

MINUTES OF MEETING
SOUTH ST. PAUL PLANNING COMMISISON
July 6, 2022

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY CHAIR THOMPSON AT 7:04 P.M.

Present: Tim Felton
 Jason Frankot
 Ruth Krueger
 Matthew Thompson
 Michael Healy, City Planner
 Monika Mann, Associate Planner

Absent: Angela DesMarais
 James Hart
 Geoff Fournier

- 1) APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Motion to approve as presented – Frankot/Felton (4-0).
- 2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 1, 2022 – Motion to approve the minutes as presented – Felton/Frankot (4-0).
- 3) NEW BUSINESS

None.

- 4) PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. An Ordinance Amendment Updating the Zoning Rules for Pet-Related Uses

Mr. Healy presented the staff report. The City is proposing an ordinance that would update the zoning rules for pet-related businesses and would legalize pet grooming businesses on Southview Boulevard and Marie Avenue. The city code currently allows a “pet store” in all of the city’s commercial zoning districts, but the code does not define what a pet store. Previously pet-related uses have been processed using a conditional use permit for a “use that is similar” to a pet store. The City Attorney advised staff that going forward, the code should be updated to include uses as opposed to relying on the “similar use” provision. The proposed ordinance is being brought forward in part because Linn Companies would like to redevelop the existing gas station at 1301 Southview Boulevard into a pet-grooming operation. The proposed ordinance would create definitions for “pet stores” and “pet grooming,” add pet grooming and training as conditional uses in all of the city’s mixed-use and commercial zoning districts with specific performance standards, and add pet day care as an allowed used in the GB District with a conditional use permit and time restrictions.

Commissioner Felton asked staff to elaborate on what “almost 24/7” entails related to the proposed dog wash/grooming facility that Linn Companies was interested in developing. Mr. Healy explained that at their other locations, the business closes between 1:00 AM and 5:00 AM for cleaning. The business is then open between 5:00 AM and 1:00 AM. Mr. Healy shared that the Applicant has stated that in order for their business to be viable, they would need to open by no later than 6:00 AM and close no sooner than 10:00 PM. They would prefer to be open beyond the hours of 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM to provide additional hours of service to customers.

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Commissioner Felton asked if the other business locations were in residential areas or commercial areas. Mr. Healy stated that he was not certain off the top of his head, but that he would have this information for discussion in the future. Commissioner Felton shared his concern about the future business disrupting the neighboring residential properties. Mr. Healy commented that the way the proposed ordinance was written, the Planning Commission and the City Council would be able to add case-by-case conditions to any dog grooming or pet training facilities, including hours of operation.

Commissioner Frankot commented that he was concerned about the hours of operation and disrupting the residents that live adjacent to the site. Commissioner Frankot encouraged discussion with the proposed developer about the hours of operation.

Commissioner Thompson asked staff if the ordinance should include some of the other pet uses that were discussed in 2018, such as pet day cares and vet clinics. Mr. Healy stated that the code already includes definitions for commercial kennels and vet clinics. The definitions that are proposed to be added are the definitions that the code currently lacks.

Commissioner Krueger asked about the hours of operation that the Holiday Station store was approved for in 2021. Mr. Healy explained that the Holiday Station store was approved to operate 24/7. Part of the Applicant's request was that the city allow the car wash at their site operate to 24 hours a day. The City did grant this request with the condition that after construction is completed, a sound study must be done to determine if the decibel level of the car wash at the property line would meet the statutory limits of how much noise can be made at night. Commissioner Krueger commented that the area was a commercial area, not just a residential area.

Chair Thompson opened the public hearing.

No one was present to comment on the application and no correspondence was received prior to the meeting.

Chair Thompson closed the public hearing.

