OPEN MEETING

Chairperson Evan Cordes called the Regular Meeting of the Vadnais Heights Planning Commission to order at 7:12 p.m. on May 26, 2020.

ROLL CALL

Evan Cordes, Chairperson  Present
Linda Bigelbach    Present
Edward Caillier    Present
Brian Carnes      Present
Curt Cooper     Absent
Martin Jokinen, Vice Chairperson  Present (joined at 7:20 p.m.)
Joseph Stumph    Present
Jerry Moynagh, First Alternate  Present
Terri Dresen, Second Alternate  Present

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

Chairperson Cordes noted an issue may have occurred with the online meeting agenda link and that while they would be continuing with the meeting additional opportunities to provide public input on Planning Case 20-007 would occur at either another Planning Commission meeting or City Council meeting.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

“RESOLVED, to approve the May 26, 2020, Regular Meeting Agenda as presented.”

Ayes – 7  Nays – 0

The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

“RESOLVED, to approve the minutes of the April 28, 2020, Regular Meeting as presented.”
The motion carried.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Chairperson Cordes opened the floor to the public at 7:15 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 7:15 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Planning Case 20-007 – Ink Partnership – Variance at 1000 Labore Industrial Court.

Planning/Community Development Director Wall provided a presentation with background information stating the applicant/property owner is requesting a variance from the applicable standards for construction of a new driveway on the subject property. He explained the subject property contains an existing office-warehouse building. The existing driveway from Labore Industrial Court serving the main building entrance and parking lot is located on the adjacent unaddressed parcel to the east, which was recently sold by the applicant/property owner to the property owner of 3235 Labore Industrial Court. As a result, a new driveway is required to provide direct access to the subject property in close proximity to the existing driveway. Wall said the existing development is currently served by two driveways from Labore Industrial Court but was developed across two parcels. He noted that the proposed driveway is approximately 15 feet from the existing driveway to the east and requires a 25-foot variance from the applicable 40-foot separation standard and the easterly driveway is located on an adjacent property formerly owned by the applicant/property owner, which was recently sold to the adjoining property owner to the east. Therefore, direct access to the existing building’s main entrance/parking lot was eliminated and an easement was not negotiated as part of the land transaction. The applicant/property owner is requesting the variance in order to re-establish their own access in close proximity to their former access. The existing building’s location and parking lot orientation are practical difficulties that do not allow a new driveway to meet the 40-foot separation standard from the existing driveway. Wall noted that the driveway separation standard is intended to provide ample space between driveways to allow for appropriate sightlines and reduce potential turning movement conflicts. Labore Industrial Court is a cul-de-sac serving only five industrial properties and has very low traffic volumes. Wall said that the benefit of resolving the access issue because is outweighs the potential safety concerns, in staff’s opinion. The proposed driveway will not alter the essential character of the area.

Commissioner Carnes commented how this action should have come before the applicant sold the property as it established practical difficulties and could have closed off the other entry and put in the new driveway before the property sale. He inquired about the evergreen tree and if it would be retained or relocated. He also asked about who is
responsible for the utility movement. Wall said one of the proposed conditions requires
the property owner to replant any vegetation removed as part of the driveway construction.
Commissioner Carnes suggested instead that we say the other property owner needs to
close the other entrance so the next one could be established outside the 40 feet. Wall said
staff considered that option but noted when the other site develops the City would like to
see what happens depending on building use, dock doors, access and circulation and could
instead impart conditions about closing off that driveway or making the property owner
comply in order to redevelop the site and provide adequate protections be placed on the
next applicant but said staff was fine with the driveway locations as proposed.

Commissioner Caillier said with the sale of the adjacent property it appears there was one
row of parking eliminated from the applicant’s property so does the remaining stalls meet
the City Code requirements. Wall replied yes and that he is unsure why the parking lot was
allowed to be put across two parcels but the parking is adequate and would be confirmed
when adjacent parcel develops.

Ken Krueger, Ink Partnership, said he was available for questions.

Chairperson Cordes asked if the driveway from the property sold would still be used as the
driveway for the new property owners. Mr. Krueger said he was not sure but it was
currently used and served as an access for part of the parking lot they purchased, adding
they developed parking on two different parcels when they sold off their driveway.

