

City of Excelsior
Hennepin County, Minnesota

Minutes
Planning Commission

Monday, June 22, 2020

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Wallace called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Wallace, DiLorenzo, Hersman, Holste, Noll, Craig, Harrison

Commissioners Absent: None

Also Present: City Planner Becker and City Attorney Staunton

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) Planning Commission Meeting of June 10, 2020

Motion by DiLorenzo, seconded by Harrison to continue this item to the July 27, 2020 Planning Commission meeting. Motion carried 7-0.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

a) 511 Second Street Design Standards Amendment (PC No. 20-2)

Becker presented the report. Harrison asked if the building footprint was increased with the Design Standards Amendment that was approved back in 2017, and it was believed that the footprint was not increased but the commercial space had been reduced and the residential space increased. She also asked if the driveway would still be on the side of the building as was in the previous proposal, and Becker said that it would not be. Hersman asked about the amount of parking space on the first level and amount of black panel. Tim Brown, Schaeffco Inc., applicant, presented responses to findings for denial. He asked for clarification from City Attorney Staunton regarding definition of traditional building and how the Comprehensive Plan can be used when not implemented in ordinances or the Design Standards Manual. Staunton replied that what is in the Design Standards is

what is intended to be done within the Comprehensive Plan, and it is difficult to deny based on the Comprehensive Plan alone. The definition of traditional buildings was discussed, and it was felt that the gas station and post office did not fit into the definition of traditional building. Hersman wanted to understand how the greenspace went from 12% to 22% when the size of building has almost doubled. Noll felt that the materials that were approved originally were fully approved, and the Planning Commission was looking more at the issue of the size and scale of the Design Standards Review. Wallace felt that it does not matter whether it is an amendment or new Design Standards Review, and that the Planning Commission can comment on the materials regardless if the materials had previously been approved. Holste asked about the requirement of the easement vacation and if the previous proposal would have required an easement vacation. Becker confirmed that it would have.

Wallace opened the public hearing.

No one from the public spoke.

Wallace closed the public hearing.

Noll said that he has a strong consideration for what it takes to make the property viable. He believes there must be some middle ground between what was approved and what is being proposed. He believes that it would be nice to have this lot developed.

The Planning Commission went over the staff-prepared findings for denial. They did not have any concerns with vacating the easement as part of the proposal. The Comprehensive Plan provisions were discussed, and Craig did not feel that taking up most of the bottom level with parking space would be amenable to being pedestrian friendly. Wallace was concerned that the provided turnaround area within the parking lot would likely not be wide enough for users to back out onto Second Street, and he was particularly concerned with this because of the amount of pedestrian traffic on this street. The tree preservation and landscaping were discussed. Noll asked how the landscaping requirements would be met when there is not a required setback within this zoning district. Wallace explained that even though developers have the option of zero setback in some parts of the development, they have to choose where to put the landscaping requirements and cannot maximize out the entire property with building area. Holste asked where the existing trees would be transplanted to. Harrison was concerned with the reduction of trees on the property, and Holste was in agreement. Design Standards were discussed. Craig appreciated that the applicant

provided a rendering of the building with brick and believes that the rendering was quite dark and appreciates the light color. She was concerned with the amount of black at the back of the building. Hersman feels that the back would be ominous. DiLorenzo feels that this area of the city is difficult, as the surrounding buildings are all very different. Harrison felt that the design may be appropriate but not when it doubled in size. Wallace does not feel that it is similar enough in size and scale to the properties immediately adjacent to the subject property. DiLorenzo believes that the entire makeup of the building changes because of the use. Harrison doesn't have an issue with the height but has an issue with the width of the building.

Motion by Craig, seconded by DiLorenzo, to recommend denial based on the findings outlined in the staff report based on the proposed mass and scale. Wallace wanted to note that he was more comfortable with the landscaping with the amended proposal. Motion carried 7-0. Harrison also wanted to note that she was recommending denial because the design did not nod to the lake or historic value of the City.

b) The Villas at Excelsior Village Planned Unit Development Amendment (PC No. 20-3)

Becker presented the report. Hersman asked if there was a landscaping plan approved in lieu of the sidewalk that the applicant was proposing to replace, and Becker said that no amended landscape plans have been approved. Harrison asked if the sidewalk was important to the previous Council and how the previously proposed gazebo was approved. It was not thought that this sidewalk was of particular importance to the Council, and it wasn't known how the gazebo was approved. Bill Stoddard, applicant, spoke regarding the request.