Motion to recommend approval of the ordinance as presented- Frankot/Krueger (4-0)

5) OTHER BUSINESS

A. Discussion on Updates to the Zoning Code's Signage Allowance Standards for Commercial and Industrial Districts

Ms. Mann presented the staff report. In the past year, staff have undertaken several sign code clean-up projects to reduce the number of sign variances the Planning Commission and the City Council must review each year. The proposed ordinance would address one of the remaining issues which is that the sign code does not allow adequate signage for the City's commercial and industrial businesses. This is due to the City's "one-size-fits-all" approach to signage. Prior to 2009, the City's sign code based the amount of signage a property could have on the building size and the lot size. Staff would like to amend the sign allowance standards in the commercial and industrial districts to use a standard similar to the standard that is in place in the MMM district for determining the total amount of signage allowed at a property. The current signage allowance for a property located in the MMM district is 1.5 times the lineal feet of the building frontage along Concord Street or 150 square feet, whatever is greater. This standard would allow additional signage on larger lots with larger buildings. There are certain situations where basing the amount of signage on the building length still does not provide for enough signage. For these situations, staff is proposing to create a process to allow a master sign plan to be approved for the property. A master sign plan is essentially a site plan review for signage. Only certain properties would be

eligible for a master sign plan, including gas stations, multi-tenant commercial buildings, commercial or industrial developments over 5 acres in size, and properties with multiple principal buildings. The master sign plan process would have design standards that would prevent a master sign plan approval from being a “pie-in-the-sky” signage approval. In addition to updating the signage allowance standards, the proposed ordinance would allow each principal building at the Fleming Field Airport to have up to 200 square feet of signage and would clarify the types of signs that are allowed in the GB district for properties located in the Bridgepoint Business Park.

Commissioner Krueger asked if the master sign plan process was a common process used by other cities for signage. Ms. Mann explained that the tool was not uncommon and that other cities including the cities of Roseville, Bloomington, and Saint Paul offered a master sign plan option for certain properties.

Commissioner Krueger asked if staff had calculated how much staff time could be saved by approving the proposed ordinance. Ms. Mann estimated that the ordinance would save about 80 hours of staff time a year.

Chair Thompson asked staff if the proposed ordinance would address the remaining sign issues. Chair Thompson also questioned if other cities use a similar model for calculating total signage allowance. Ms. Mann explain that the ordinance in front of the commissioners was specifically tailored to address the sign variances that have been reviewed by the Planning Commission and the City Council in the last few years that did not present a practical difficulty beyond the ordinance not allowing enough signage. Ms. Mann stated that the proposed ordinance was on par with the sign standards in the surrounding communities.

Commissioner Frankot asked staff if the proposed ordinance addressed signage lighting. Ms. Mann explained that the proposed ordinance did not include language about sign lighting due to the need to regulate the lighting on signs, particularly when they are located near a residential district. The proposed ordinance focuses just on the total amount of signage allowed at a single property.

Chair Thompson commented that the ordinance seems beneficial if staff feel it will save time. Commissioner Frankot echoed support for the proposed ordinance.

B. Update Regarding Planning Commission Packet Distribution

Mr. Healy shared that most of the other boards and cities do not receive paper versions of the packet mailed to them. Going forward, paper versions of the Planning Commission packet would not be mailed out to the commissioners to reduce the amount of unused materials being printed and mailed. Ultimately, the City is trying to reduce unnecessary costs and to be environmentally responsible. Staff is happy to provide a paper copy of the packet at meetings or for pick up ahead of time if the commissioners would still like to receive a paper copy of the packet.

Commissioner Felton commented that it would be nice to offer tablets or computers for viewing the packet during meetings if paper copies of the packet would not be provided. Mr. Healy stated that the hope was that similar technology may be added to the Council Chambers during the reconstruction.

Chair Thompson asked for confirmation that a PDF version of the packet would still be provided to the Planning Commissioners. Mr. Healy clarified that the commissioners would still receive an email with the PDF version of the Planning Commission packet on the Friday prior to their next meeting.

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Mr. Healy stated that any commissioners that are interested in still having a paper copy of the packet provided to them should reach out to him by email.

6) ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn- Krueger/Frankot (4-0).