Chairperson Evan Cordes called the Regular Meeting of the Vadnais Heights Planning Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. on March 26, 2019.

ROLL CALL

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

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Upon motion by Commissioner Jokinen, seconded by Commissioner Anderson, it was

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

Ayes – 7  Nays – 0

The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

“RESOLVED, to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2019, Regular Meeting as presented.”

Ayes – 5  Nays – 0  Abstain – 2 (Anderson, Caillier)

The motion carried.
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Case 19-002: City of Vadnais Heights – City Code Amendment Concerning Planned Unit Development Standards

Planning/Community Development Director Wall said staff recommends the Planning Commission review the proposed amendments contained in DRAFT Ordinance 733 and provide direction on any additional revisions. He stated that a formal public hearing will be noticed for the April 23 Planning Commission meeting and that no recommendation to the City Council is required at this time.

Wall said that City staff are proposing amendments to Chapter 38, Article III, Division 15, of the City Code concerning the Planned Unit Development (PUD) District. The City is using its legislative authority when considering action on a City Code amendment request and has broad discretion; the only limitations are that actions must be constitutional, rational, and in some way related to protecting the health, safety and general welfare of the public. While processing recent applications, staff identified several potential amendments to the PUD standards and procedures. Due to the limited land available for development/redevelopment in the community, the PUD process will continue to be utilized as a regulatory tool to encourage flexibility that supports high-quality development. The proposed amendments aim to ensure an equitable and transparent review process that promotes additional community engagement. Wall reviewed the proposed amendments.

Chairperson Cordes suggested removing the words “In general…” in Sections I and II, as it would allow for more exceptions. Wall agreed.

Wall reviewed Section III. He said that paragraph E, Setback Standards, would allow a request for flexibility in any standard but that setbacks were included for a PUD district and that it seems unnecessary to have this when we are using the underlying zoning district in its place. He noted that the language that states an applicant may request flexibility in setbacks does not guarantee flexibility. He said that staff are recommending the following change: Any proposed setbacks within the PUD may be reduced from the required setback standards within the underlying zoning district under the following considerations:

(1) Adequate space remains to install an appropriate landscape buffer, if
determined necessary.

(2) The height of the building does not negatively affect sunlight expose or
air access on the adjacent properties and/or uses.

(3) The overall site and/or building design is enhanced.

(4) The site conditions present unique challenges and/or constraints.

Commissioner Carnes suggested other things could be considered and suggested
amending the text to say “including but not limited to…” Wall agreed.

Commissioner Anderson suggested adding the words “sunlight exposure” to the text on
Line 99.

Chairperson Cordes said Line 147 seems to exempt residential development from
requiring cash in lieu of land dedication. Wall said that that was not the intent as cash in
lieu was still allowed for residential uses and said that the Council may require cash in
lieu of land dedication. He said that the ordinance already covers that but if the
Commission wants to clarify we could add that land could be considered for residential
development as well in Line 149. Cordes said that that change should be made and asked
if others agreed. Commissioner Carnes asked why not leave the language to say “in
general that the Council may require cash in lieu of land dedication”. Wall said that he
will do more work on the language in this Section.

Wall reviewed the proposed changes to the paragraph regarding Density (residential).
Chairperson Cordes noted densities can be flexible and asked why we need to add
different ways to calculate densities. Wall agreed and said that reference regarding net or
gross densities could be removed if the Commission finds it confusing. Commissioner
Carnes said it may be good to keep this language because density was a key issue with
the Aster Meadows project.

Commissioner Anderson asked if gross density was an easily understood phrase and
suggested including definitions to ensure that the Council’s goal is to make it clear and
transparent results. Wall noted that definitions were included in the Comprehensive Plan
and that changing the definition to include gross density may make it more confusing and
result in unintended consequences. Wall suggested leaving the language as it currently
reads. Commissioners agreed.

Wall reviewed Section IV, PUD Overlay District. Commissioner Jokinen asked how staff
tracks PUD overlay districts and individual PUDs. Wall said PUDs are added to the
zoning map as approved and that PUD overlays are reflected by development agreements
and the development agreements are recorded against the property.

Wall reviewed the new language being proposed to be added to Section IV:

(c) Additional requirements and standards.

(1) Setbacks. Flexibilities for the underlying zoning district standards shall be
considered under the same conditions as in section 38-484(e).

(2) Density. Flexibilities from the underlying zoning district standards and/or
comprehensive plan shall be considered under the same conditions as in section
38-484(n).
(3) Building height. Flexibilities from the underlying zoning district standards shall be considered under the same conditions as in section 38-484(o).

