OPEN MEETING AND WELCOME

Chairperson Evan Cordes called the Regular Meeting of the Vadnais Heights Planning Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. on April 28, 2020.

ROLL CALL

Upon motion by Commissioner Jokinen, seconded by Commissioner Carnes, it was “RESOLVED, to approve the April 28, 2020, Regular Meeting Agenda as presented.”

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 24, 2020, Regular Meeting as corrected.”

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

The motion carried.

Upon motion by Commissioner Cooper, seconded by Commissioner Bigelbach, it was
“RESOLVED, to approve the minutes of the April 15, 2020, Special Meeting as corrected.”

Ayes – 7  Nays – 0

The motion carried.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Chairperson Cordes opened the floor to the public at 7:08 p.m. for questions and comments on items not on the agenda.

As no one wished to address the Commission, Chairperson Cordes closed the meeting to the public at 7:08 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Case 20-004: Gasparre Westwood Park, LLC – Zoning Code Amendment

Planning/Community Development Director Wall shared that the applicant is requesting amendments to City Code Chapter 38, Article III, Division 4 concerning the Residence Three (R-3) District. The applicant owns and operates the Westwood Park Apartments located at 669 County Road D. The development contains two buildings with 48 total units on approximately three acres. The applicant is requesting a zoning code amendment to allow construction of an ancillary rental office/residential unit on their property. Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the proposed Ordinance 742 adds “ancillary building as part of a multi-family residential development” as a conditional use in the R-3 District, with several conditions:

• Only one such building is allowed on the property.
• Uses are limited to offices, one residential unit, attached garage/storage, and community facilities.
• Building height is limited to 35’ or no greater than the adjacent apartment buildings.
• Exterior materials have to match the existing apartment buildings.
• Size limited to 5,000 SF.
• Building setback 10’ from property boundary lines.

Wall clarified the proposed request does not approve the actual construction of a building on the subject property but creates the opportunity to pursue it further. As proposed, if approved, the property owner is required to submit separate conditional use permit and site plan applications prior to construction. Wall also clarified that approval of this request does not approve construction of a building and would require approval by the City Council.

Commissioner Caillier inquired how the defined conditions were developed and if these conditions are similar to other cities that have this type of Ordinance in their codes. Wall responded the City’s R-4 zoning district is for mobile housing developments and they
have community facilities as part of those developments such as laundry facilities and storm shelters and that staff was working with the applicant on what they want to include. He said the City wants to see reinvestment in these communities and stated this allowance would be one way to have onsite management and ensure the property is well managed.

Steve Perillo, President of MGM Property Management, and applicant representative, said his firm manages several thousand units within the Twin Cities’ area as well as Rochester and St. Cloud areas and all have onsite rental offices on all of their sites. He said these offices build harmonious relationships with residents and shows that management staff are visible onsite. He noted no one currently lives onsite and that having on onsite office and living unit would be very beneficial to the development.

Commissioner Carnes confirmed the owner would own the parcel and the individual living onsite would work for the management company. Mr. Perillo said staff working in the office would be an employee of MGM Property Management and the owner owns the property as well as Westwood Park and that Westwood Park staff would work and live within the residence. Wall said one of the conditions regarding the individual living onsite requires them to be a current employee of the property management or leasing company, it can’t be someone just renting the space. Commissioner Bigelbach clarified that one person or a family that would live there or would the employees rotate in and out. Mr. Perlough said one person would live onsite who is an employee of the company but that in the future could that change, it will always be available for staff.

Commissioner Cordes asked for clarification on the community facility for residence and if the area could be used as a lounge for residents. Wall confirmed that was correct, stating a laundry facility or community room is typically something residents want and would add value to the development.

Mr. Perillo confirmed onsite management is standard in the industry and noted other properties actually construct a separate building to provide more onsite staff.

Chairperson Cordes opened the public hearing at 7:23 p.m. and outlined the public testimony process in the virtual meeting format.

As no one wished to address the Commission, Chairperson Cordes closed the public hearing at 7:25 p.m.

