

MINUTES OF MEETING
SOUTH ST. PAUL PLANNING COMMISISON
August 3, 2022

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

Present: Angela DesMarais
 Tim Felton

 Geoff Fournier
 James Hart
 Matthew Thompson
 Michael Healy, City Planner
 Monika Mann, Associate Planner

Absent: Jason Frankot
 Ruth Krueger

- 1) APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Motion to approve as presented – DesMarais/ Felton (5-0).
 - 2) APPROVAL OF MINUTES – July 6, 2022 – Motion to approve the minutes as presented – Hart/ DesMarais (5-0).
 - 3) NEW BUSINESS
- None.
- 4) PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Setback Variance for a Driveway Addition at 452 9th Avenue South

Mr. Healy presented the staff report. The Applicant, Shawn Tusler, is requesting a side yard setback variance to expand a “grandfathered” driveway that is 0 feet from the north side property line. City Code requires driveways or parking areas to be at least 2 feet away from the side property line in the event that the adjacent property is residential. The Applicant would like to match the driveway at 448 9th Avenue South which goes up to the property line. The subject property and 448 9th Avenue South were built with garages that faced each other and shared a driveway area that serviced the doors of both garages. The shared driveway area was “grandfathered” to be built up to the shared property line. When a new garage was constructed at 448 9th Avenue South in the summer of 2021, the old driveway was extended and turned into a parking pad. Reportedly, the contractor misread the permit and built the expanded parking pad up to the property line. The Applicant would like to construct a new garage and a parking pad that matches the parking pad at 448 9th Avenue South.

Staff noted that the block the subject property is located on contains many shared alley driveways. The houses on the block were built over a 100-year timespan and the shared driveway design appears to have been a popular style during several of the decades the block was developed. The existing code does not have a mechanism to create a new shared driveway or to expand an existing shared driveway to meet the needs of modern parking pads. Staff advocated for review of the parking setback requirement to see if there are situations where the code could be more flexible.

Planning Commission Minutes

August 3, 2022

Page 2 of 3

Commissioner Felton asked how it was missed that the contractor poured a concrete parking pad beyond what was allowed in the permit. Mr. Healy explained that inspections are handled by the Building Official and that the Building Official visually inspects driveway replacements. Mr. Healy shared that the inspection process had changed to prevent a situation like this from happening again. Mr. Healy suggested that the issue may have arisen because the permit was for a new garage, not a concrete parking pad, and that a subcontractor poured the concrete, not the contractor that constructed the garage. Mr. Healy reiterated that the procedures for concrete inspections had been amended to be more consistent with the inspections that are completed for a concrete driveway permit.

Shawn Tusler and Margaret Adams, 452 9th Avenue South, were present at the meeting. Mr. Tusler pointed out that the part of the driveway that was in question was a 2-foot by 10-foot square. Mr. Tusler shared that he was requesting this variance because if a new parking pad was constructed under the current code, the property would end up with an awkward, unusable 20 square foot grassy area. The approval of this variance would allow for a nice uniform look and would create a practical parking pad.

Chair Thompson opened the public hearing.

No one was present to comment on the application. No correspondence aside from the email found in the staff report had been received.

Chair Thompson closed the public hearing.

Chair Thompson noted that the City's mistake was the Applicant's gain. Chair Thompson added that there was a need to make sure that these issues are caught during the inspections process. Mr. Healy reminded the Commissioners that they would be within their rights to deny the variance and require the neighboring property owner to remove the 20 square foot area of the non-conforming parking pad to make their project comply with their permit.

Motion to recommend approval of the variance as presented- DesMarais/Fournier (5-0)

B. Site Plan Review and CUP Amendment for a Minor Building Addition at 455 Concord Street South

Ms. Mann presented the staff report. The Applicant, Chris Nutini on behalf of Kwik Trip Inc., is requesting site plan review and an amendment to an existing Conditional Use Permit for a Planned Unit Development. The Applicant is proposing to construct a 660 square foot building addition at the southeast corner of their site where their existing trash enclosure is. The existing trash enclosure would be moved to the drive aisle south of the building. The proposed building addition is part of a larger kitchen remodel project which would increase the amount of kitchen space available at the site. The proposed building addition would match the existing building and meets all relevant zoning requirements.

Chris Nutini, Kwik Trip Inc, was present for questions on the application.

Chair Thompson opened the public hearing.

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

Chair Thompson closed the public hearing.

Motion to recommend approval of the site plan and the Conditional Use Permit Amendment to a Planned Unit Development- Hart/Fournier (5-0).

C. An Ordinance Amendment Updating the Zoning Code's Signage Allowance Standards in Commercial and Industrial Districts.

Ms. Mann presented the staff report. Staff is proposing to amend the sign ordinance to increase the total sign allowance for properties located in the City's commercial and industrial districts. The proposed ordinance is part of a large sign clean-up project aimed to reduce the number of sign variances that the Planning Commission and City Council must review each year. Staff is proposing to increase the maximum amount of signage for a property located in the C-1 or CGMU district to 1.5 times the lineal feet of the longest building frontage along a public road or 150 square feet, whatever is greater. The maximum amount of signage allowed for a property located in the GB, I or I-1 district is proposed to be 1.5 times the lineal feet of the longest building frontage along a public road or 200 square feet, whatever is greater. The proposed ordinance would increase the maximum sign height in the C-1, CGMU, and MMM districts to 8 feet in height and 12 feet in height in the GB, I, and I-1 districts. The proposed ordinance would also create a new type of zoning approval called a Master Sign Plan. A Master Sign Plan approval would allow certain types of businesses, such as shopping centers, gas stations, and commercial/industrial sites over 5 acres, to propose a sign plan for the City to review and approve.

Chair Thompson opened the public hearing.

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

Chair Thompson closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Felton commented that the Master Sign Plan seemed complex. He asked staff if they anticipate spending a lot of time on projects that apply for this process. Ms. Mann shared that she anticipated that a Master Sign Plan review would require a similar amount of work to the current review that is required anytime staff receive a sign plan. Commissioner Felton asked if staff would be saving time with the other standards that are changing. Ms. Mann confirmed this to be the intention.

Commissioner Felton commented that he was concerned that the envelope for the maximum amount of signage allowed at a property would continue to be pushed. Ms. Mann commented that while a business may propose additional signage, Staff can now say that the maximum signage standards have been updated and that they would not support a variance from these new standards without a true and unique practical difficulty. Commissioner Felton commented that the commission should do its best to stick to these proposed standards.

Motion to recommend approval of the proposed ordinance as presented- Felton/ Fournier (5-0).

5) OTHER BUSINESS

None.

6) ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn- DesMarais/Hart (5-0).