



## CITY OF OAK PARK HEIGHTS PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, October 8, 2015 – Oak Park Heights City Hall

- I. Call to Order: Chair Kremer called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.  
Present: Commissioners Anthony, Bye and Kremer ; City Planner Richards, City Engineer Mann, City Administrator Johnson and Commission Liaison Liljegren. Absent: Commissioners Nelson and Thurmes.
- II. Approval of Agenda:  
Commissioner Anthony, seconded by Commissioner Bye, moved to approve the Agenda as presented. Carried 3 – 0.
- III. Approval of September 10, 2015 Meeting Minutes:  
Commissioner Bye, seconded by Commissioner Anthony, moved to approve the Minutes as presented. Carried 3 - 0.
- IV. Department/Commission Liaison / Other Reports: City Planner Richards introduced City Engineer, Lee Mann of Stantec.
- V. Visitors/Public Comment: None.
- VI. Public Hearings:
  - A. ISD #834 – Stillwater Area High School – Consider request for Conditional Use Permit Amendment to allow building expansion and modifications to parking and athletic field at Stillwater Area High School, located at 5701 Stillwater Blvd. N.

City Planner Richards reviewed and discussed the October 2, 2015 Planning Report, noting that updated information had been received from the applicant since the report's preparation, and has been distributed to the Commission for their use at the meeting.

Chair Kremer opened the hearing for public comment and invited the applicant to address the Commission.

Mark Drommerhausen introduced himself as Stillwater Schools Principal on Special Assignment to work on the school bond project, including the high school project. He noted other representatives from and on behalf of the school district present in the audience. Mr. Drommerhausen shared a historical perspective of the bond process followed by the school district from the start to present and offered a brief summary of what is planned and the timeline for the construction process. He noted that plans for snow removal had been questioned and provided a review of the plan for the same.

Mr. Drommerhausen made himself and other representatives present available for questions and responded to questions related to the current student population and what the student population capacity. Mr. Drommerhausen noted that the plan is not an aspect of anticipated population growth; rather it's an academic restructuring that moves the ninth grade into the high school.

Steve Erickson of BWBR Architects introduced himself as the architect representing the school district. In response to the question of whether or not the greenhouse, currently at the school, would be removed, he stated that it will be relocated upon the campus.

Rob Bach, Stillwater Area High School Principal responded to the question of what research was relied upon for decision making during their planning process to determine the size of the school needed, etc. Mr. Bach noted research shows that large schools offer greater opportunities than smaller school and that they specifically looked at Edina, Minnetonka and Wayzata High Schools – three of the highest performing public high schools in Minnesota as part of their planning. He noted that practices of the Minnesota Dept. of Education were also looked at. ISD #834 is operating on a grade 10-12 model, while State standards are written on a grade 9-12 model. He pointed out transition delays in initiating college conversations with ninth grade students with them and their transcripts separate from the Senior High School setting. He provided Chair Kremer with research references as being MN State scores and standards.

Commissioner Anthony noted that she had concerns with the large population of students and adding to that volume as well as the traffic in the area and related safety aspects.

Commissioner Bye inquired about the parking and drop off plans for the site. Discussion ensued as to parking and traffic guidance throughout the campus. Mr. Erickson reviewed the traffic plan and discussed parking alterations, turn around planning for bus movement, and general traffic flow plan for movement through the site overall.

City Administrator Johnson noted concerns that have been historically expressed for the safety of student crossing the street from the retail center across the street from the high school after student's park or are dropped off there. Mr. Bach noted that campus parking does have a charge of \$250 per year and that there are 600 +/- parking spaces available for student parking. City Planner Richards noted that parking capacity at the campus is being increased. It was questioned whether or not the Commission should be looking at the off campus parking issue. City Administrator Johnson noted that he made note of the situation with regard to the safety aspect of roadway crossing.

