



MINUTE SUMMARY
Edina Planning Commission
Wednesday, April 30, 2008, 7:00 PM
Edina City Hall Council Chambers
4801 West 50th Street

MEMBERS PRESENT:

**Chair John Lonsbury, Julie Risser, Nancy Scherer, Kevin Staunton,
Steve Brown, Floyd Grabel and Arlene Forrest**

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Michael Schroeder, Mike Fischer and Katie Sierks

STAFF PRESENT:

Cary Teague and Jackie Hoogenakker

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTE SUMMARY:

The minutes of the March 26, 2008, meeting were filed as submitted.

II. OLD BUSINESS:

**Discussion on Massing/Zoning Ordinance Amendment –
Cary Teague, Planning Director**

Staff Presentation

Planner Teague addressed the Commission and gave a power point presentation on "Massing". Planner Teague focused his presentation on establishing a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and maximum height to the ridge line or top of a roof. Continuing, Planner Teague explained staff proposes FAR to be calculated on a sliding scale on only the front 150 feet of lot depth and FAR shall include only finished floor area above the basement, including garage space. Planner Teague said staff also proposes maximum building height of 35 feet to be measured to the highest point on a roof of a single or double dwelling. The maximum height may be increased by one inch for each foot that the lot exceeds 75 feet in width, and in no event shall the maximum height exceed 40 feet. Planner Teague further explained that any lot 135 feet or wider could have a house 40 feet tall to the top of the roof. Continuing with his presentation Planner

Teague highlighted newly constructed houses within the City and how the proposed FAR and height requirement would impact their construction. Concluding, Planner Teague at the direction of the Commission depicted examples of “neighborhoods/districts” as another tool to use to control massing.

Comments and Questions from the Commission

Commissioner Brown asked Planner Teague to clarify how FAR would be handled if the City were to establish individual “neighborhoods/districts” as an approach to control “massing”. Planner Teague responded that each “neighborhood/district” could have its own FAR; adding if the City identifies “19 neighborhoods or districts” there could possibly be a different FAR for each. Planner Teague pointed out at this time City Code designates all residential lots as R-1 and all R-1 lots are guided by the same requirements except for variations for lot width and lot coverage. Concluding, Planner Teague further explained if the Commission supports establishing neighborhoods/districts each identified neighborhood/district would need to be rezoned.

Chair Lonsbury asked Planner Teague if the City were to identify and rezone individual neighborhoods or follows the character districts established in the Comprehensive Plan would the City need to reestablish standards for each neighborhood/district. Planner Teague responded in the affirmative.

Commissioner Grabel observed with regard to massing there is the possibility that residents/neighbors the Commission has heard from may be wrong. Commissioner Grabel stated in his opinion the Commission needs to be careful in restricting redevelopment and new development. Property owners reinvesting in their neighborhoods increase property values, and for the most part that is a good thing. Concluding Commissioner Grabel noted if changes to Code are too restrictive residents may find difficulty in selling their homes when the time comes.

A discussion ensued with Commissioners focusing on height as an important tool in controlling massing, and agreeing the suggested change in height is a good tool to implement immediately. Commissioners also noted how the loss of sunlight as a result of construction of overly tall homes can impact neighborhood character and enjoyment.

Chair Lonsbury suggested when voting that the proposed Code changes be separated.

Chair Lonsbury opened the hearing for public comment.

Public Comment

Mr. Bill Grist, Minneapolis Area Association of Realtors, 5750 Lincoln Drive, addressed the Commission and explained what is important to realtors is to have the correct information available for clients. Mr. Grist pointed out it's been difficult to keep up with current and proposed changes to Edina's Code. He noted someone can purchase a home under one set of rules, only to have them change by closing. Mr. Grist asked the Commission to give the current Code changes time to work before changing them again, reiterating it's been very difficult for the public to keep up with the changes.

Commissioner Brown moved to close the public hearing. Commissioner Scherer seconded the motion. All voted aye.

Commission Action

Commissioner Scherer moved to recommend an amendment to City Code 850 regarding building height. The maximum height to the highest point on a roof of a single or double dwelling unit shall be 35 feet. The maximum height may be increased by one inch for each foot that the lots exceeds 75 feet in with. In no event shall the maximum height exceed 40 feet. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. All voted aye; motion carried.

Commission Comment

Further discussion ensued with Commissioners stating they truly believe a one-size-fit all approach doesn't work. Commissioners also stressed they have no desire to prevent growth in the City, and acknowledged the difficulty in developing and implementing new guidelines. Commissioners however stated that something needs to be done, and new technology could be used as an aid in development and implementation of new rules. Commissioners reiterated that in their opinion developing neighborhood districts is the approach that should be implemented to control massing and maintain neighborhood character.

Commissioners also acknowledged that reconstruction and new construction will occur during this review process, questioning if FAR should be immediately established; however, Commissioners reiterated their opinion that if FAR is established it should be calculated based on individual neighborhood standards. Continuing, Commissioners further indicated FAR should either be tied to a "vicinity or neighborhood character districts" as laid out in the Comprehensive Plan or separate districts should be established and designated. Concluding, Commissioners stated they believe the recommended Code change this evening

regarding building height and other recent Code changes will help control massing until separate neighborhoods are defined and/or rezoned.

Commission Action

Commissioner Staunton moved that the Commission recommend to Council that they not adopt the proposed Code change on FAR as laid out in the staff report and that the Commission further study the use of FAR in a vicinity manner and/or the use of FAR as part of character districts in a future rezoning of Code. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. All voted aye; motion carried.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

Discussion on Tree Ordinance – Cary Teague, City Planner

Chair Lonsbury suggested that the discussion scheduled on developing a tree ordinance be held over for the benefit of absent Commissioners. Continuing, Chair Lonsbury said he would like to receive input on the “potential” tree ordinance from Commissioner Schroeder who is very knowledgeable on this subject. Commissioners agreed with the suggestion from the Chair.

Commissioner Scherer moved to table the discussion on a tree ordinance. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. All voted aye; motion carried.

IV. INTERGOVERNMENTAL BUSINESS:

Chair Lonsbury told the Commission Nancy Scherer will no longer serve as Commission liaison to the Heritage Preservation Board, adding Arlene Forrest has graciously volunteered to serve as HPB liaison. Chair Lonsbury moved to elect Arlene Forrest as Commission Liaison to the Heritage Preservation Board. All voted aye; motion carried. Chair Lonsbury congratulated Commissioner Forrest.

Chair Lonsbury acknowledged back of packet materials, especially the training materials prepared by Campbell Knutson.

Commissioner Grabiell told the Commission he experienced a fascinating zoning board meeting last Thursday and suggested if zoning items are appealed to Council that the Commission is kept abreast of what occurs at the Council level. Commissioner Grabiell suggested that the monthly zoning board summary indicate if an item was appealed. Planner Teague said to date the City has not received any variance appeals in the month of April; stating Commissioner

Grabiels suggestion is good, adding if a variance decision is appealed the appeal will be noted in the monthly summary.

Commissioner Risser invited the Commission and public to attend an Energy Fair to be held at Centennial Lakes on May 3rd and 4th.

Commissioner Forrest told the Commission she recently attended an excellent workshop on sustainability and encouraged Commissioners to attend other workshops offered if they have the opportunity to do so.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Risser moved adjournment at 8:10 pm. Commissioner Scherer seconded the motion. All voted aye; motion carried.

Submitted by