Upon motion by Commissioner Cooper, seconded by Commissioner Caillier, it was "RESOLVED to recommend approval of a draft Ordinance Amending Chapter 38, Article III, Division 4, Section 38-155 of the City Zoning Code, Concerning Conditional Uses in the Residence Three (R-3) District.

Subject to the following conditions:

1. Only one such building is allowed on the property.
2. Uses are limited to offices, one residential unit, attached garage/storage, and community facilities.
3. Building height is limited to 35’ or no greater than the adjacent apartment buildings.
4. Exterior materials have to match the existing apartment buildings.
5. Size limited to 5,000 SF.
6. Building setback 10’ from property boundary lines.”

Chairperson Cordes referred to Lines 25-26 regarding attached garage/storage space and shared concerns about potential abuse by others who would use this to provide additional outdoor garages and clarified that the garage would be used only for a company vehicle or employee who lives their use it for their personal vehicle parking.

Commissioner Carnes suggested adding language that refers to attached parking that would address that concern and not allow the garage to be used as additional storage.

Chairperson Cordes suggested language about keeping single or double stall garage space to limit. Wall said staff could provide language that states garage would be associated with the office and residential dwelling unit and not allow construction of 5,000 square feet of attached garages and would request the City Attorney to draft language amendments for consideration by City Council.

Commissioner Cordes suggested language that limits the size of the attached garage to be supplemental to the property management rather than additional garage space for residential use. Wall said he would suggest that additional condition to the City Attorney and have a discussion with the applicant.

Upon motion by Chairperson Cordes, seconded by Commissioner Jokinen, it was “RESOLVED to amend the motion to incorporate language limiting the garage sizes as determined by City Attorney, staff, and applicant input.”

Commissioner Carnes said he did not believe this language gave the applicant the right to construct anything as approval and that they would still had to go to the Planning Commission and City Council for approval. Wall confirmed that was the case but noted approval of the draft ordinance amendment not having limitations would allow an applicant to come forward with a conditional use permit application to add reasonable conditions.

Ayes – 7         Nays – 0

Amended motion carried.

Ayes – 7         Nays – 0

The main motion as amended carried.
B. Case 20-005: Davis Group Real Estate Services Group, LLC – Variances and Site Plan Review at 3590 Arcade Street

Planning/Community Development Director Wall shared that the applicant/property owner is requesting setback variances and a site plan review to construct a parking lot expansion at the Midwest ENT property. The subject property is an undeveloped remnant parcel from the park-and-ride facility to the east and was recently purchased by the applicant from the Metropolitan Council. The applicant also owns and developed (in 2018) the Midwest ENT medical-office building on the adjacent parcel to the west. The proposed parking lot expansion is intended to be utilized by employees and for overflow. The surrounding area includes Wal-Mart to the north; Summit Orthopedics to the south; Metropolitan Council park-and-ride facility to the east; and Midwest ENT to the west. No adverse impacts to surrounding properties are anticipated. Wall stated no adverse impacts to the existing traffic patterns in the surrounding area are anticipated. He said that the proposed project would add 51 parking spaces for use by the adjacent medical-office building. The existing parking lot contains 53 spaces and was compliant with the applicable standards when developed. The proposed parking lot will be utilized by employees and for overflow. The parking lot grade, surfacing, striping will be required to meet the applicable City Code standards and will be reviewed in greater detail as part of the building permit process.

Wall noted that the sidewalk in the area will be extended around the east and north sides of the existing building. A new curb cut is proposed from the existing private/shared driveway, which is mostly used as a secondary access point for the surrounding uses. Wall noted that the proposed project remove all existing vegetation on the subject property and the Landscape Plan includes 14 deciduous and coniferous major/over-story trees, which is compliant with the required amount based on the applicable standard above. In addition, the applicant is proposing to temporarily remove five existing trees along the northern property boundary line to allow for construction of the storm sewer connection and then they will be re-planted. Wall noted that VLAWMO and SEH both expressed concerns about the proposed plantings within the bio-filtration basin and recommend that the trees be relocated to other areas of the site. The City Center District requires that plantings are one-third conifers and two-thirds deciduous of certain species, and the proposed Landscape Plan is not entirely compliant with the applicable ratios, required species, or planting sizes. Staff has included a condition that requires the proper coniferous-to-deciduous ratio and planting sizes in a revised landscape plan. However, the species match those allowed for the original development, as part of the PUD Overlay process, and should be allowed as proposed.

