

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

**REGULAR MEETING
OF THE
VADNAIS HEIGHTS PLANNING COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 26, 2019**

13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22

OPEN MEETING

Chairperson Joseph Stumph called the Regular Meeting of the Vadnais Heights Planning Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. on February 26, 2019.

23
24
25
26
27

ROLL CALL

Joseph Stumph, Chairperson	Present
Dave Anderson	Absent
Linda Bigelbach	Present
Edward Caillier	Absent
Brian Carnes	Present
Evan Cordes	Present
Martin Jokinen	Present
Curt Cooper, First Alternate (voting member)	Present
Jerry Moynagh, Second Alternate (voting member)	Present

Also present: Nolan Wall, Planning/Community Development Director; Jeff Melcoch, Cable Producer.

28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Upon motion by Commissioner Cordes, seconded by Commissioner Bigelbach, it was

“RESOLVED, to approve the February 26, 2019, Regular Meeting Agenda.”

Ayes – 7 Nays – 0

The motion carried.

38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Carnes referred to two corrections needed to the minutes: 1) Line 91 change to who made the reference as he did not recall making the statement and “Commissioner ~~Carnes~~ Anderson commented on the length of time it takes for transit projects,...; and 2) Line 100 “...that while he ~~feels~~ feels there may be a need for this type of service, the cost is astronomical...”

Upon motion by Commissioner Cordes, seconded by Commissioner Carnes, it was

“RESOLVED, to approve the minutes of the November 27, 2018, Regular Meeting as amended with technical changes to lines 91 through 101.”

49 Ayes – 7 Nays – 0

50

51 The motion carried.

52

53 **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

54

55 Chairperson Stumph opened the floor to the public at 7:05 p.m. for questions and
56 comments on items not on the agenda.

57

58 No one wished to address the Commission, Chairperson Stumph closed the meeting to
59 the public at 7:05 p.m.

60

61 **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

62

63 A. Case 19-001: Outfront Media LLC. Variances for Billboard at 3364 Rice Street

64

65 Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the applicant is requesting four
66 separate variance requests to the property to construct a new billboard on the subject
67 property.

68

69 Planning/Community Development Director Wall said Chapter 38, Article VI, Sec. 38-
70 700 of the City Code allows billboards on certain property in compliance with applicable
71 standards. Wall then outlined the applicant’s variance that is to request a height variance
72 from 35 feet to 50 feet that the applicant feels is necessary to allow for greater visibility
73 over the future bridge ramps. He shared several graphics depicting the proposed location
74 with the new ramps that would create difficulty to be compliant to the City Code height
75 standards.

76

77 Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the applicant was also requesting
78 a 66-foot building setback due to Country Drive being rerouted leaving the available land
79 21,000 square feet less which will create difficulty with a new billboard meeting the
80 setback. He stated the proposed location is as far back as possible but there is only a
81 small area left from the Ramsey County right-of-way.

82

83 Planning/Community Development Director Wall then explained the air space
84 occupation variance where the billboard would occupy airspace over or above a driveway
85 or parking area and how relocation was constrained due to relocation of Country Drive,
86 County right-of-way, the parking lot expansion itself, building location and the proposed
87 billboard’s orientation. Staff does believe that four of the proposed parking stalls could
88 be removed to increase green space.

89

90 Planning/Community Development Director Wall outlined the requested wetland setback
91 variance of 281 feet. He shared that the buffer covers the entire subject property and said
92 the last variance was based on the former billboard. He said that staff believes a 15-foot
93 higher billboard in the same general location as the current one will not have any
94 additional negative impacts. He shared details of the billboard with one side being a
95 dynamic face and the other static then shared photos of existing billboards for
96 comparison.

97 Planning/Community Development Director Wall reviewed building setbacks and stated
98 both adjacent property owners, Ramsey County and Caribou Coffee, voiced support of
99 the variance requests. Wall said that staff are recommending approval of the variance
100 requests: height to 50 feet with added architectural treatments around the pylon; building
101 setback to 33.4 feet; air space approval for the driveway but denial of the parking area
102 request with the requirement to remove parking stalls directly under the billboard; and the
103 wetland setback variance to 219 feet.

104

105 Commissioner Carnes asked to review photos of any billboards in the City that fully
106 comply with the Ordinance. Planning/Community Development Director Wall said
107 billboard regulations have changed over time and that many do not fully comply.

