

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

The Ramsey Planning Commission conducted a regular meeting on Thursday, December 19, 2024, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Cheri Gengler
 Commissioner Bruce Anderson
 Commissioner Randy Bauer (arrived at 7:02 p.m.)
 Commissioner Tom Hunt
 Commissioner Eric Peters

Members Absent: Commissioner Ryan Heineman
 Commissioner Gary VanScoy

Also Present: Planning Manager Todd Larson
 City Planner Adam Martin
 Senior Planner Chris Anderson

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

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

5. CONSENT AGENDA

5.01: Approve the November 21, 2024 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

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

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Gengler, Commissioners Hunts, Anderson, and Peters. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioners Bauer, Heineman, and VanScoy.

Commissioner Bauer arrived.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS/COMMISSION BUSINESS

6.01: Public Hearing: Centra Homes – Variance to Side Yard Right-of-Way – 7597 147th Lane NW

Public Hearing

Chairperson Gengler called the public hearing to order at 7:03 p.m.

Presentation

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

M Commissioner Peters asked if building the garage closer to the street would cause any issues with the line of sight for pedestrians or vehicles.

Planning Manager Larson replied that the deck would not be constructed close to the street and explained that under different circumstances the house and deck could be closer to the street.

Commissioner Anderson asked for clarification on the 12.5 feet.

Planning Manager Larson replied that the red line in the map is the property line and the front corner of the garage to the property line is the closest point at 12.3 feet.

Commissioner Anderson stated that if the road were built, he would assume there would need to be a sidewalk and asked if there would be enough room.

Planning Manager Larson confirmed that there would be sufficient space. He stated that when he mentions road he actually means the edge of the right-of-way, not the curb.

Citizen Input

Paul Tibone, Centra, stated that he was present to address any questions.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he lives near this property and can see the end of the road. He asked if there were any concerns with a street going through near this property.

Mr. Tibone replied that he would not have any concerns as if this were normal circumstances this would still be a setback of 31 feet which would exceed the 21-foot requirement for a corner lot.

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

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

Chairperson Gengler closed the public hearing at 7:11 p.m.

Commission Business

Motion by Commissioner Hunt, seconded by Commissioner Anderson, to adopt Resolution #24-361 Approving a Variance to Side Yard Right-of-Way Setback in Garden View.

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

6.02: Public Hearing: Consider the Preliminary Plat for Emerald Estates, Located along 181st Avenue, West of Xenolith Street (Project No. 24-123); Case of Landform Professional Services, LLC

Public Hearing

Chairperson Gengler called the public hearing to order at 7:12 p.m.

Presentation

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

Commissioner Bauer commented that it would seem if they followed the recommendation of the County to construct a road that would impact the buildable area of the lots. He commented that separate driveways would seem to be more feasible.

Senior Planner Anderson confirmed that is accurate. He stated that if there were a service road, lots 12 and 13 may very well be rendered not buildable.

Citizen Input

Eric Luth, Landform, spoke in representation of the applicant. He stated that a memorandum was included in the packet which responded to the comments of the County.

Chairperson Gengler asked if the applicant has looked at the suggestion for pairing driveways.

Mr. Luth stated that because these are custom-built, they would prefer to allow property owners to choose the location of their driveway and noted that typically there is a spacing of 100 feet between

driveways. He stated that they do not see this as an issue of safety as placing two driveways right next to each other creates more of a safety issue.

Commissioner Anderson commented that safety is extremely important on a 55-mph roadway and referenced the comments from the County. He asked why they could not use a frontage road to connect the driveways. He stated that he does not like the idea of 13 additional driveways on this road.

Mr. Luth replied that a frontage road would severely compromise lots 12 and 13 and adding a frontage road would add more impervious surface that would need to be treated. He stated that would also require mass grading, where they are attempting to build into the lots individually to preserve the natural environment as much as possible. He stated that properly spacing driveways per MnDOT rules is safer than collecting everything into one location where vehicles would enter and exit at one time.

