

**CITY OF ISANTI
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 10, 2015**

1. Meeting Opening.

A. Call to Order.

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

B. Pledge of Allegiance.

Everyone rose for the pledge of allegiance.

C. Roll Call.

Members Present: Cindy Lind-Livingston, Steve Lundeen, Jeff Duncan, Wayne Traver and Paul Bergley.

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Community Development Director Roxanne Achman

Others Present: Karl Lee of ICS Consulting, Inc., Mark Eisenbacher of Cambridge Isanti Public Schools, and Greg Buchal of Larson Engineering, Inc.

D. Agenda Modifications.

Achman stated there were none.

2. Organization of Advisory Bodies as per the City Code of Ordinances Chapter

A. Election of Planning Commission Chair

Bergley called for nominations for Planning Commission Chair.

Traver nominated Duncan. Lundeen seconded the nomination.

Duncan accepted the nomination. The motion was passed with unanimous approval.

Duncan stepped forward as the new Planning Commission Chair to lead the remainder of the meeting.

3. Approval of Minutes from February 10, 2015 Planning Commission Meeting.

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

Motion by Lundeen second by Bergley to approve the February 10th, 2015 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes. Motion was unanimously approved.

4. Public Hearings.

A. Request from the Cambridge-Isanti School District for Site Plan approval of Parking Lot Improvements at the Isanti Primary School, located at 301 Heritage Blvd NW, Isanti County, Isanti, Minnesota.

Duncan read the item into the minutes.

Achman presented the staff memo indicating that ICS Consulting, Inc. had prepared a response for the Planning Commission and that representatives were in the audience to speak on the matter.

Duncan opened the public hearing.

Karl Lee with ICS Consulting, Greg Buchal with Larson Engineering and Mark Eisenbacher, the Buildings and Grounds Director for the Cambridge Isanti School District, approached the podium and introduced themselves.

Lee explained that the plan is to shift the parking area from being adjacent to the school, to being adjacent to the street. Another change will be shifting the turn lane into the parking lot further to the north to eliminate the illegal turns into the parking lot, which should help alleviate some traffic build up. The goal is to allow parents to safely drop their kids off along the sidewalk, rather than dropping them off behind cars that are backing up. Parents that wish to escort their kids into the building can park in the designate spots. There will be a small expansion to the east side of the lot that will allow for additional parking for early childhood parents that come in at different times of the day with smaller children.

Buchal added that the school plans to send information out to the parents on the changes that are being made and what's expected of them.

Lind-Livingston asked if parents parking on the south side would be directed to the crosswalk or if they would be allowed to walk between moving cars to get to the sidewalk and school.

Buchal stated that traffic should be moving fairly slow; similar to traffic in front of a shopping center.

Lind-Livingston reiterated her question that parents can park and cross anywhere? There won't be something directing them to the crosswalk?

Buchal stated there is not an avenue to direct them to the crosswalk.

Lind-Livingston stated she was worried about parents parking and sending their kids in to school across traffic alone.

Buchal noted that in speaking with the school and parents, if they plan to send their kids in without accompanying them, then they will likely pull up to the sidewalk to drop them off, not park and let the kids out.

Eisenbacher indicated that as part of the back-to-school preparation, there will need to be some education on dropping your kids off.

Bergley asked if the parking spots were more for visitor during the day.

Eisenbacher indicated that they were.

Duncan closed the public hearing.

Motion by Lundeen second by Bergley to recommend approval, based on the Findings of Fact and Conclusions, of the request from the Cambridge-Isanti School District for Site Plan approval of Parking Lot Improvements at the Isanti Primary School, located at 301 Heritage Blvd NW, Isanti County, Isanti, Minnesota. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Request from the City of Isanti to Rezone Parcel No. 16.095.0500, legally described as Outlot D, Rum River Meadows, and Parcel 16.106.0110, legally described as Outlot A, Villages on the Rum Fifth Addition, Isanti County, Isanti, Minnesota, for park and open space uses.

Duncan read the item into the minutes.

Achman indicated that there are two parcels that are requested to be rezoned. One is in the Villages on the Rum area, north of Heritage Boulevard; the other is in the Rum River Meadows area, south of Martin's Landing. Both parcels were tax forfeited property owned by the state. The City had the option of obtaining the parcels so long as they remained park and open space. What the City can do with these parcels is limited to what the DNR and State allows us to do. The State has the ability to take the property back from the City at any time if they feel we are not doing what we agreed to with the property. With that being said, the City is requesting to rezone the property to Park and Open Space since that was part of the agreement in obtaining the land. Any future plans for these parcels will be discussed at the Park, Recreation and Culture Board and brought before the City Council for action. Discussion on the future of these particular parcels will be further discussed at the next PRC meeting, which is to be held March 24th at 6:00pm.

Duncan opened the public hearing.

Duncan asked if the decision being made tonight was just to rezone it and then further discussion of the plans would go to the PRC Board.

Achman stated that is correct.

Aaron Zdon, 709 Bergman Ct, Chair of the PRC Board, approached the podium. Zdon stated the Villages on the Rum property is in his backyard. As far as plans, there are none at this time. It isn't park land yet so, plans have not been discussed. Ideas floated around when we found out the land may be acquired, that there would maybe be open space and walking trails, but no plans have been formed. We would go through the process where people could attend the meetings to discuss the project if they wanted to. As a property owner, I think it might be a good space for a walking trail on the west side of the property. Also, as a property owner, I don't want to see a trail going through my backyard.

Traver asked what the land was like behind Zdon's house.

