



MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2006, 7:00 PM
EDINA CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
4801 WEST 50TH STREET

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair John Lonsbury, Nancy Scherer, Kevin Staunton, Michael Schroeder, Michael Fischer, Geof Workinger, Stephen Brown and Scott Thiss

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Floyd Grabel and Basima Tewfik

I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The minutes of the March 29, 2006, meeting were filed with corrections.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

Z-06-2	Final Rezoning and Final Plat Brownstones on France Noonan Construction/Kingdom Properties 5200/5300 France Avenue
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Ms. Aaker informed the Commission the City Council approved Preliminary Rezoning and Preliminary Plat approval for Brownstones on France at their March 21, 2006, meeting.

Ms. Aaker said the proponents revised their site plan and exterior elevations remain essentially the same as in the original plan with the exception of a reduction in surface parking, the addition of a sidewalk along West 52nd Street, replacement of boulevard sidewalk along France Avenue, and a slight modification in window type used in the building.

Ms. Aaker explained it was suggested at past meetings that surface parking be reduced. Surface parking is now 15 stalls instead of the originally proposed 20. The sidewalk along West 52nd Street and replacement of the

boulevard sidewalk along France Avenue was at the suggestion of the City Engineer.

Ms. Aaker concluded staff supports the proposal for Preliminary Rezoning and Preliminary Plat subject to: Final Rezoning, Final Plat approval, Developer's Agreement and Watershed District permits.

The proponent, Mr. Ed Noonan was present.

Commissioner Brown said he recalls the discussion suggesting a reduction in surface parking; however, questioned if this reduction could result in the under parking of this site. Ms. Aaker responded even at 15 spaces the project remains "over parked" by Ordinance standards. She pointed out the project also includes two underground parking stalls per unit.

Commissioner Fischer complimented the proponent on the design of the project and the use of quality exterior materials. Commissioner Fischer noted the only "tick" he sees in the plan is that he would like the garage door screened a bit more.

Commissioner Schroeder echoed Commissioner Fischer sentiments but questioned the "bump out" around the utility poles to accommodate the sidewalk. Commissioner Schroeder suggested that the sidewalk be located where it belongs, adding in his opinion the sidewalk jog to accommodate the poles isn't pleasing. Concluding, Commissioner Schroeder suggested moving the poles or burying the utilities.

Chair Lonsbury stated he believes the reason the sidewalk was located in that area was to move pedestrian traffic away from vehicle traffic along France Avenue.

Mr. Ed Noonan, 84 Woodland Circle, Edina, addressed the Commission and informed them small changes were made to the plan at the request of City Staff, the Council and Commission. With graphics Mr. Noonan pointed out the change in window type, the addition of more limestone, window bays, copper, slate roofs, etc., adding in his opinion these additions insert more character to the building(s). Continuing, Mr. Noonan said the placement of the sidewalk was at the request of the City Engineer, adding he believes the utility poles should not pose a problem. Mr. Noonan explained the courtyard area is the "front yard" for this development and this courtyard area has been enhanced with additional landscaping. Mr. Noonan said in response to Commissioner Fischer's comments about the screening of the garage door with graphics Mr. Noonan pointed out the proposed landscaping that will screen the door. Concluding, Mr. Noonan said his goal was to create a timeless feel to the project.

Commissioner Schroeder asked Ms. Aaker who reviews the landscaping plan. Ms. Aaker responded the Planning Department reviews all landscaping plans. Commissioner Schroeder commented it appears to him the landscaping plan indicates the planting of Ash trees, adding he is worried about the future "health" of Ash trees. Commissioner Schroeder explained many communities are not allowing the planting of Ash trees because of the Emerald Ash Borer beetle. Continuing, Commissioner Schroeder suggested that the City Forester review the landscaping plan. Ms. Aaker responded she will refer the landscaping plan to the City Forester for his comments.

Commissioner Staunton questioned if this hearing is the Commission's final review. Chair Lonsbury confirmed this review is final. He added certain items are implemented at the building permit level and in the Developer's Agreement, but this is the last time the Commission will review this plan.

Commissioner Workinger told the Commission for the last few months the Commission has been discussing affordable housing, adding he is taking this opportunity to advocate for affordable housing by asking developers to find ways to help the City achieve more affordable housing. Commissioner Workinger acknowledged this may not be the proper place for affordable housing; however, every opportunity the Commission has to enlighten not only the City but developers that more affordable housing is needed in Edina is of benefit. Concluding, Commissioner Workinger stated in his opinion this is a good project.

Commissioner Fischer informed the Commission tomorrow, April 27th the Affordable Housing Task Force will unveil their draft to the public. Commissioner Fischer acknowledged there is a growing sentiment in the community that "affordable" or "work force" housing needs to be maintained and increased. Concluding, Commissioner Fischer reiterated the excellent quality of the Brownstone project.

Commissioner Brown moved to recommend Final Rezoning and Final Plat approval subject to Watershed District permits and Developer's Agreement. Commissioner Scherer seconded the motion. All voted aye; motion carried.

III. OTHER BUSINESS:

Election of Liaison to Heritage Preservation Board

Chair Lonsbury told the Commission at this time due to the retirement of David Runyan the Heritage Preservation Board needs a liaison from

the Planning Commission. Chair Lonsbury asked if anyone is willing to serve as liaison to the Heritage Preservation Board.

Commissioner Scherer informed the Commission she was a guest visitor at one of the Heritage Preservation Board meetings, adding she has interest in preservation and an interest to serve as the Commission liaison to this Board. Chair Lonsbury thanked Commissioner Scherer for her interest in serving.

Chair Lonsbury appointed Commissioner Nancy Scherer to serve as Commission liaison to the Edina Heritage Preservation Board.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS:

Commissioner Workinger told the Board he is the liaison to the Transportation Commission and when warranted will inform the Commission of issues before the Transportation Commission. Commissioner Workinger said he understands copies of the minutes are provided; however, sometimes an update is needed.

Chair Lonsbury thanked Commissioner Workinger for his comments.

Chair Lonsbury informed the Commission this past weekend he was in California visiting a friend, adding the community his friend lives in is facing the same issues Edina is facing with regard to “massing” and availability of affordable housing. Continuing, Chair Lonsbury said one option implemented by this community is an “affordable housing fee” is placed on all building permits. Chair Lonsbury said massing and affordable housing are very delicate topics, not only here, but all over the Country.

Commissioner Scherer asked Chair Lonsbury if he believes the fee is placed in a “funding pool” to maintain and/or construct affordable housing units. Chair Lonsbury responded he believes so, but isn’t quite sure how the money is dispensed, adding it is something to keep in mind while the City grapples with these issues, especially affordable housing.

Commissioner Fischer informed the Commission he had the opportunity to go to a National Planning Conference, adding one of the points he came away with from the conference was that the role of the Planning Commission is to look to the future, which in his opinion is a very important point to keep in mind when reviewing proposals. Continuing, Commissioner Fischer echoed Chair Lonsburys comments that the City of Edina isn’t alone in addressing the issues of massing and affordable housing. Communities all over this Country are also facing these issues, especially inner ring suburbs like Edina. Concluding Commissioner Fischer said after he sifts through all his information he will pass along to the Commission articles, etc. he believes would be of interest to them and help them as Commissioners.

Commissioner Schroeder told the Commission the City Council has formed a task force to focus on massing, of which he is a member. Commissioner Schroeder stated at this time the Massing Task Force is trying to formulate goals, procedures and policy. Commissioner Schroeder added at this point in the process he is unsure of the final recommendation(s), however, will keep the Commission posted on the outcome of the Massing Task Force.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm

Jackie Hoogenakker