(4) Procedure. PUD overlay district applications shall be processed in accordance with Sec. 38-43.

Wall referred to Lines 249 and 250 regarding density, building heights and procedure and references to 38-43 which is a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). He noted that a PUD overlay is processed as a CUP. Commissioner Anderson suggested referencing Line 250 as a CUP. Wall noted that they could do that and that there is a similar reference to PUDs that relates it back to the rezoning process and he will make that change in that area also.

Wall reviewed Section V proposed changes which include some high-level policy changes. He said that the first substantial change to this Section is that the applicant is required to host an open house to share the proposed concept plan with property owners within 350-feet and possibly beyond 350-feet, depending on the project. He stated that the intent is to inform the public of a proposed project prior to the public hearing, increase transparency and provide more proactive community engagement. He said the hope is this process would result in more public participation and vet out concerns prior to the actual public hearing of a project.

Commissioner Carnes suggested rearranging the proposed process as the PUD overlay step is out of place and should be moved to the end. Planning/Community Development Director Wall said he doesn’t disagree with that suggestion. Commissioner Jokinen asked how much time this step would add to the public process. Commissioner Cordes asked if Wall could have numbers on how many would have been notified within the 350-feet versus a 500-feet area during an earlier PUD and suggested including parameters for an open house such as having an ADA accessible site located within the City to ensure the best possible participation. Wall asked if this should be on the application or codified. Cordes responded that it should be codified and state that the hearing should be held in Vadnais Heights in an ADA compliant location. Wall said that he will work with the City Attorney to come up with language regarding this requirement.

Commissioner Cordes suggested including parameters on the application that must be approved by City staff instead of within City Code. Commissioner Anderson agreed that by providing direction to staff to allow for flexibility in parameters based on time and location may have an impact on a project.

Wall said the concept PUD plan review process would be required and has been included as a suggestion. He said that other communities require a similar process. He said the proposed change was not motivated by the Aster Meadows project but that the City realized some changes could be good to ensure transparency and public engagement.

Commissioner Moynagh said the proposed process would allow more time for Planning Commission review as well. Wall said it would be made clear that the open house would be for concept review only and that no action would be taken and that nothing would be
binding to any future decision by the Council but that the intent is to help influence a
better project.

Commissioner Cordes confirmed that the timeline would not result in any delay in the
gleal time limit. Wall explained the timelines for a PUD approval process and a PUD
District Overlay approval process. He then noted that a formal public hearing will be
noticed for the April 23 regular Planning Commission meeting for the Commission’s
consideration.

B. Planning Commission Work Plan

Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the Planning Commission’s role is
inherently reactive as its main responsibility is to review proposed development and code
amendment applications and make recommendations to the City Council. In the past, the
Planning Commission has established an annual work plan to take a more proactive
approach on a variety of land use/zoning issues. Staff are proposing that the Planning
Commission establish a proposed work plan for 2019 to present to the City Council for
their consideration and/or direction. Some issues may be timelier than others and the
intent is to complete any required work within the current department budget and is also
based on staff’s current workload. He explained that the intent is to be proactive and
assist the City Council by bringing forward ideas for their consideration.

Wall reviewed the proposed work plan for Commission consideration:

1. Review Potential Zoning Code Amendments
   A. Planned Unit Development District
   B. Steep slopes
   C. Park dedication
   D. Billboards/signs
   E. Density (gross vs. net)
   F. Water Management Overlay District
   G. Subdivision Ordinance

2. Bi-Annual/Annual Joint City Council Meeting
   A. Present proposed work plan
   B. Get direction on additional goals

3. Economic Development Initiatives
   A. Current policies and programs
   B. Surrounding cities’ policies and programs
   C. Recommend additional policies and programs
   D. TIF 101
   E. VHEDC coordination
   F. Economic Development Authority

4. Housing Initiatives
   A. Current policies and programs
   B. Surrounding cities’ policies and programs
C. Recommend additional policies and programs

5. Evaluate Redevelopment Areas
   A. Study constraints
   B. Identify funding or budgeting priorities

Commissioner Cordes asked if this work plan was more about a vision or if staff wanted ideas as well. Wall said staff would welcome working directly with a Planning Commission member on any proposed topic on the work plan but said staff are really looking for permission to review and bring back potential code changes for full Commission discussion, and added that the final work plan would need Council support as well.

Commissioner Jokinen suggested including accessory buildings to the work plan. Wall said accessory buildings were recently reviewed and expanded to comply with building code standards and that he believes that portion of the Code is up-to-date with building standards, but he could bring the topic back for review and confirmation with the Commission.

