

**CITY OF ISANTI
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 12, 2013**

1. Meeting Opening.

A. Call to Order.

Stevens called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Stevens stated that the Planning Commission is a recommending body to the City Council. Stevens stated that the motions on items that will take place this evening, will be reviewed and recommended by the commission for approval or denial. Stevens stated that these are recommendations to the City Council; and the City Council will make the final ruling on those items. Stevens stated that as we discuss the items this evening, you must step up to the podium to speak on these issues. Stevens stated that when an individual does so, they do need to state their name and address for the record. Stevens requested that each member of the Commission introduce themselves.

Each of the Planning Commission members stated their name.

B. Pledge of Allegiance.

Everyone rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Roll Call.

Members Present: Kristi Gordon, Sue Larson, Cindy Lind-Livingston, Steve Lundeen, Michael Streiff III, and Sean Stevens.

Members Absent: Dave Englund (gave prior notice).

Staff Present: Lisa Wilson, Planning and Parks Director.

D. Agenda Modifications.

Wilson stated that she had none.

2. Approval of Minutes from January 8, 2013 Planning Commission Meeting.

Stevens questioned if there were any comments or changes on the minutes.

Motion by Larson, second by Lind-Livingston to approve the January 8th, 2013 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes. Motion was unanimously approved.

5. Public Hearings.

A. Request from David Noe, on behalf of PDL Properties LLC for a Variance to decrease the number of required off-street parking spaces from six (6) to three (3) for the property located at 102 Dahlin Avenue NE.

Stevens questioned if there was anyone in the audience present to represent this item.

David Noe, 12657 Zilla Street, Coon Rapids, MN was present for the item.

Stevens opened the public hearing at 7:05 p.m. Stevens requested that Mrs. Wilson provide some background on the item.

Wilson presented the information contained within the staff memo. Wilson stated that the Planning Commission did need to make findings for each of the five variance requirements that are located page 2 of the staff memo. Wilson stated that staff was looking for a recommendation on this item, which would carry forth to the City Council at their next meeting.

Stevens questioned if there are issues or complaints regarding parking on the site.

Noe stated that there were none that he is aware of. Noe stated that there is a long board/skate board shop located in the building. Noe stated that most of the patrons to this particular store are coming by skateboard or by walking. Noe stated that is their core buyers. Noe stated that there are three spots in the back of the lot. Noe stated that the original building was built in 1900, he was unsure when the garage addition was built. Noe stated that there is a small space between the main structure and the garage, but there are no other areas in which parking could be placed on the lot.

Stevens questioned where employees are being guided to go.

Noe stated that there is parking along the street both on Main St and Dahlin Ave.

Stevens stated that the parking requirements are there for the ease of the customer. Stevens stated that employees should be encouraged to leave areas closer to the building available for the customers. Stevens questioned if he had read the items before them and if he had comments/questions.

Noe stated that he did not understand #4 with the solar panels.

Wilson stated that solar panels are considered a practical difficulty, but there are others that would apply.

Larson questioned if there were other areas in the building that additional uses could be moving into.

Noe stated no.

Lundeen stated that he is aware of some issues with the back storage area.

Noe stated that he was informed by the landlord that the group that was using the area would be vacating the unit within the next week to 10 days. Noe stated that no one would be using that back area for now. Noe stated that they are talking and working with the Building Official on their options and some upgrades for the area, to include: sheet rock, electrical, and bigger doors. Noe stated that the intent would be to make the area more presentable and functional for storage.

Stevens questioned if anyone on the Commission had anything further. Stevens questioned if the petitioner or audience had comments or questions.

No additional items were presented.

Stevens stated that the group needs to review the variance criteria numbers 1 through 5. Stevens stated that he would make a motion to approve the variance as requested.

Lundeen stated that there are other businesses in the downtown where parking is very limited and the use of on-street parking is used heavily.

Stevens read through the variance criteria and questioned if the Planning Commission agreed that the request meet all of the items.

