.

Chairperson Gengler asked and received confirmation that there had not been discussion of moving the meeting. She asked that staff be alerted if any other members, outside of Commissioners Bauer and Van Scoy, would not be able to attend the March 28th meeting.

Planning Manager Larson noted that if it is needed, they could discuss a potential date change at the February meeting. He reviewed some of the items that would be reviewed at the February meeting and noted that March is shaping up to have a heavier agenda.

City Planner Martin provided details on the interactive developments map project that he has been working on that launched this week with the intent to keep residents updated on current development activity.

Planning Manager Larson noted the upcoming open house on February 6th at PACT Charter School for Saint Katherine Drexel to receive feedback from neighbors before the public hearing. He stated that the school will also be providing tours of the school.

Commissioner Heineman noted that PACT will also be holding an open house/ribbon cutting on March 4th.

9. ADJOURNMENT

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

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Anderson	aye
Commissioner Heineman	aye
Commissioner Peters	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Hunt	aye
Chairperson Gengler	aye

Motion Carried.

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Larson
Planning Manager

ATTEST:

Dana Verbeek
Planning Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.