108

109 Commissioner Carnes asked what the economic benefit would be to the City to approve
110 the variances and questioned why codes were established if variances are continually
111 approved. He said while he understood there was a billboard in this location before
112 maybe the location should be changed and asked why parking was not recommended
113 under the billboard. Commissioner Jokinen said the reason was for the potential of snow
114 and ice falling from the structure.

115

116 Commissioner Cordes asked if this land would be annexed to Little Canada in the future.
117 Planning/Community Development Director Wall responded that staff spoke with the
118 City of Little Canada about that possibility and while they are not interested at this time it
119 is possible based on the roundabout completion in the future as it will include a leg of
120 Country Drive that will have to be addressed with regards to maintenance, plowing, etc.

121

122 Commissioner Cordes inquired about the schedule, as Little Canada does not allow new
123 billboards. Planning/Community Development Director Wall replied construction would
124 occur this year so plans for landscaping, sidewalk connections and plowing will need to
125 be determined fairly soon.

126

127 Commissioner Carnes asked if the height request and graphics were based on actual
128 bridge heights or speculation and asked about the possibility that they will need the
129 billboard even higher. Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the request
130 was based on the best information they have to date and that 50 feet would provide the
131 visibility the applicant needs.

132

133 Commissioner Moynagh asked if there is any other potential use for that land or is it land
134 locked and is this the only option for use of the property. Planning/Community
135 Development Director Wall said Ramsey County is expecting to sell the property to
136 Caribou Coffee for parking expansion. It is a very small piece of property that does not
137 have much viability and right-of-way access is very limited and said that using it for a
138 billboard is probably the highest and best use. He noted billboards are allowed in the
139 zoning district along Interstate 694 but that it just does not comply with several of our
140 standards and that is why they are requesting variances.

141

142 John Bodger and Scott Christensen, Outfront Media, shared how this was a great example
143 of the tenant, the property owner, Ramsey County and the City working together. They
144 said the billboard has been there since 1986 and they are just working to relocate the

145 billboard. They stated they concurred with the staff report and understand the conditions
146 to remove the parking stalls.

147

148 Chairperson Stumph opened the public hearing at 7:31 p.m.

149

150 No one wished to address the Commission, Chairperson Stumph closed the public hearing at
151 7:31 p.m.

152

153 Upon motion by Commissioner Cooper, seconded by Commissioner Jokinen, it was

154

155 “RESOLVED, to recommend approval of the Variance requests as presented by staff, based
156 on the following findings of fact:

157 1. The proposed billboard replaces a former non-conforming billboard removed to
158 facilitate construction of a public roadway improvement project.

159 2. The proposed billboard is a permitted accessory use within the C-2 District and is
160 compliant with the Comprehensive Plan.

161 3. Several unique circumstances exist that create practical difficulties for the
162 applicant to construct the proposed billboard on the subject property in
163 compliance with certain applicable City Code standards, including:

164 a. Limited freeway visibility due to the location of the proposed ramps/bridges
165 for the Rice Street/I-694 interchange reconstruction project and proposed
166 billboard orientation;

167 b. Reduction in size of the subject property due to required right-of-way
168 acquisition;

169 c. Location of the existing building on the property to the south and potential
170 parking lot expansion project; and

171 d. Location of the existing wetland complex to the south/east.

172 4. The proposed billboard will not negatively affect the character of the surrounding
173 area.

174 5. Several other existing billboards along the I-694 corridor in other communities
175 exceed 35 feet in height.

176

177 Subject to the following conditions:

178 1. Sign and Building Permits shall be submitted for administrative review/approval,
179 prior to any signage being installed on the subject property.

180 2. The applicant shall comply with all applicable State Statutes and City Code
181 performance standards for construction and operation of the proposed billboard.

182 3. Parking stalls directly underneath the proposed billboard shall be prohibited, to be
183 reviewed for compliance by the Community Development Department as part of
184 any future parking lot expansion project or other future use of the subject
185 property.

186 4. The applicant shall conceal the sign support column with an approved
187 architectural treatment that is consistent with the colors and/or materials of the
188 adjacent building, to be reviewed and approved by the Community Development
189 Department.