Planning Commission members agreed.

Motion by Stevens, second by Lundeen to approve the Variance request to decrease the number of required off-street parking spaces from six (6) spaces to three (3) spaces for the property located at 102 Dahlin Avenue NE based upon the findings of fact as presented, noting that the variance meets all of the criteria noted. Motion was unanimously approved.

B. Request from Todd Praske, on behalf of Marla Properties LLC for a Conditional Use Permit to allow for Outdoor Storage on the property located at 425 E Dual Blvd NE.
Stevens questioned if anyone was present to represent the item.

Todd Praske, 14729 Helium St Ramsey, MN and Pete Greuel, 12950 Overlook Rd, Dayton, MN were both present for the item.

Wilson presented the information in the staff memo and presented the conditions for approval that the Planning Review Committee had provided.

Stevens opened the public hearing at 7:16 p.m. Stevens questioned if they have reviewed the details and comments from the Planning Review Committee. Stevens questioned if they had any questions comments or concerns. Stevens questioned as far as the screening goes, what would be the plan to screen the chain-link fence.

Praske stated that they had discussed fabric and aluminum slats. Praske stated that they did want to discuss that with the Commission and see if they had a recommendation.

Stevens stated that in the past he has seen the ones that have the one by two inch wide slates that are weaved between the links. Stevens stated that he has not heard any issues. Stevens questioned the crushed concrete. Stevens questioned if that was similar to class 5.

Greuel stated that it is recycled concrete and is similar to class five. Greuel stated that it is a step up from Class 5.

Lundeen stated that it gets pretty hard once it has been packed in.

Larson stated that when they are changing the land, they want to consider run-off. Larson questioned how they would address drainage now that the area would have concrete or be covered other than with grass.

Greuel stated that he understood they were required to bring the driveway up to code with concrete or bituminous. Greuel stated that they had not considered any run off at this point.

Lundeen questioned what would be stored in the area. Lundeen questioned if there would be any chemicals, etc.

Greuel stated that they have a grant from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to build two farm scale production units. Greuel stated that they are building these units within the storage containers that are on-site. Greuel stated that one is pulled into the building during construction, because it is warmer; and the second is left outside for the time being. Greuel stated that both would be placed in the fenced area, but both would be leaving temporarily throughout the summer as they will be taken out to farms so that those individuals can see the process.

Lundeen stated that he was just concerned about contamination and things leaking into the soil on the site.

Greuel stated that it is just the two containers and the structure for cleaning/separating seed.

Stevens questioned if it was granular only; and there were no liquid byproducts.

Greuel stated that the seeds are camellia and pennycress which are oil seed crops. Greuel stated that they can be sold and used as cattle feed. Greuel stated that these seeds can be pressed to obtain the oil, which can then be converted to biodiesel fuel.

Stevens stated that it sounds like an interesting process. Stevens questioned if the proximity to the current biodiesel facility helpful.

Greuel explained that these are separate companies but under common ownership.

Lundeen questioned the 6 foot tall fence and the 8 foot tall trailer. Lundeen questioned if there were an issue in the ordinance with that difference.

Wilson stated no. Wilson stated that this has been a topic of discussion when these types of items were defined as outdoor storage. Wilson stated that both the Planning Commission and City Council acknowledged that the height of some vehicles would exceed this, but the majority of the area would be covered.

Stevens stated that he had questions with regards to the landscaping. Stevens questioned if there were a species type or quantity required. Stevens questioned pine trees.

Wilson stated that when planting in the area, staff was going to need to work with the property owner to find something that would not interfere with the overhead wires. Wilson stated that given that the property bordering the site is commercial, the landscaping would provide a buffer between the differing uses.

Stevens stated that it would mainly be more ornamental.

Wilson stated yes.

Greuel stated that they would put some shrubs or arborvitae in the area.

Stevens closed the hearing at 7:23 p.m.