Frank Scharber, 17820 Gibbon Street NW, commented that he lives directly south of this property and had concern with the narrow lots. He commented that there are a lot of wetlands and hills that drain into the wetlands. He asked if there was an environmental study to ensure the septic systems would not impact the wetlands.

Senior Planner Anderson replied that any installed septic system needs to meet the state requirements as well as requirements of City Code to ensure septic tanks are pumped every three years with an inspection to ensure everything is functioning properly.

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

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

Chairperson Gengler closed the public hearing at 7:30 p.m.

Commission Business

Commissioner Hunt recognized that there were concerns with safety in the prior review. He was unsure that the best option would be a frontage road as that would severely impact the development.

Senior Planner Anderson commented that the County provided two sets of review comments, related to the sketch plan and this case. He noted that the second set of comments were a reiteration of the previous comments. He stated that the County stopped short of saying it was a requirement as there is nothing in their policies that state that shall be done. He stated that City engineering staff deferred to the comments of Anoka County.

Commissioner Peters commented that he lives on a road that has a speed limit of 55 mph and there are driveways on that road that do not pair and there are no issues. He commented that this road does seem narrow and with the amount of development that will most likely occur in that area,

perhaps the road would be widened on the other side as part of that development. He stated that there are many 55 mph roads in Ramsey with driveways.

Commissioner Anderson commented that he could not support this proposal because of his concerns with safety. He stated that the City needs to ensure that development occurs in a safe manner for those that live here and those that drive on the roads.

Chairperson Gengler commented that the turnarounds are helpful as people will not be backing out of the driveways. She commented that if this area were to become more populated there would need to be additional improvements as part of that future development.

Senior Planner Anderson stated that staff did review the average daily trips (ADT) for this road, which is about 3,000 and therefore is on the very low end. He also provided details on crash data noting that the majority were single-vehicle accidents. He stated that there is the same scenario to the east and west and therefore it did not seem that adding 13 lots would cause an issue of safety.

Commissioner Bauer stated that while he understands the concern of Commissioner Anderson, these lots meet all Code requirements and there is nothing that would require shared access or frontage roads, therefore he would have a hard time denying this as it meets all requirements.

Motion by Commissioner Peters, seconded by Commissioner Bauer, to recommend that City Council adopt Resolution #25-003 Approving the Preliminary Plat for Emerald Estates, contingent upon compliance with staff's review comments.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Gengler, Commissioners Peters, Bauer, and Hunt. Voting No: Commissioner Anderson. Absent: Commissioners Heineman and VanScoy.

7. COMMISSION BUSINESS

7.01: Discuss the Sign Code Update Pertaining to Electronic Messaging Center (EMCs)

City Planner Martin presented the Staff Report asking the Commission to provide direction to staff to develop clear, consistent, and simplified regulations for electronic messaging centers in all zoning districts.

Commissioner Bauer recalled discussion about the digital signs on Highway 10 and believed the minimum message time was longer than three seconds. He stated that if there was a good rationale for seven seconds in that case, perhaps it would make sense for that to be the duration throughout the community for consistency. He commented that he would think there is already a restriction on the allowed size of signage for a business and therefore the EMC would fall under that and did not see a reason to have a specific size restriction for an EMC that would be different than a standard sign.

Commissioner Anderson agreed. He asked if there have been requests or complaints about the current signage requirements.

City Planner Martin replied that there have not been many specific questions related to EMCs. He noted that generally there is concern for brightness on a busy street or near a residential area.

Chairperson Gengler commented that there was an EMC sign that shot into her backyard and the bedrooms of her neighbor's home. She stated that they reached out to the business and the brightness was dimmed in the evening hours. She believed it would be good to have some type of standard, requiring a dimmer light if the sign is adjacent to residential.

Commissioner Anderson commented that he thought there were already limitations on brightness during the evening hours and flashing when adjacent to residential.

City Planner Martin replied that those standards do not exist at this time. He stated that there are general lighting standards, and that language could carry over.

