

MINUTES OF MEETING
SOUTH ST. PAUL PLANNING COMMISISON
March 2, 2022

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY ACTING CHAIR DESMARAIS AT 7:00 P.M.

Present: Angela DesMarais
 Tim Felton
 Geoff Fournier
 Jason Frankot
 Ruth Krueger
 Matthew Thompson
 Michael Healy, City Planner
 Monika Mann, Community Development Specialist

Absent: James Hart

- 1) APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Motion to approve as presented - Thompson/ Fournier (6-0).
- 2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES – February 2, 2022 – Motion to approve the minutes as presented – Thompson/Fournier (6-0).
- 3) NEW BUSINESS

A. Planning Commission Rules of Order

Motion to adopt the Planning Commission Rules of Order as presented- Felton/ Krueger (6-0).

B. Election of Officers

Motion to elect Matthew Thompson as the Chair of the Planning Commission- Fournier/Frankot (6-0).

Motion to elect Angela DesMarais as the Vice Chair of the Planning Commission- Krueger/Fournier (6-0).

- 4) PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Interim Use Permit for a Temporary Building for the South Metro Fire Department

Mr. Healy shared the staff report. The Applicant is the South Metro Fire Department/the City of South St. Paul. They are seeking an Interim Use Permit (IUP) to operate a fire station out of a temporary building in the parking lot of the Public Works department’s maintenance facility while City Hall is being renovated. The renovations include a new roof and a complete interior redesign of the Fire Department wing as well as interior remodels for a number of other departments. The Fire Department will need to set up a temporary fire station within South St. Paul during this time to maintain response times to calls. The Public Work’s facility has room for a temporary building and would allow for South Metro Fire to respond to calls in a timely manner. Staff recommend approval of the IUP.

Commissioner DesMarais asked staff about the length of the IUP. Mr. Healy explained that the code requires IUPs to have a defined expiration point which can be a calendar date or event. The proposed IUP would be

project-specific as opposed to date-specific so the City would not need to come back for an IUP extension in the event that the renovation project takes longer than expected.

Commissioner Krueger asked if the temporary building would have water, sewer, and electric. Mr. Healy deferred to Mark Juelfs, Chief for South Metro Fire, on the question. Mr. Juelfs stated that the trailer would be hardwired with electric, running water and would have a holding tank for plumbing that would be pumped at least once a week.

Chair Thompson opened the public hearing.

No one was present to comment on the item nor had any correspondence been received.

Chair Thompson closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Frankot asked if there were other locations that were considered. Mr. Healy stated that he was not a part of the internal discussion; however, the only districts that allow temporary buildings are the Industrial districts, so the Public Works facility was a natural choice.

Commissioner Thompson asked for clarification that the IUP was tied to the renovation of the Fire Department wing, not the City Hall renovation project as a whole, meaning that once the Fire Department was back in City Hall, the IUP would terminate. Mr. Healy explained that the City Hall project is one project that is being completed in multiple phases. The trailer would just be used for the Fire Department while their wing was being renovated.

Motion to recommend approval of an Interim Use Permit for a temporary fire station at 400 Richmond Street East- Frankot/ DesMarais (6-0).

B. Ordinance Amendment to Update the Landscaping Ordinance and Establish Landscaping Guarantee Requirements for Development Projects

Mr. Healy presented the staff report. The Applicant is the City of South St. Paul. The City code requires landscaping in the front and side yards of all developed districts. Certain zoning districts have additional landscaping standards that regulate the number of trees on a lot, the minimum amount of lot coverage, and the minimum value of the landscaping. The City requires a landscaping plan for new development and for new uses that require a major zoning approval. The approval of a development project is usually contingent on landscaping being completed and maintained. South St. Paul has periodically had problems with property owners never completing their landscaping or allowing the landscaping to die. Most communities require a landscaping guarantee for their new development in the form of a financial guarantee being provided at the time of building permit. The money is returned after the Applicant has completed their landscaping and the landscaping has survived at least one year. South St. Paul has never codified this practice but has taken landscaping guarantees on a case-by-case basis. Staff is proposing to update the landscaping ordinance to create a minimum planting size, establish a consistent process for updating an approved landscaping plan, and establishing a landscape guarantee requirement. Staff recommend approval of the proposed ordinance.