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 Carnes, seconded by Commissioner Bigelbach, it was

“RESOLVED to recommend approval of the requested 25-foot variance from the
applicable 40-foot separation standard based on the following findings of fact:

1. The existing uses are permitted in the Industrial District and are compliant with the
   2040 Comprehensive Plan.
2. The existing driveway serving the main building entrance/parking lot is located on
   an adjacent parcel that was recently sold to an adjoining property owner and an access
easement was not established.
3. The existing building’s location and parking lot orientation are practical difficulties
   that do not allow a new driveway on the subject property to meet the 40-foot
   separation standard from the existing driveway.
4. Labore Industrial Court is a cul-de-sac serving only five industrial properties and has
   low traffic volumes, which mitigates any potential traffic safety issues resulting from
   the location of the proposed driveway access.
5. The proposed driveway establishes direct access to the subject property in close
   proximity to the former access and will not alter the essential character of the area.
Subject to the following conditions:

1. A zoning permit shall be submitted prior to commencement of any construction activities on the subject property, to be reviewed/approved administratively.
2. The driveway apron shall be constructed of concrete, including curb and gutter.
3. Bituminous removal shall be at least two-feet-wide, using proper saw-cutting.
4. The driveway shall be constructed in compliance with the applicable code standards, to be reviewed/approved administratively as part of the zoning permit.
5. The property owner shall re-plant any vegetation removed to construct the driveway, to be reviewed/approved administratively.

Chairperson Cordes said should members of the public wish to speak but were unable to access the website that an opportunity would be provided at an upcoming City Council meeting or at a reconvened Planning Commission meeting if necessary.

Commissioner Jokinen’s virtual connection failed and it was noted for the record that Alternates Moynagh or Dresen would vote in his absence.

Ayes – 7  Nays – 0

The motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS
None.

OLD BUSINESS
None.

REPORTS

A. Council Liaison
Council Liaison Youker had nothing new to report.

B. Planning Commissioners
None.

C. Staff
Planning/Community Development Director Wall reported that the new Chief Building Official would begin work on June 1 and explained how the City had utilized a private contractor and help from White Bear Lake and White Bear Township staff during the interim. He asked whether Planning Commission meetings would continue to be virtual and the potential to hold meetings earlier and provide adequate notice for any public who wish to physically attend the meetings, adding next month’s meeting would include consideration of a site plan application for an office-warehouse building on Labore Road.
Discussion was held on potential meeting time changes and consensus was to continue holding Planning Commission meetings at 7:00 p.m.

Commissioner Jokinen returned to the meeting at 7:33 p.m.

Planning/Community Development Director Wall updated the Commission noting that the At Home Apartment project was moving forward, and Mr. Frattalone continues to pursue his development through work with the watershed district, and that the Luther Cadillac project was currently delayed indefinitely.

Commissioner Caillier asked about the garage condo project off of McMenemy. Planning/Community Development Director Wall said staff have no development agreement yet so the project is not moving forward at this time, adding it may have been either a speculative project and likely delayed or even abandoned.

Commissioner Dresen asked if the City was considering returning to in-person meetings now that Governor Walz was beginning to open up the State from the pandemic. Wall said staff are waiting to decide and said it would be based on the comfort level of Planning Commissioners and the ability to conduct safe public meetings in person but felt if those want to continue virtual meetings that would be fine.

Commissioner Cordes encouraged the public who had questions or concerns regarding the meeting process to contact Wall.

Wall shared a resolution passed by the City Council that provides exemptions for local bars/restaurants to establish patio spaces in off-street parking lots based on rules and compliance that do not cause public safety concerns. He said they hoped restaurants would maximize this option and that all permits will be done administratively, as time is of the essence to allow maximum flexibility. He noted that maximum flexibility is granted but must still retain public safety on a temporary basis only to expanding seating capacity because of the pandemic and the Governor’s orders that allowed the opening of restaurants for outdoor patio use only.

NEXT MEETING

The next Planning Commission meeting will be held on June 23, 2020.

ADJOURN MEETING

Upon motion by Commissioner Jokinen, seconded by Commissioner Moynagh, the meeting was adjourned at Bigelbach at 7:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Sorensen
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.