Chairperson Evan Cordes called the Regular Meeting of the Vadnais Heights Planning Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. on April 23, 2019.

ROLL CALL

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

Also present:  Patricia Youker, City Council Liaison; Nolan Wall, Planning/Community Development Director; Jesse Farrell, Public Works Director/City Engineer; Jeff Melcoch, Cable Producer.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

“RESOLVED, to approve the April 23, 2019, Regular Meeting Agenda.”

Ayes – 7  Nays – 0

The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

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

Ayes – 6  Nays – 0  Abstain – 1 (Bigelbach)

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

A. Case 19-003: Luther Company, LLLP – Preliminary Plat, Site Plan and Variances at 3494, 3500 and 3516 U.S. Highway 61

Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the applicant is requesting preliminary plat and site plan approvals and variances to construct a new automobile dealership on the subject property. A portion of the proposed development lies within the City of Gem Lake. Gem Lake is conducting a separate review process of the development. Chapter 38, Article II, Section 38-39(a) of the City Code requires site plan approval for new commercial developments. The proposed use is a permitted/accessory use in the Commercial Three (C-3) District and the application includes variance requests from certain applicable setback standards. The City is using its quasi-judicial authority when considering action on zoning requests and has limited discretion; a determination regarding whether or not the request meets the applicable code standards is required.

Wall stated that Luther Company, LLLP is proposing to construct a new automobile dealership on the subject property, which currently contains undeveloped land and a single-family dwelling. The proposed development includes a 37,375-square-foot building with a showroom, offices, automobile repair services, wash facility, and off-street parking lot/storage area. The proposed development site encompasses three existing properties, two of which are in Vadnais Heights and one in Gem Lake. The site plan and variance requests in this case only apply to the portion of the proposed development within the City limits, as Gem Lake will be processing their own zoning approvals. The preliminary plat contains the entire proposed development site within both cities and the subject property within Vadnais Heights is vacant/undeveloped and borders three separate jurisdictions; City of Gem Lake to the north, City of White Bear Lake to the south, and White Bear Township to the east. Surrounding existing uses include a single-family residence to the north, an automobile dealership and wetland to the south, a BNSF Railway line to the east, and U.S. Highway 61 to the west and would have no significant traffic impacts if constructed.

Wall explained the site plan includes 613 parking stalls, which exceeds the minimum required number of spaces but is compliant with drive widths. He noted site circulation plans would be reviewed as part of the building permit then shared a rendering of the building. He outlined the landscape plan and said some seeding would be done in areas due to grading which staff support. He said the landscape plan provides adequate coverage and includes a variety of trees and the grading plan includes some retaining wall structures. Wall reviewed the variance requests for building setback, parking lot and
circulation drive and said a traffic signal would be installed and a frontage road would be constructed as part of the project.

Commissioner Jokinen asked when Gem Lake’s consideration was scheduled and inquired about wastewater impacts from the vehicle wash area. Wall said Gem Lake would consider their item on May 7 and asked that the applicant respond to the wastewater impacts from the vehicle wash system. Public Works Director Farrell responded that Luther has very high standards for environmental considerations within the dealership for items such as oil waste and wastewater impacts.

Commissioner Cooper inquired about the actual footage in the right-of-way. Wall said footage varied throughout the site but meets City requirements.

Linda McGinty, Luther Companies, thanked staff for their assistance in this process, stating that it has been very complicated due to the multiple jurisdictions. She said this building will be a brand new image for Cadillac with only two others like it in the country and that they were excited to bring this to the Twin Cities. She confirmed their requirements regarding environmental impacts and said that they have flammable waste traps, which are required, and that their buildings are regularly cleaned and maintained.

Steve Sabraski, project engineer with Landform, provided further comment on Luther’s maintenance programs that Luther manages across the state, and said that they have a dedicated team which manages about 30 dealerships around the state. He said that the right-of-way is a 50 foot right-of-way from Highway 61 and varies to allow for longer stacking distance on Highway 61.

Commissioner Jokinen commented about similar frontage for other dealerships and confirmed that the frontage road on this project would not be used for vehicle storage and asked if the applicant would be willing to include this as a condition of approval. Ms. McGinty agreed they would not use the frontage road for vehicle storage and said they would make allowances for transport vehicles and circulation but that it would not occur in the right-of-way. Mr. Sabraski said they would be open to including vehicle storage in the frontage road as a condition of approval if the Commission requires it.