Motion by Lundeen, second by Larson to recommend approval of the conditional use permit to allow for outdoor storage on the property at 425 E Dual Blvd NE with staff's conditions and that fabric is not used on the chain-link fence, but rather a more heavy slat be used. Motion was unanimously approved.

C. Request from Robert Doohen, on behalf of First Fruits Land Development LLC for an Amendment to the Villages on the Rum Third Addition, Phase 3 Planned Unit Development to reduce the side yard setbacks from ten (10) feet to five (5) feet for the garage.

Josh Robinson (J Robinson Construction), 309 Elm St SW, was present for Robert Doohen who was unable to attend the meeting.

Stevens requested that City staff provide some background information. Stevens opened the public hearing at 7:25 p.m.

Wilson presented the information within the staff memo and the conditions for the approval.

Stevens questioned if the maps provided were the current maps for the projects or proposed.

Robinson stated that all of the plat maps and plans are for the existing development. Robinson stated that nothing will change with the lot lines themselves. Robinson stated that the size of structure that will be placed will change.

Stevens questioned if this section of Villages on the Rum was subject to the cove line amendment that the group had reviewed last month.

Wilson stated yes.

Stevens stated that the cove lines no longer exist.

Wilson stated that is correct, the front yard setback is 30 feet.

Stevens questioned if the petitioner had any problems or concerns with anything in the staff memo.

Robinson stated he did not.

Stevens questioned if this was development that was planning to take place within the upcoming year.

Robinson stated that he would like to start a model home next month, if the frost cooperates. Robinson stated that based upon the market, it will dictate how quick they are built. Robinson stated that the trends indicate that 6-12 homes could be built/absorbed a year, so they hope in three to five years the project will be complete.

Larson questioned if they are looking at potentially making sure that two garages are not located immediately adjacent to one another. Larson questioned if emergency vehicles could get through.

Robinson stated that most neighborhoods have back to back garages, as a bigger green area is located on the other side of the home. Robinson stated that there would still be adequate space for vehicles to get through. Robinson stated that they are going to try to keep as much open space between as possible. Robinson stated that not every home will have a three car garage. Robinson stated that they will be offered that way, but it would be up to the homeowner if they wanted the third stall. Robinson stated that the biggest problem is with a 960 square foot foundation, most plans for this size home have a width for the home at around the 38-40 feet. Robinson stated that if you add the ten foot garage on there, you are now wider than would most of these lots can handle. Robinson stated that they are not going to push it to the five feet, but would like the option if needed. Robinson stated that lots on the cul-de-sac may be tighter. Robinson explained how not every house down the line will have only 10 feet between the garages.

Lundeen stated that he thinks the extra garage stall is a good idea.

Robinson stated that the third stall allows for more storage area and allows a larger driveway for the parking of vehicles. Robinson stated that homeowners may add the shed that does not always turn out to be the most appealing building, so here they are being given a head start with some extra space.

Larson stated that there would be space from some toys.

Stevens closed the hearing at 7:32 p.m.

Lundeen stated that he had spoken about this to someone else and he does not want this to be a precedent set for other developments. Lundeen stated that the density within this area seems to allow for this type of development. Lundeen stated that with the lots being the size that they are, it makes sense. Lundeen stated that he did not want to see someone coming from the east side of 65 where there are larger lots; and question why this petitioner could do it, but they cannot. Lundeen stated that it is the density of the population and lots in this area that makes this work. Lundeen stated that he does not want to set a precedent. Lundeen stated that there are other councilmembers that do not want things sardined into an area. Lundeen stated that he does not like a lot of vehicles parked in the driveway. Lundeen stated that if things are put away, then there are no complaints. Lundeen stated that the petitioner bought those lots and are going to do something great in town, but we are only doing this based upon the density of the area. Lundeen stated that the Council has stated that they want to keep things even, and not every builder is going to be able to do this. Lundeen stated that the Council has emphasized setting standards and precedence that we continue to follow. Lundeen stated that this is a smaller house, on smaller lots; and where he lives there are bigger lots and larger homes.