Commissioner Krueger asked staff to clarify if the ordinance would only apply to developments or if the ordinance would apply to residential properties as well. Mr. Healy explained that the ordinance is written to apply to development projects and some business expansions and would not apply to single-family homes, two-family homes or three-family homes.

Chair Thompson opened the public hearing.

No one was present to comment on the item nor had any correspondence been received.

Chair Thompson closed the public hearing.

Motion to recommend approval of the proposed landscaping ordinance- DesMarais/ Felton (6-0).

5) OTHER BUSINESS

A. Discussion on Commercial and Residential Fence Standards

Ms. Mann requested feedback from the commissioners about proposed changes to the fence ordinance in response to inquiries about the fence code from the last year. Staff is proposing language that would clarify the fence height standards for commercial fences and reorganize the existing code to be more user-friendly. Staff is looking for feedback on whether metal privacy panels and masonry should be included in the list of allowable fence materials. Staff is also looking for a definitive answer on whether fence tarps and chain link slats should be allowable fencing materials. Finally, staff is looking for feedback on if the code should be changed to allow privacy fence panels to be attached to a residential deck.

The consensus was that the commercial districts should have fencing standards similar to the standards that are in place for residential districts, with the exception of industrial type uses in the general business district. The list of allowable fence materials should be expanded to include masonry and metal privacy fencing. Fence tarps and chain link slats should be prohibited in residential districts. Fence tarps should be prohibited in commercial district, but chain link slats should be allowed in the side and rear yard of a commercially zoned property. Finally, the code should not be amended to allow privacy fence panels to be attached to residential decks.

B. Discussion on Front Yard Setback Requirements in Commercial Zoning Districts

Mr. Healy brought forward a discussion item on the front yard setbacks in the commercial districts. The City's Comprehensive plan and a number of the city's small area plans call for traditional main street development where buildings are placed up to the sidewalk. Most of the city's commercial buildings were built with a 0-foot setback until the 1970s. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, the code required traditional suburban development with buildings located further away from the front property line with a parking lot between the sidewalk and the building. The City changed courses in the early 2000s and started rewriting the code 'down the hill' to require buildings to be close to the sidewalk. Between the 2000s code rewrite and the updates to the code through the MMM District, the setbacks have been adjusted to allow this traditional main street development in the MMM and CGMU districts. This leaves the General Business and Retail Business districts, both commercial districts, stuck with buildings that must be at least 40 feet back from the centerline of the nearest road. This setback requirement may create difficulties for the new library at the corner of Marie Avenue and 7th Avenue North, which is proposed to be a pedestrian-oriented building. Staff is looking for feedback on whether to bring forward an ordinance decreasing the front yard setbacks for buildings that have a pedestrian-oriented design if the design is consistent with the architectural context of the area.

Commissioner Frankot asked about the applicability of the proposed ordinance beyond the scope of the library project. Mr. Healy explained that there are a number of vacant lots positioned for development including the lot adjacent to the Dollar General and the property across the street from the old Kaposia Convenience gas station.

Planning Commission Minutes

March 2, 2022

Page 4 of 4

Mr. Healy pointed out that the ordinance could benefit existing businesses on Southview Boulevard and Marie Avenue that may want to expand their existing building but do not currently meet setback requirements. The proposed ordinance would be a way to allow an addition without a variance.

The consensus was that it would be appropriate to allow decreased front yard setbacks for pedestrian-oriented properties in the commercial districts if it was determined to be consistent with the architectural context of the area.

6) ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn- DesMarais/Felton (6-0).