Chairperson Cordes opened the public hearing at 7:33 p.m.

No one wished to address the Commission, Chairperson Cordes closed the public hearing at 7:33 p.m.

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

“RESOLVED, to recommend approval of the preliminary plat, site plan, and variance requests, based on the following findings of fact:

1. The proposed use is permitted within the applicable zoning district and is compliant with the Comprehensive Plan."
2. The proposed use is compliant, or conditioned to be compliant as part of the building permit process, with all other applicable City Code standards not addressed in the variance request.

3. The right-of-way dedication and traffic signal installation serves a public purpose, but substantially reduces the subject property’s developable acreage, and justifies the proposed reduced building and parking lot setbacks.

4. The proposed building’s location at the front of the development site provides a visual barrier from the expansive parking/automobile storage area and creates a prominent architectural feature.

5. The proposed development site is within two municipalities and the location of the boundary line requires a parking lot setback variance to facilitate a functional site plan.

6. The surrounding area, and highway corridor, contains numerous automobile dealerships and the variance requests in this case will not cause any negative affects to its character.

Subject to the following conditions:

1. The Gem Lake City Council approves the proposed development and any conditions of approval that require revisions to the applicable plans and/or plat are reviewed and approved by the Vadnais Heights City Council as part of the development agreement.

2. A development agreement between the applicant, and all others with interests in the subject property, shall be entered into with the City, to be recorded at the applicant’s cost with the offices of the Ramsey County Recorder and/or Register of Titles, prior to issuance of a building permit.

3. A building permit in compliance with all applicable code standards shall be submitted prior to commencement of any construction activities on the subject property, to be reviewed/approved administratively.

4. A sign permit in compliance with all applicable code standards shall be submitted prior to any sign(s) being installed on the subject property, to be reviewed/approved administratively.

5. The applicant shall pay the applicable park dedication fee, in lieu of land dedication, prior to the issuance of any permits for commencement of construction activities on the subject property.

6. The final design and specifications for all exterior building materials shall be compliant with the applicable code standards, to be reviewed/approved as part the development agreement.

7. The off-street parking lot and driveways shall be constructed and operated in compliance with the applicable code standards, to be reviewed/approved administratively as part of the building permit.

8. Retaining walls in excess of four (4) feet in height shall require engineering design, to be reviewed/approved administratively as part of the building permit.

9. Landscape plantings, including any existing vegetation proposed to be preserved, shall comply with all applicable code standards.

10. Roof-mounted mechanical units shall be of a low-profile variety and ground-mounted mechanical units/building utility areas shall be adequately screened by plant material and/or fencing and shall not obstruct fire department connections or hydrants, to be reviewed/approved administratively as part of the building permit.
11. Existing wells and/or on-site private sewage facilities on the subject property shall be abandoned and/or removed in compliance with all applicable regulatory standards and permit procedures.

12. The location and installation of any on-site gasoline/bulk storage of liquids shall require a conditional use permit in compliance with all applicable agency permit procedures, standards, and codes.

13. The location and design of any on-site security fencing and/or system shall be constructed in compliance with all applicable zoning and fire code standards, to be reviewed/approved administratively.

14. Drainage and utility easements of ten feet on the front yard and five feet on each side yard shall be dedicated to the City, to be filed at the applicant’s cost with the offices of the Ramsey County Recorder and/or Register of Titles, prior to issuance of a building permit.

15. A final plat in compliance with all other applicable agency requirements shall be submitted for staff review and City Council approval within two (2) years from the date of approval of the preliminary plat, to be recorded at the applicant’s cost with the offices of the Ramsey County Recorder and/or Register of Titles, prior to the issuance of any permits for commencement of construction activities.

16. Compliance with the conditions included in the MnDOT letters, dated 03/07/2019 and 04/15/2019, respectively.

17. Compliance with the conditions included in the Fire Chief’s memorandum, dated 03/27/2019.

18. Compliance with the conditions included in the City Engineer/Public Service Director’s memorandum, dated 04/18/2019.

Ayes – 7  Nays – 0

The motion carried.