190

191 Commissioner Cordes said that it seems premature to him, the entire corridor will be
192 redone in the next year, may give land to Little Canada, speculating on bridge height, and

193 they may be back in a year asking for another variance and that he would rather wait, and
194 do it right once rather than doing it wrong. He said he would vote to table or say no at
195 this time and come back when bridge is complete and we know if its land within the City
196 of Vadnais Heights..

197
198 Commissioner Carnes said the Code needs to be reviewed to avoid having to issue so
199 many variances. He said while it may not be fair to this applicant that we say no when
200 we gave another billboard a variance. He said he understands that the billboard has been
201 there for 33 years and while the applicant has received a lot of revenue from it but
202 squeezing it into this small space may not be the best solution based on the current City
203 Code.

204
205 Commissioner Bigelbach said that she would also be willing to table the item to allow for
206 bridge completion and decide whose land it is.

207
208 Chairperson Stumph inquired about whether the City of Little Canada had any input if the
209 property were to be sold. Planning/Community Development Director Wall stated tabling
210 the item is not recommended as Council needs to take action, they can't table things for
211 an entire construction season. The Commission could deny the request which would
212 allow Council to consider the request at their next meeting.

213
214 Commissioner Cordes asked if the variance was denied at this time could the applicant
215 come back for another variance. Planning/Community Development Director Wall said
216 there were some time restraints on applying for a variance if a variance was denied but it
217 would be up to the Council, adding that the applicant could withdraw their request and
218 reapply instead of having a denial on the record that might have some sort of time
219 constraint.

220
221 Commissioner Moynagh said he would like to see the barrier size first before considering
222 the variance request.

223
224 Commissioner Jokinen asked when construction would occur. Mr. Bodger said they plan
225 to construct this summer and said the variance application is based on the fact that some
226 of the Caribou Coffee land will have to be condemned to make the loop. He noted that
227 Ramsey County signed-off on the application.

228
229 Commissioner Cooper said it would have been good to have Ramsey County present to
230 answer questions. Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the County
231 owns the property and the renderings show the proposed interchange and confirmed the
232 County supported the variance on the property they currently own and will do the land
233 transfer with a right-of-way swap and acquisition. He stated that while these are separate
234 actions, they do come together in this application.

235
236 Commissioner Jokinen said he has no objection in proceeding and that he is comfortable
237 supporting the request as requested and he sees no reason to delay consideration for the
238 applicant. He is not in favor of tabling it. Commissioner Cooper agreed.

239

240 Commissioner Cordes said there is too much uncertainty and expressed concern
241 regarding Ramsey County’s due diligence and unintended consequences. He stated his
242 intent is to vote no and the Commission should tell the Council that this request is
243 premature.

244
245 Commissioner Carnes said that he too will vote no.

246
247 Ayes – 3 (Stumph, Cooper, Jokinen) Nays – 4 (Bigelbach, Carnes, Cordes, Moynagh)

248
249 The motion failed.

250
251 Upon motion by Commissioner Cordes, seconded by Commissioner Bigelbach, it was

252
253 “RESOLVED, to recommend denial of the Variance requests based on being
254 premature given construction and possible change in City ownership of that
255 property and that City zoning laws may not even apply.”

256
257 Ayes – 4 (Bigelbach, Carnes, Cordes, Moynagh) Nays – 3 (Stumph, Cooper, Jokinen)

258
259 The motion carried.

260
261 **NEW BUSINESS**

262
263 A. Elect Chairperson

264
265 Upon motion by Commissioner Cooper, seconded by Commissioner Carnes, it was

266
267 “RESOLVED, to elect Commissioner Cordes as Chairperson for 2019.”

268
269 Ayes – 7 Nays – 0

270
271 The motion carried.

272
273 B. Elect Vice Chairperson

274
275 Upon motion by Commissioner Cooper, seconded by Commissioner Cordes, it was

276
277 “RESOLVED, to elect Commissioner Jokinen as Vice Chairperson for 2019.”

278
279 Ayes – 7 Nays – 0

280
281 The motion carried.

282
283 C. Appoint Economic Development Authority Representative and Alternate

284
285 Upon motion by Commissioner Cordes, seconded by Commissioner Carnes, it was

286

287 “RESOLVED, to appoint Commissioner Cooper as Economic Development
288 Authority Representative for 2019.”