Larson stated that a planned unit development is handled differently, and requirements are different. Larson stated that the size and shape of the lots in this area has always been a concern.

Robinson stated that in his neighborhood, all of the lots are 75 feet in width. Robinson stated that if they had something like that here, they would be able to work with it. Robinson stated that he would not have developed this property in the manner that it has been. Robinson stated that the extra room could have been given on these lots to avoid this situation.

Lundeen stated that the sewer and water are already stubbed in to these lots. Lundeen stated that to go back and remove lots, then the City loses out on the connection fees that were originally anticipated in the area. Lundeen stated that the infrastructure is already there to support this number of units.

Larson stated that this will make the house more sellable. Larson stated that if this area could be developed, it would be wonderful. Larson stated that the 960 is a livable space and the third space would add value for the family.

Robinson stated that the current houses were designed differently to accommodate the lot. Robinson stated that with this setback, they will be able to construct a standard traditional looking home with more curb appeal. Robinson stated that new construction has been dead in Isanti. Robinson stated that there is a need for this size and price point of home in the community.

Stevens stated that this area of Villages on the Rum there have always been of concern due to the lot size and configurations. Stevens stated that it is nice to see that this area has some options. Stevens stated that if you look at the four homes in that area currently, there are a lot of cars on the street.

Robinson stated that there should be minimal parking on the street near the cul-de-sac, given that the driveways will be closer together. Robinson stated that the homes will be setback further in this area and the driveways will be longer, making individuals more able to park on the driveways.

Stevens stated that precedence is a tough thing, but in this circumstance, this may be the most prudent thing to do. Stevens stated that we can still maintain emergency vehicle access and hopefully will make those lots more sellable and livable.

Motion by Lundeen, second by Larson to recommend approval of the proposed amendment to reduce the interior side yard setback from ten (10) feet to five (5) feet for an attached garage with the stipulation that this is being approved due to the existing platted density within this phase of the Villages on the Rum Planned Unit Development. Motion was unanimously approved.

4. Other Business.

A. Review of Section 16 Signs of the Zoning Ordinance.

Stevens questioned if this was informational only.

Wilson stated that the Planning Commission would be getting this information back until we start to make some decisions regarding the changes. Wilson stated that the group had requested some surrounding communities' ordinances be provided. Wilson stated that that information is included. Wilson stated that there was also further discussion surrounding the chamber's

involvement in the process. Wilson stated that staff is looking for direction from the commission on how they would like to proceed with this item.

Stevens stated that they did discuss the sub-committee option, but the group agreed that this approach was not necessary. Stevens questioned if staff had a conversation with the chamber, about soliciting feedback.

Wilson stated that a formal conversation has not been had; however, she believes they are aware that this is coming through the Planning Commission.

Stevens stated that he would like to get something hammered through with their blessing and support. Stevens stated that signage is important for businesses. Stevens stated that County Rd 5 is just littered with signs.

Larson stated that it does look bad and the chamber is aware of it. Larson stated that she would think the chamber would like for the area to look better. Larson stated that she does not like all of the signs out there; and many are supposed to be temporary. Larson stated that we would have a much more welcoming County Rd, if the area was cleaned up. Larson stated that the economy is starting to come back; and the city did not want to drive people out of business. Larson stated that this conversation took place a few years ago; and now we are back to square one, only the situation is worse.

Lundeen stated that sign pollution is worse than garbage pollution. Lundeen stated that one thought is to have the community billboard where people could rent space. Lundeen stated that we need to be business friendly, but we have one of the more liberal sign ordinances.

Stevens stated that maybe not intentionally so, but temporary can be a hard concept to grasp.

Lundeen read the definition of temporary. Lundeen stated that these signs should be for a limited time. Lundeen stated that there are some businesses that have their signs placed for a long time. Lundeen stated that permanent signs would be better. Lundeen stated that there are some that are ugly after about two weeks. Lundeen stated that it gets their message across, but they should be temporary. Lundeen stated that this is a touchy topic. Lundeen stated that the pull behind neon signs is bothersome and the question should be raised as to how long a special is going to last, 6 months, because at that point you should get a permanent sign. Lundeen stated that someone with the Chamber should be here for the discussion. Lundeen stated that we do not want to be unfriendly towards businesses, but we need support from the chamber.