Tony Willger, Stillwater Area Schools Facilities/Site Manager provided the percentages of the current student population who are signed up for bussing. Specifically he noted that 25% of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, 50% of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade and 95% of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade bus. He provided estimates for 9<sup>th</sup> grade and the criteria used to determine the need for an additional six busses for increased student population with the addition of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade class to the campus.

Steve Erickson reviewed the plan for access by public safety personnel as revised in response with communications with staff and the Fire Chief.

Chair Kremer inquired as to the issue of public access as noted within the planning report.

Annette Sallman, Stillwater Area Schools Director of Community Education and Community Relations responded to the issue of public access. She stated that historically community public access to the school facilities has been before school, in the evening and weekends and then throughout the summer. She noted that with the addition of a fitness center to the campus, there would be access to that as well. Chair Kremer inquired as to how many non-school focused events there have been held in the building in the past 12 months.

Tim Mauer, Stillwater Area Schools Coordinator of Facility Use and Adult Athletics responded, providing examples such as the Special Olympics event held this past June, three to four basketball and wrestling tournaments each year, various sports and games clinics in the summer. Rental fees are charged for use for spaces, walk in adult athletic fees and team rates. The fitness center is still in planning stages as to what kind of access hours will be available, parking and rates.

City Administrator Johnson noted that there is a condition within the planning report requesting clarification of public access and process for access, for when the facility was first constructed and what the availability and process is presently. Johnson noted that the park dedication fee was waived at the time of facility construction in exchange for public access to the community and that it is important to know what that policy has been and what it is proposed to be.

Chair Kremer asked if there was anyone else in the audience who would like to address the Commission as part of the public hearing discussion.

Warren Wasescha, 5675 Newberry Ave. N. noted that he has lived adjacent to the high school for nearly 20 years and has observed the morning traffic flow first hand. He stated that traffic is an issue right now with vehicles backing up at the guard shack and stacking onto 58<sup>th</sup> St. and Hwy. 5. He noted his observations of parents dropping kids off at the retail center across 58<sup>th</sup> St., seeing kids crossing 58<sup>th</sup> St. nearly hit by vehicles, and frustrated drivers. He expressed his opinion that there is not a good system in place to get traffic into the site so that kids can be dropped off safely and so that traffic does not back up.

Mr. Wasescha stated that he liked the plan for the school but doesn't see anything in the materials presented that shows any improvement to the traffic flow. He asked if they had done any traffic studies, particularly in the morning, and asked that the Commission consider requiring that a traffic study be done and that a site plan review be done to address whether or not the guard shack is properly located on the property and to improve traffic flow and vehicle stacking.

City Planner Richards and City Planner Richards discussed historical activity to traffic study activities and efforts made to relieve traffic stacking with timing of lights and adjustments to the turning lanes. Discussion was had as to the situation and what could be done. Commissioner Bye indicated that she would like to see this issue reviewed and addressed. Commissioner Anthony expressed her concern that this was a safety issue and needs to be addressed.

City Administrator asked the City Engineer to brief the Commission on the retention pond. City Engineer Mann reported that the issue is that the site is within the City's drinking water management area and that guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health suggests that infiltration is not appropriate on the site and is something that needs to be worked out with the watershed.

It was noted that bicycle racks are currently in place on the school campus.

There being no other visitors to the public hearing, Chair Kremer closed the hearing at 8:08 p.m.

Commissioner Bye, seconded by Commissioner Anthony moved to recommend City Council approval of the request, subject to the conditions found within the October 2, 2015 planning report, as amended adding a condition that a traffic study be undertaken and that the applicant work with the City and City Engineer with regarding to traffic safety issues.

Carried 2-1, Kremer opposed.

- B. Sign Ordinance 401.15.G – Consider amendment to Zoning Ordinance 401.15.G – Signs for the purpose of clarifying and simplifying regulations and providing better visibility for Hwy. 36 corridor and Hwy. 5 intersection businesses.