Mark Davis, applicant, thanked the Planning Commission for reviewing and considering their application and shared that Midwest ENT is a very busy clinic and a productive health facility for their clients and the need for additional parking is important. He said they were currently leasing from TCO and were entering into a bid process to acquire land to better meet their patients’ needs.

Commissioner Jokinen left the meeting at 7:41 p.m.
Wall confirmed the stormwater management plan was reviewed by VLAWMO and SEH and they are confident the project is compliant with all regulations.

Chairperson Cordes opened the public hearing at 7:42 p.m.

As no one wished to address the Commission, Chairperson Cordes closed the public hearing at 7:43 p.m.

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

“RESOLVED to recommend approval of the proposed rezoning, final planned unit development plan, and site plan requests, based on the following findings of fact:

1. The proposed project will be integrated into the adjacent development and adds parking capacity for employees and overflow, if needed.
2. The proposed use is a permitted accessory use in the applicable zoning district and is compliant with the comprehensive plan.
3. The subject property is likely too small to support a viable, stand-alone development and the proposed parking lot setbacks closely match those approved for the adjacent development under the PUD Overlay process.
4. The proposed project will not alter the essential character of the area

Subject to the following conditions:

1. A development agreement amendment between the property owner, 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.
2. A grading 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.
3. A stormwater operation and maintenance agreement between the property owner, 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, within six (6) months of completion of the proposed project.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. A photometric lighting plan shall be submitted for inclusion in a subsequent development agreement amendment.
7. The landscape plan shall be revised to comply with the required standards and agency/department comments, to be included in a subsequent development agreement amendment.
8. The property owner shall re-plant any vegetation removed to construct the required utility connections.
9. The subject parcel shall be combined with the adjacent parcel to the west, to be recorded at the applicant’s cost with the offices of the Ramsey County Recorder and/or Register of Titles.

10. Compliance with the conditions included in SEH’s memorandum, dated 04/16/2020.

11. Compliance with the conditions included in VLAWMO’s memorandum, dated 04/16/2020.

12. Compliance with the conditions included in the Fire Chief’s memorandum, dated 04/15/2020.

13. Compliance with the conditions included in the Director of Public Works/City Engineer memorandum, dated 04/21/2020.

Ayes – 7    Nays – 0    Absent – 1 (Jokinen)

The motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

REPORTS

A. Council Liaison

Councilmember Patricia Youker had nothing to report.

B. Planning Commissioners

None.

C. Staff

Planning/Community Development Director Wall shared that the At Home Apartment project will be before the City Council on May 5 and will include the normal public hearing process. He said that residents are encouraged to submit emails or sign up for public testimony timeslot. Wall noted that staff received a letter from the Metropolitan Council approving the land use amendment relating to that project and said that the delay was due to errors in the final plan that had to be corrected before any amendments could be considered. He shared that staff have not seen a noticeable decrease in building permit activity due to the current pandemic and said that the City is seeing the same number of roofs, decks, windows, and apartments projects permits as planned but noted that the Luther Cadillac dealership project has been delayed a bit while they wait to start construction. He said there will be some slow down likely due to a backlog of permits from residents doing home projects now as more residents are home during this time.
Commissioner Cooper asked for an update regarding the Hy-Vee project on Highway 61. Wall said the project was located on Highway 61 and County Road E in Gem Lake and Hy-Vee acquired the site few years ago and demolished the existing buildings but had no current timetable for construction. He explained how Vadnais Heights annexed a portion of that site to Gem Lake to help provide a cleaner building process and noted construction will likely not happen this spring as planned due to the current circumstances and that it is within Gem Lake.

NEXT MEETING

Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the next meeting would be held May 26, 2020.

ADJOURN MEETING

Upon motion by Commissioner Caillier, seconded by Commissioner Cooper, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Sorensen, TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.