Zdon indicated it depends on the year. One year it was a beautiful pond and the next year it was mud and the pond was gone. Typically it's a pretty decent pond, stagnant, but it does flow in from the Rum every spring and freshen up.

Traver asked about the area being mucky.

Zdon stated that most of the land is mucky, but there is a nice ridge on the west side that stays fairly dry. You're able to access it from Riverside Park. Zdon noted that he is speaking neither for nor against the use of the land as a park.

Achman indicated that there is a DNR Wild and Scenic easement that covers a majority of both of these parcels, which significantly impacts what can and cannot be done on this property.

Kraig Domogalla, 1113 Rum River Dr SW and 1102 Maplewood Ave SW, approached the podium. Domogalla stated that the parcel north of 1113 Rum River is the City owned access to the lot behind his house. He wanted to know what that lot will become - drive aisle, walkway, parking lot? Or doesn't the Commission know at this point?

Lundeen stated that we wouldn't know until it's discussed by the PRC Board.

Domogalla indicated he would wait until the PRC meeting to find out more information.

Jeremy Ferguson, 1101 Rum River Dr SW, asked if area residents would receive a notice in the mail of future meetings similar to the one they received for this rezoning.

Achman stated that typically mailings are sent out when there is a site plan up for review. Otherwise the agendas are posted online for the PRC. The PRC meeting is every fourth Tuesday of the month at 6:00pm. Discussion on this item will occur on March 24th.

Duncan closed the public hearing.

Motion by Bergley second by Lundeen to recommend approval, based on the Findings of Fact and Conclusions, of the request from the City of Isanti to Rezone Parcel No. 16.095.0500, legally described as Outlot D, Rum River Meadows, and Parcel 16.106.0110, legally described as Outlot A, Villages on the Rum Fifth Addition, Isanti County, Isanti, Minnesota, for park and open space uses.

Lundeen further stated that this at least gives the city a certain amount of control over the property.

Lind-Livingston asked if there was a cost to obtaining this land or if we just had to make a request.

Achman stated we had to apply to receive the land and state what we would use it for.

Lind-Livingston asked if there was a cost estimate for upkeep.

Achman stated she did not have an answer to that at this time. There is only so much research we can do on the property before it's in our possession and we know what we can do with it. Achman recommended speaking with Josi Wood, the Isanti Community Events Manager and Parks Coordinator.

Bergley asked if the costs to the City would depend on what the PRC Board decides for the park.

Achman stated yes, that would be correct.

Lind-Livingston asked if she heard correctly about the State being able to take the land back at any point.

Achman stated that what the City has is called a Conditional Use Deed on these parcels. So if the state determines that the land isn't being used the way it's supposed to be used, the State can take it back.

A woman in the audience asked who has the authority to patrol that area.

Duncan stated that the Isanti Police Department has that authority.

Discussion ensued about people being on that land doing things they shouldn't be doing, safety and mosquitos.

Motion carried with Traver voting nay.

5. Other Business.

A. Allowing landscape screening fences in residential districts

Duncan read the item into the minutes.

Achman presented the staff memo to the Commission.

Lind-Livingston stated she has seen Upright Junipers and they can get huge.

Achman indicated that without the proper care, all of the listed plants can get quite large.

Lind-Livingston questioned the maturity of the plant and how expensive they can get.

Achman stated that she had spoken with a landscaping company that is familiar with a 3'-4' arborvitae being sold at Menards for \$20-\$30 in the spring.

Lundeen mentioned that he had concerns with a property installing the plants and taking care of them, and then a new homeowner buys the property and doesn't care for the plants. Lundeen further stated he didn't think it was a good idea.

Lind-Livingston asked if property owners would still have to keep the plants setback like a fence.

Achman confirmed that setbacks and vision clearance area would be required.

Lind-Livingston stated she would prefer a planting screen over a privacy fence.

Discussion ensued about what the requirements for screening were.

Bergley asked if any of the Cities mentioned in the staff memo had issues with enforcement.

Achman stated she had pulled the information from those cities online codes, but had not actually spoken with staff from the cities. Achman further stated she would get in contact with some of the cities prior to the next meeting to find out if there were enforcement issues.

Duncan indicated that planting screens will have to be maintained just like fences are expected to be maintained.

Achman clarified that commercial and industrial lots with planting screens received notifications if they need to replace landscaping or trees on their lots. We would expect a similar response to residential properties in need of maintenance.

The Commission agreed that it provides a nice option for property owners.

Lundeen voiced his concern with the amount of work it will place on the CE/ZT.

Achman stated she didn't think there would be a ton of requests to use planting screens considering the first request only came in recently.

Lundeen stated that it wouldn't be cheap to install plantings.

Duncan disagreed and stated that it's not a bad price. It's a \$30 tree every five feet rather than a \$50 panel plus posts every eight feet.

Achman outlined the draft ordinance that was attached to the staff memo.

Lind-Livingston asked about how close a plant can be placed to a property line so that it doesn't impede into the neighbor's yard.

Achman stated that would be a good thing to place in the ordinance and further stated she would look into that language.

Planning Commission asked that more information be brought back to the Commission prior to moving forward with an ordinance change.

6. Discussion Items.

A. Planning Commissioner Membership Update.

Achman informed the Commission that the Planning Commission Chair would be one of the City's representatives on the Joint Planning Advisory Board that is in the works between Isanti and the City of Cambridge.

7. Adjournment

Motion by Lundeen second by Bergley to adjourn the March 10th, 2015 meeting of the Planning Commission. Motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Dated at Isanti, Minnesota this 11th day of March 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Achman
Community Development Director