Commissioner Anderson asked if those type of restrictions were discussed for the Highway 10 signs, as he would consider those to be EMCs.

City Planner Martin replied that those are considered off-premise signage and have their own set of regulations.

Commissioner Anderson asked why they would want different standards if they are trying to simplify.

Planning Manager Larson replied that the Highway 10 signs are billboards that have state regulation, whereas EMC signs are left to City regulation. He noted that currently most of the EMC signs do not meet City requirements, so the discussion is whether they want to change the standards or follow the path of enforcement.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he does not like flashing, but he does not mind scrolling messages.

Commissioner Hunt stated that he also does not have a problem with scrolling or different transitions between messages.

Commissioner Anderson asked how staff would define flashing.

City Planner Martin replied that there is not a current definition for flashing. He noted that this is the last type of sign he had to discuss with the Commission and asked if there was input from the Commission on any other type of signage they would want to discuss.

Commissioner Peters asked about signage on vehicles.

City Planner Martin replied that is becoming increasingly more common and while City Code currently prohibits that, it would also be difficult to enforce.

Commissioner Anderson stated that until the Code is changed, he would recommend enforcement of the existing regulations.

Commissioner Hunt asked when new regulations would go into effect.

City Planner Martin replied that the plan is to present the draft changes to the Commission in January and stated that he would also present this information to the Economic Development Authority (EDA) to gain a business community perspective. He explained that it would then move forward to the Council in perhaps March with final adoption in early summer.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he will be interested in the input of the EDA.

City Planner Martin asked if the Commission would want three categories for signage such as the COR, Highway 10, and other.

Commissioner Bauer agreed that those categories would make the most sense, especially as the Highway 10 projects are completed and there are no longer stoplights it will be critical for those businesses to continue to be visible to traffic.

Commissioner Anderson asked if taller signs should be allowed for the highway and if so, the highway would need its own category. He stated that he could support the standards for the COR and the remainder of the city being the same.

City Planner Martin asked if there should be a restriction on a residential subdivision or using an EMC for its entrance signage.

Senior Planner Anderson stated that it is not uncommon for the subdivision to have its name at the entrance of the development.

The Commission agreed that they would want to limit that type of signage to traditional signage and not allow an EMC for that purpose.

City Planner Martin commented that Stoney River has an EMC. He asked if the Commission would support EMCs as temporary signs, using the example of signage that is used during events such as the Renaissance Festival.

Chairperson Gengler stated that perhaps that could be allowed for special events rather than as temporary signage.

8. COMMISSION / STAFF INPUT

Chairperson Gengler recognized that this is the last meeting for Commissioner Peters as he will be joining the City Council and thanked him for his service on the Commission. She recognized that Commissioner Heineman will also be moving on to the position of Mayor.

Commissioner Peters commented that his son is in attendance on break from college and was recognized on the Dean's list. He stated that his time on the Commission has been tremendous and believed that commissions and boards help to serve as an incubator for those that eventually want to become elected officials, noting all of the information he has learned throughout his time serving. He looked forward to serving on the Council as well as the great work the Commission will continue to do. He also thanked City staff for always addressing his questions.

Commissioner Anderson stated that while they may not always agree, he appreciates the value that Commissioner Peters has brought to the Commission. He noted that this will be his last in person meeting for a few months as he will head south next week, but will plan to attend virtually.

Planning Manager Larson noted items that will appear on the January agenda. He noted that because there will be two vacancies and there are not any current applications, attendance will be important in the coming months. He also read a statement from Councilmember Woestehoff who was unable to attend, thanking the Commission and expressing his appreciation for his time as Council Liaison.

Commissioner Bauer stated that Commissioner VanScoy apologizes for his late absence as he was required to assist at the church to prepare for the Christmas Eve service as they just received the Certificate of Occupancy. He appreciated the initiative of staff to review all of the Codes to bring them up to date, eliminate duplication, and develop consistency.

9. ADJOURNMENT

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

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

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Larson
Planning Manager

ATTEST:

Abdihafid Sahal
Planning Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.