Larson stated that we thought we had it last time, but we are back to it being worse than what it was. Larson stated that they are going to protect their own, but hopefully, they can look at the corridor and come to the realization that something needs to be done.

Lundeen stated that if you have a business that puts out the permanent sign, they put the money into that sign. Lundeen stated that if we had an electronic sign, we could rent space, but the costs are huge (\$65,000 to \$75,000). Lundeen stated that the only thing on the city billboard now is meeting dates/times. Lundeen stated that it is not utilized to its full potential.

Larson stated that the main focus for that sign was getting people to Main St.

Lundeen stated that an electronic billboard would have been helpful.

Larson stated that we need to be really careful with our businesses, as they have not recovered from the economy.

Stevens stated that even businesses will tell you that you can rent one of those pull behind neon signs and you drag it out for a week, then it is eye catching. Stevens stated that if you leave it out all year, no one looks anymore because it is part of the landscape. Stevens stated that we can create a business friendly climate, while cleaning up the town.

Larson stated that people do drive through Isanti; and she hears comments about County Rd 5. Larson stated that these people live elsewhere or work elsewhere; and they make comments about how big of a mess the corridor is.

Stevens stated that the Commission would like to bring the business community into the discussions. Stevens stated that staff needs to reach out to the Chamber.

Wilson stated that she will contact Tracy at the Chamber and will send along the same information that the Planning Commission receives along with an invitation for them to join the discussion.

Lundeen stated that this was brought to his attention through potential signage for the spring fling. Lundeen stated that he could urge Tracy and Jan to show up at the next meeting as well. Lundeen stated that it will not be resolved in one or two nights, but we can meet mid-way.

Stevens stated that we can try to.

Streiff stated that the fee could be reduced for having the sign out for shorter durations.

Lundeen questioned if there is a permit fee for temporary signs.

Wilson stated that the fee is \$50 to \$75 for the whole year.

Lundeen stated that it is no longer temporary then. Lundeen stated that they should be charged \$50 for two months and if it is more than that it is \$350.

Wilson stated that other communities structure their fees differently, and the costs can become great.

Lind-Livingston stated that she reads the signs all the time. Lind-Livingston stated that she likes the Princeton example. Lind-Livingston stated that what they have is very reasonable. Lind-Livingston stated that the City could charge less if the amount of days that the signs are up is less.

Stevens stated that he thinks that is pretty close to where we may end up. Stevens stated that he thinks about the Minnco Car Show; and that to him is the essence of a temporary sign. Stevens stated that having a sign out there all year does not make sense.

Streiff stated that they could pay up front each year; and the days it is up are chosen by the owner. Streiff stated that many communities have strict guidelines, especially when compared to Isanti. Streiff stated that their banks in Stillwater get calls constantly for sign violations from the City.

Lundeen questioned who lives there.

Stevens stated that the folks that moved to Isanti are generally people that are sleeping here and working in the cities. Stevens stated that when he moved to town, the appeal was the river, recreation and parks for kids. Stevens stated that people living here are interested in those things; and they are not looking for a glut of signage. Stevens stated that people want to feel like they do not live in the big city. Stevens stated that there is middle ground and we can find it. Stevens stated that he would like the businesses to have a voice at the table.

5. Discussion Items.

A. Zoning Ordinance Updates.

Stevens stated that there were updates for the big zoning book in the packet. Stevens questioned if City staff had anything further for the agenda.

Wilson stated that she did not.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Lundeen, second by Larson to adjourn the February 12th, 2013 meeting of the Planning Commission. Motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Dated at Isanti, Minnesota this 12th day of March 2013.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa M. Wilson, AICP
Planning and Parks Director