B. Planning Staff Report – Case File 19-002: Planned Unit Development District Amendments

Planning/Community Development Director Wall said staff recommend the Planning Commission review the proposed amendments contained in Draft Ordinance 733 and make a recommendation to the City Council. The proposed ordinance was reviewed in-depth at the March meeting and preliminarily reviewed by the City Council. Wall summarized the proposed revisions to the Draft Ordinance made following the March meeting.

Commissioner Carnes inquired about Line 67 saying “generally consistent” with the Comprehensive Plan parameters and said that allowed for too much leeway and asked if the term should be changed to read “shall be consistent”. Wall stated the Comprehensive Plan is a large document that contains a number of policies related to many scenarios and could contain an unrelated policy inconsistent with a development proposal which would not be the intent but suggested that the City Attorney review Lines 66-68 prior to final approval by the City Council.

Chairperson Cordes opened the public hearing at 7:48 p.m.
No one wished to address the Commission, Chairperson Cordes closed the public hearing at 7:48 p.m.

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

“RESOLVED, to recommend approval of Case 19-002, as written, An Ordinance Amending Chapter 38, Article III, Division 15 of the Zoning Code, Concerning the Planned Unit Development District.”

Ayes – 7  Nays – 0

The motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Planning Commission Work Plan – 2019

Planning/Community Development Director Wall summarized the final proposed 2019 Planning Commission Work Plan that was discussed at a Council Workshop on April 16. He said that Chairperson Cordes and Commissioner Jokinen attended the Workshop to discuss the proposed Work Plan. Chairperson Cordes said the Council had a favorable review of the proposed Work Plan and that while there was no ranking of priorities, they suggested joint education elements be considered where appropriate.

Wall said staff’s intent was to work on tasks over the next year and into 2020 and noted that the recent goal setting session with City Council led to prioritized tasks related to economic development, redevelopment and housing initiatives. He said the Planned Unit Development District goal has already been completed and a discussion was held regarding potential administrative approval for minor subdivisions of which the Council was supportive to streamline and make the process more efficient.

Commissioner Caillier asked if documentation would be created around whatever action was taken. Wall said no formal action was needed this evening but the intent is to summarize the work plan and then work with the Commission on individual items which might include research, attending Council meetings, to build more of a collaboration.

GARCEAU CORNER TASK FORCE UPDATE

Planning/Community Development Director Wall said that staff are working to schedule the first meeting for the Garceau Corner Task Force. He said the City has hired a facilitator and appointed residents and other stakeholders to the Task Force. They hope to have the first meeting sometime in late May. He said that the first meeting would include a scope of work, introduction to the site, site tour, background, site contamination, history, and creation of context moving forward. He said the next two
meetings would include a review of potential residential and commercial uses and then a panel of developers to help understand impacts and obtain feedback on the current market and reuse of the buildings with the last meeting reserved to identify potential redevelopment scenarios and prioritize. He said the process would include regular updates on the webpage and should take approximately 5-6 months to complete.

REPORTS

A. Council Liaison

Council Liaison Youker gave an overview of the Council’s Goal Setting session and that the Council is excited about next steps.

B. Planning Commissioners

None.

C. Staff

Planning/Community Development Director Wall introduced Public Works Director Jesse Farrell and asked him to share his background.

Public Works Director Farrell said he started at the City in December and has been busy working on street improvement projects including Buerkle Road. He shared his background, which included 10 years in the private sector with the last 10 years in the public sector at the Cities of St. Paul and White Bear Lake and said he was excited to be here.

Chairperson Cordes welcomed Public Works Director Farrell to the team.

Commissioner Caillier inquired about the status of the recent apartment project at Centerville Road/County Road F. Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the project was approved in December but that staff was still waiting on an approved development agreement which they hope to have sometime in May and that construction will follow that.

Planning/Community Development Director Wall updated the Commission on the Willow Ridge East project approved in 2017. He noted that they will begin construction this summer. He explained the delay was because the developer was waiting on federal low-income tax credits.

NEXT MEETING

The next Planning Commission meeting will be held on May 28, 2019.

ADJOURN MEETING
Upon motion by Commissioner Stumph, seconded by Commissioner Cooper the meeting
was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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