City Planner Richards provided a brief update of the sign ordinance revision process and discussed the proposed amendments to the ordinance language.

Chair Kremer opened the public hearing at 8:16 p.m. and invited comment from the audience.

Jerry Brown of Musicmakers – 14525 61<sup>st</sup> St. Ct. N. noted that in light of the roadway changes by their business area, he would be interested in having a multi-tenant sign for the business development put in place and wondered if something like that would be allowed. Brief discussion was had as to what was currently on site for signs. Richards indicated that the City would certainly work with Mr. Brown to see what they could do at the site and encourage him to contact City staff.

Donae Gustafson of Nuview Psychological Services – 6120 Oren Ave. N. indicated that her business was also within the business development with Mr. Browns and that she would like to see the freestanding signs at the individual businesses remain so that visitors can find them within their respective businesses. Richards noted that multi-tenant buildings would likely be able to retain their freestanding signs in addition to any development signage placed and noted that the City would be willing to work with the development on changes to their signage.

Ann Wasescha – 5675 Newberry Ave. N. addressed the Commission and questioned why signs should be made easier, noting that as a former member of the Planning Commission , they created the sign regulations and that the regulations were created with careful thought as to what was desired in the community and in keeping the best interests of the community in mind.

Discussion commenced as to the nature of many of the amendments being to make the ordinance easier to navigate and staff to facilitate, to take into consideration new technologies available to businesses for signs, the nature of ordinances evolving over time and allowing businesses greater opportunities to market themselves.

Warren Wasescha – 5675 Newberry Ave. N. stated that he felt good guidelines were important, noting that rules tend to be broken over time and business advertisement competition can create challenges. He expressed that careful consideration needs to be given as to what is allowed so that it doesn't look like a circus throughout the community.

Commissioner Anthony expressed that she felt that the review and amendments proposed are an attempt to reach balance for the businesses within the City and to reduce micromanagement.

James Roehrl introduced himself as a representative of the company that manufactured the electronic signs installed at Stillwater Motors and noted the efforts of the Commission to streamline the ordinance and its definitions. He offered his company's legislative department to assist the City, if they desired, to work with them on the ordinance. Mr. Roehrl did state that he would like to see the display time requirement reduced and provided references to studies that have declared that electronic signs do not constitute a traffic hazard.

City Administrator Johnson noted that over 250 notices were mailed to City businesses and that other than those present, no responses were received and noted time and practice in reviewing the sign ordinance both present and past.

Warren Wasescha – 5675 Newberry Ave. N. stated that he was initially shocked at the Stillwater Motors signs, when they first went up, in light of the conversations had at the public hearing. Wasescha noted that he found the time intervals of the signs and brightness of them as they are currently is okay.

There being no other visitors to the public hearing, Chair Kremer closed the public hearing at 8:39 p.m.

Commissioner Bye, seconded by Commissioner Anthony moved to recommend City Council approval of the amendments to the ordinance and the definitions as proposed in the City Planner's memo of October 1, 2015.

Carried 3-0.

VII. New Business: None.

VIII. Old Business: None.

IX. Informational:

A. Upcoming Meetings:

- Tuesday, October 13, 2015      City Council                      7:00 p.m./City Hall
- Tuesday, October 27, 2015      City Council                      7:00 p.m./City Hall
- Tuesday, November 10, 2015      City Council                      7:00 p.m./City Hall
- Thursday, November 12, 2015      Planning Commission      7:00 p.m./City Hall

B. Council Representative

- Tuesday, October 27, 2015 – Commissioner Kremer
- Tuesday, December 8, 2015 – Commissioner Thurmes

Chair Kremer stated that he will attend whichever City Council meeting it is that discusses the Stillwater Area High School request.

X. Adjourn.      Commissioner Anthony, seconded by Commissioner Bye, moved to adjourn at 8:48 p.m. Carried 3 – 0.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Hultman  
Planning & Code Enforcement

Approved by the Planning Commission: 11-12-2015