

City of Excelsior  
Hennepin County, Minnesota

Minutes  
Planning Commission

Tuesday, July 7, 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 Hersman, seconded by DiLorenzo to approve the meeting minutes of June 10, 2020 as amended. Motion carried 7-0.

b) Planning Commission Meeting of June 22, 2020

Motion by Harrison, seconded by Holste to approve the meeting minutes of June 22, 2020 as amended. Motion carried 7-0.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

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

Becker presented the report. Holste asked why the Council thought that Floor Area Ratio (FAR) would encourage teardowns. Noll felt that proposing that FAR being a trigger for review would negate the work that was put into developing the Good Neighbor Guidelines (GNG). He does not

believe that this trigger for review would regulate setbacks, orientation or preserving blue and green space. Harrison had originally felt that the FAR trigger would be appropriate, but she now feels that the original proposal of change in volume or orientation is more appropriate as a test. Wallace felt that granting a FAR variance would be a legal struggle, and anyone that was purchasing a home that wanted to add on, and the home didn't meet FAR would have a tough time going through with the sale. He believes it is important that the FAR number is low enough to feel comfortable with any home that does not meet this standard. Craig wanted to make sure that the large lots are looked at thoroughly. Staunton said that a variance could be granted if the ordinance stated that the GNG would help determine if the requested variance was a reasonable use of the property. DiLorenzo and Harrison were in favor of FAR as a trigger. Hersman saw value in both. Noll also saw value in both but would like to see FAR as a separate analytic tool and for the triggers to be retained. Craig would be okay with FAR as the trigger if the numbers were different. Holste is in favor of using FAR as a trigger. She also wanted to know if the closeness of the house and how tall it is in relation to an existing structure should also trigger a review. The Planning Commission took a vote on FAR as a trigger. The vote was 6-1 with Noll as the dissenting vote because it exempts too many homes as having to go conform with the GNG. Craig later changed her vote to dissenting after the discussion regarding FAR numbers, as she believes that the FAR for larger lots should be higher, and so the vote was ultimately 5-2.

The Planning Commission discussed having a subcommittee with three Planning Commission members, and Wallace was more in favor of having a sketch plan review option. Craig was hesitant with a sketch plan for fear that it wouldn't provide enough information for the Planning Commission to give proper feedback. All were in favor of a sketch plan review as opposed to a subcommittee.

In general, the Planning Commission was in favor of a City Architect.

GNG were discussed. DiLorenzo was concerned that Guideline #4 was limiting in terms of architectural style. The Planning Commission felt that the language regarding locating a primary structure should be eliminated. Requiring preservation of tree canopy was discussed, and there was concern that it conflicted with the code. Staunton suggested adding language that would point out that exceeding these standards would be given special consideration. They wanted to remove the replace "avoid interruption" with "minimize" and replace "view corridors" with "view." They wanted to say special consideration will be given to appropriate roof lines to amend Guideline #4.

Craig wanted the FAR to be larger for larger lots to be 0.37 and so wanted to change her vote for

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FAR being the trigger. Harrison wanted to bring up the fact that only the applicant can appeal.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Noll, seconded by Hersman, to adjourn at 9:14 pm. Motion carried 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Becker  
Planning Director

DRAFT