289
290 Ayes – 7 Nays – 0

291
292 The motion carried.

293
294 Upon motion by Commissioner Cordes, seconded by Commissioner Carnes, it was

295
296 “RESOLVED, to appoint Commissioner Moynagh as Economic Development
297 Authority Representative Alternate for 2019.”

298
299 Ayes – 7 Nays – 0

300
301 The motion carried.

302
303 D. Appoint Garceau Corner Task Force Liaison and Alternate

304
305 Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the Garceau Corner Task Force
306 resulted from a series of conversations over the past two years with the goal of cleaning
307 up this property and reviewing options. He said the City is ready to have a proactive
308 community engagement process to create a vision for this site so the Task Force is
309 comprised of a range in membership, including City Council, non-neighbors, local real
310 estate professionals, businesses and stakeholders in order to present different perspectives
311 for an equitable conversation. Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the
312 intent is to bring in market representatives to educate the Task Force members and that
313 open houses and information will be shared online for resident updates.

314
315 Commissioner Bigelbach asked if other cities have had success utilizing the Task Force
316 concept for property development and she asked if the meetings will be open to the
317 public. Planning/Community Development Director Wall replied that other cities have
318 used this type of process and the same was done for Koehler Road, adding that the public
319 meetings will allow for information and input without having a specific project being
320 proposed and will help the community feel more comfortable about the process. He
321 noted that there is a webpage set up with information on the Task Force.

322
323 Commissioners Bigelbach, Jokinen, and Chairperson Stumph shared their interest in
324 being appointed to the Task Force.

325
326 Commissioner Bigelbach shared that she was a 39-year resident of the City and knows
327 the community well and believes she could be an asset to the group.

328
329 Commissioner Jokinen said he was a former city administrator and understands
330 redevelopment projects, some with pollution concerns and the need to address this
331 contaminated site.

332
333 Upon motion by Commissioner Carnes, seconded by Commissioner Cooper, it was

334

335 “RESOLVED, to appoint Commissioner Bigelbach as Garceau Corner Task Force
336 Liaison for 2019.”

337 Ayes – 5 Nays – 1 (Jokinen) Abstained – 1 (Cordes)

338

339 The motion carried.

340

341 Chairperson Stumph withdrew his interest in being appointed.

342

343 Upon motion by Commissioner Cordes, seconded by Commissioner Carnes, it was

344

345 “RESOLVED, to appoint Commissioner Jokinen as Garceau Corner Task Force
346 Alternate Liaison for 2019.”

347

348 Ayes – 7 Nays – 0

349

350 The motion carried.

351

352 E. Accept Annual Expense Allowance

353

354 Upon motion by Commissioner Cooper, seconded by Commissioner Carnes, it was

355

356 “RESOLVED, to accept the annual expense allowance for 2019.”

357

358 Ayes – 7 Nays – 0

359

360 The motion carried.

361

362 **OLD BUSINESS**

363

364 None.

365

366 **REPORTS**

367

368 A. Council Liaison

369

370 Council Liaison Youker said she was pleased to be there and thanked the Commission for
371 allowing her to attend, adding she had nothing to report.

372

373 B. Planning Commissioners

374

375 None.

376

377 C. Staff

378

379 Planning/Community Development Director Wall stated that the Comprehensive Plan
380 was submitted to the Metropolitan Council at the end of 2018 and have reviewed it and
381 returned it to the City with comments which are mostly text revisions. He said staff was

382 currently working through the revisions and while technically incomplete he did not
383 anticipate any portion would need to be brought back to the Commission for review.

384

385 Planning/Community Development Director Wall thanked Chairperson Stumph for his
386 work as Chair the past two years. He noted that during the time he was chair the
387 Planning Commission adopted a new City Code and worked through two fairly
388 contentious proposals. He stated he appreciated Chairperson Stumph's leadership during
389 this time as chairing is not an easy job and he thanked him for his service to the
390 community.

391

392 **NEXT MEETING**

393

394 The next Planning Commission meeting will be held on March 26, 2019.

395

396 **ADJOURN MEETING**

397

398 Upon motion by Commissioner Carnes, seconded by Commissioner Cordes the meeting
399 was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

400

401 Respectfully submitted,

402 Cathy Sorensen, *TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*

APPROVED