Commissioner Anderson suggested including code standards for signage. Wall agreed that not all signage sections are clear and said that review of signage code could include how many wall signs should be allowed on a building.

Commissioner Carnes referred to changes that occurred when digital signage was added. Commissioner Stumph said the last discussion by the Commission included when the City should draw the line and not allow a variance to signage. Wall referred to potential First Amendment concerns with regards to signage but said the topic could be reviewed in a proactive manner.

Commissioner Carnes suggested reviewing the Code as a whole instead of by section. Wall agreed, stating that there are inconsistencies. He noted he may want to bring in an outside consultant to specifically review signage but said it would be helpful for the Commission to make it a priority.

Wall suggested the Commission consider having a bi-annual or at least a joint meeting with the City Council to present the proposed Planning Commission work plan and get direction on the Council’s goals. He said that this would help build relationships and rapport with the Council.

Wall said that the Council deals with the budget, roads, etc., and that sometimes planning development related items lose their way. He said that the City does have an Economic Development Authority (EDA) but it hasn’t utilized it in a way that allows us to review our current policies and programs. He said that perhaps recommending additional policies and programs and providing information on TIF would help give the Planning Commission a framework and understanding so we can reduce the learning curve and provide a framework where there is a familiarity when it surrounds TIF.
Commissioner Carnes noted that the Planning Commission does not approve TIF but just a TIF-related project, so he was not sure how Economic Development Initiatives would pertain to the Commission. Wall said it would be related to planning and development and be informative to Council as they make their decisions regarding TIF, business retention and expansion programs. Commissioner Jokinen said that having it as part of the work plan would provide vision before projects come forward, such as a joint project with the City of Gem Lake.

Commissioner Cordes inquired about the EDA structure and Commission representative. He said he has been alternative on the EDA and doesn’t believe they have ever met since he was appointed. Wall said that the Council oversees the EDA which is another reason why reason it would be helpful to meet with the Council to review rules, procedures and framework of the City Council, EDA, and the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Carnes asked if some of the concepts for Housing Initiatives are guided by expectations of the Metropolitan Council. Wall said the work plan addressed more of what housing programs could be implemented to encourage reinvestment in the City’s housing stock. Commissioner Jokinen said many housing developments were built at the same time and therefore will deteriorate at the same time. Wall agreed, stating in order for the bulk of the City’s housing stock to remain viable, the City many need to be proactive with regard to reinvestment and maybe even subsidize some redevelopment. Commissioner Anderson suggested adding County and State program review as well. Wall agreed and then referred to items such as revolving loan funds, energy programs, and others to build-off the Comprehensive Plan and is a high level policy decision by the Council.

Wall noted that the Planning Commission’s first priority will always be to react to development opportunities, but the work plan could provide some good direction with the approval of City Council.

Upon motion by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Caillier, it was

“RESOLVED, to approve the 2019 Planning Commission Work Plan as amended for consideration by City Council with the addition of 1H Accessory Structures and 4D to include surrounding Cities, Counties, and State policies and programs.”

Ayes – 7 Nays – 0

Wall said once the Work Plan is approved by the City Council he will work to prioritize the list with short-term and long-term goals. He asked if any Commissioners would attend the upcoming Council meeting to hear the discussion directly. Chairperson Cordes and Commissioner Anderson said they would both attend.

The motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

None.
REPORTS

A. Council Liaison

Council Liaison Youker not present.

B. Planning Commissioners

None.

C. Staff

Planning/Community Development Director Wall stated that the billboard variances for the Rice Street project was approved by the City Council at their last meeting and that next month’s meeting will include review of a new Cadillac dealership on the east side of Highway 61 that includes one lot in the City of Gem Lake. The request is to re-plat the property and two variance requests.

Commissioner Jokinen asked if task force members had been selected for the Garceau Corner Task Force. Wall said that applications were due last week and names will be presented to the City Council at their next meeting for consideration and appointment. He said once the group is finalized, staff will work to schedule the first meeting, adding that the City Council approved hiring a facilitator to work through the process to build consensus and manage the project.

Chairperson Cordes suggested including the Task Force as an ongoing agenda item for monthly updates. Wall agreed, adding staff will also be updating the Task Force webpage as the Task Force moves through the process.

NEXT MEETING

The next Planning Commission meeting will be held on April 23, 2019.

ADJOURN MEETING

Upon motion by Commissioner Stumph, the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Sorensen, TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.