Wallace opened the public hearing.

Brian Zais, 311 George Street, said that the gazebo potentially was eliminated due to an increase in parking. He is in support of moving the lighting to the newly proposed location. He would prefer that the light be moved to the proposed south location and is in favor of reducing the amount of light.

Todd McNabb, 10 Village Lane, was also in support of the proposals being requested. He believes that the proposals would help address a safety and hardcover issue and is in support.

Motion by Hersman, seconded by DiLorenzo, to approve the proposed amendment as requested. Holste wanted to ensure that all other site amenities would be installed per the approved plans.

DiLorenzo also wanted to make it a condition of approval that an amended landscaping plan be approved in the area where the gazebo and sidewalk were formerly going to be installed. Harrison didn't want the light levels to be too low. She also wanted to ensure that the amount of landscaping installed was similar in value to the sidewalk and gazebo. She was fine with the plan being presented to Council instead of going back to the Planning Commission. Motion carried 7-0.

c) 278 West Lake Street Variances (PC No. 20-4)

Becker presented the report. Kathryn Alexander, applicant, explained that the homeowners were thinking of remodeling the home, but the existing home was out of compliance and it was felt that it would be necessary to build a new home.

Wallace opened the public hearing.

Peter Hartwich, 186 George Street, doesn't understand why the home cannot be remodeled and likes the idea of incentives for teardowns.

Wallace closed the public hearing.

Craig noted that the applicant is increasing the building height even though it is decreasing in building footprint. Noll asked what options were explored in providing an eight-foot by two-foot recession or projection, and Alexander said that they preferred to present as is and felt that the deck provided sufficient interest and that they were trying to keep the footprint as small as possible. Noll believes that the back is broken up sufficiently. Harrison disagrees and believes that the back could be broken up more, namely in the area where the variance is being requested.

Motion by Harrison to approve the variance request from the recession requirement for garage with street facing garage doors and deny the request for a variance from the maximum wall plane length requirement. Seconded by DiLorenzo. Motion carried 7-0.

d) 221 Third Street Variances (PC No. 20-5)

Becker presented the report. Harrison wanted to know what sort of precedent would be set if a variance were granted to approve an expansion of a nonconformity. Staunton felt that the Planning

Commission should focus on if there is something unique about the property that would necessitate a variance request.

Dale Kurschner, applicant, explained the reasoning behind his proposal. Craig had asked if the applicant considered a remodel and addition without the breezeway. Kurschner explained that an attached garage would be preferred, and the proposal would make the backyard more usable, and it was not a preference to tear down the detached garage and build an attached garage.

Wallace opened the public hearing.

Hartwich liked that the proposal is a renovation and not a teardown.

Zais was in support of the proposal, as sometimes older homes necessitate variances.

Wallace closed the public hearing.

DiLorenzo asked how conversations with neighbors regarding this project have gone. Kurschner replied that neighbors have been supportive. Holste was supportive of remodeling an existing home but was hesitant in recommending approval and setting a precedent with converting a detached garage to an attached garage. Harrison appreciates that the proposed addition is only one story, it keeps the housing stock, the neighbors were consulted, impervious surface was reduced, two trees are saved, the current height is less than what is allowed, that a fence is being removed, and that green and blue space is being preserved in the middle of the lot.

Motion by DiLorenzo, seconded by Harrison, to approve the requested variances. Motion carried 6-1 with Wallace dissenting, as he was concerned about the precedent. He agrees with everything the applicant has said regarding this type of attached garage being of less mass and scale than a code compliant attached garage might be, and if the City Council and the Planning Commission are interested in exploring zoning code changes that allow these type of single story breezeway connections to existing detached garages for all lots in Excelsior, he would certainly be willing to review that possibility, but there are no circumstances unique to this property that warrant the granting of the rear yard setback variance request.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Minutes

Planning Commission

June 22, 2020

Page 6 of 6

a) Discussion Regarding Scheduling of Residential Review Board (RRB), Good Neighbor Guidelines (GNG) and Floor Area Ratio Discussion (FAR)

The Planning Commission was open to scheduling a special meeting to go over the Council's further direction on what areas of the RRB, GNG and FAR they would like the Planning Commission to focus on.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Harrison, seconded by Craig, to adjourn at 10:39 pm. Motion carried 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Becker
Planning Director

DRAFT