



PLANNING COMMISSION

September 21, 2022

7:00 PM

Fridley Civic Campus, 7071 University Avenue N.E.

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hansen called the Planning Commission Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Pete Borman

John Buyse

Amy Dritz

Ryan Evanson

Mark Hansen

Ross Meisner

Scott Hickok, Community Development Director

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

1. Approve June 15, 2022, Planning Commission Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Evanson to approve the minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Buyse.

UPON A VOICE VOTE, ALL VOTING AYE, CHAIR HANSEN DECLARED THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Introduction of Pete Borman

Scott Hickok, Community Development Director, explained how the City interweaves members of Commissions, noting that Chair of the Park and Recreation Commission serves on the Planning Commission. He introduced Commissioner Borman, and the Commission welcomed him as a new member.

PUBLIC HEARING

3. Public Hearing for Variance, VAR22-000001 by Justin Guenther, to allow the construction of a garage in the front yard, generally located at 323 Logan Parkway NE

Motion by Commissioner Meisner to open the public hearing. Seconded by Commissioner Evanson.

UPON A VOICE VOTE, ALL VOTING AYE, CHAIR HANSEN DECLARED THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY AND THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS OPENED AT 7:03 P.M.

Scott Hickok, Community Development Director, presented a request for a variance to construct a 484 square foot accessory structure (garage) in the front yard of the property located at 323 Logan Parkway NE. The location would also require a variance to reduce the front yard setback from 89.5 to 36 feet. The accessory structure would be used for vehicle parking and storage and architecturally would be compatible with the existing home. He provided details on the site, background on the property, and applicable code requirements. He provided a summary of the hardship as submitted by the applicant and reviewed the practical difficulties and related findings from staff. Even though an alternative does exist, staff recognizes that there are unique conditions and circumstances related to this lot that make it difficult to construct an accessory structure and therefore recommends that the Planning Commission approve VAR #22-000001.

The Commission asked for clarification on the alternative available would require a variance, whether the proposed structure could be used as an accessory dwelling unit (ADU), and calculation of the front yard setback. It was also noted that there are similar front yard accessory structures in the neighborhood. Mr. Hickok noted that the alternative would not require the variance as it is in the side yard, the proposed structure could not be used as an ADU and clarified how the front yard setback is calculated.

The applicant provided input on the design, desire for a garage, screening, and landscaping. He confirmed that he has spoken with his direct neighbors and did not receive any opposition.

The Commission asked if the process would be different if the garage proposed were to be attached to the home. Mr. Hickok provided details on the requirements for an attached garage.

Motion by Commissioner Evanson to close the public hearing. Seconded by Commissioner Buyse.

UPON A VOICE VOTE, ALL VOTING AYE, CHAIR HANSEN DECLARED THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY AND THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS CLOSED AT 7:34 P.M.

The Commission recognized that there were practical difficulties, this seemed to be the most reasonable location, and there was no opposition from neighboring property owners.

Motion by Commissioner Evanson to approve Variance Request, VAR22-000001. Seconded by Commissioner Buyse.

UPON A VOICE VOTE, ALL VOTING AYE, CHAIR HANSEN DECLARED THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

OTHER BUSINESS

4. Discussion Item: Locke Park Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) Between the City of Fridley and Anoka County

Scott Hickok, Community Development Director, provided background on the JPA which began in 1980. As part of the JPA the City transferred control over maintenance and operations of the 3 parks identified in the agreement, Locke Park, Plaza Park, and Locke Lake Park. The JPA was also intended to direct implementation of the Locke Park Master Plan. The City owns the land and though the parks aren't regional parks, the trail through the park is regional trail. Locke Park property was purchased by the City prior to 1980 to protect the amenity. The City and County have entered discussions to potentially dissolve the JPA and have Fridley take back the maintenance and programming of the parks identified in the agreement. He noted that the County supports this action, and the City would continue to use its land as maintained park and trail. The City may be required to file its own Metropolitan Council Master Plan and Budget for future expenditures related to the dissolution of the Joint Powers Agreement. Since the Planning Commission participated in the creation of the JPA referencing the Master Plan, it is the City's intention to keep the commission involved in this portion of the process as well. The City intends to continue dialog with the County as they are amid a public engagement process to determine what the public views as the proper future for Locke and associated parks. That process would be very valuable to the City if they do dissolve the JPA and take over programming.

Scott Hickok, Community Development Director stated, two pieces of legislation will be required at the State level to allow the City to recoup its costs for maintenance and upkeep, currently paid to Anoka County. These Items are Fridley will request to be an "Implementing Agency" (stat. 473.351), thereby entitled under the law to recoup cost incurred and to be included in cities identified with regional parks or trail required to file a master plan with the Metropolitan Council (stat. 473.313)

Scott Hickok, Community Development Director stated, an important take away from this presentation is that the City has no intent of taking the land for another purpose. Its existence as parks and trail is an important asset and the discussion herein centers around maintenance and programming, not a change in land use.

Commissioner Buyse asked would this incur extra expenses for maintenance of the trails, potential expenses for the City, and questioned why Anoka County has not been accountable for the maintenance of the park and/or funding that the County receives for that purpose.

Commissioner Dritz asked how the City knows what to ask for in terms of funds, when they approach the State Legislature.

Hickok responded that a number have staff have worked toward knowing that answer and we would have a 5-year plan likely as we approached the Legislature.

Commissioner Borman stated, he has been on the Parks and Recreation Commission for many years and through that time that Commission has been extremely disappointed in the lack of maintenance and programming in Locke Park.

Commissioner Evanson asked if the County has any real explanation for the lack of attention to the plan and things like the maintenance.

Scott Hickok responded that the County too would agree there has been a lack of attention to the agreement.

Commissioner Meisner asked what does protect this area as a park if the JPA is no longer in effect.

Scott Hickok responded the master plan and the Comprehensive Plan. The City has approved a plan out to 2040 showing this land as a park and an amenity any change would require hearings and public would be invited. Hickok concluded that as anything other than a park a proposal would not be a popular one with the public or Council for that matter.

Mr. Hickok reviewed current maintenance by the County and City, the potential for additional funding and/or expenses, the relatively low expense and staff time that would be needed to better maintain the natural setting of the trails, and the opportunity to provide programming in this setting. It was confirmed that the City would only take responsibility of the trail segments within those identified park areas and the County would maintain responsibility of the remainder of the regional trail segments.

5. Approve 2023 Planning Commission Meeting Dates

Scott Hickok, Community Development Director, stated that the proposed 2023 meeting calendar was included in the packet asked for input on potential conflicts.

Motion by Commissioner Meisner approving the 2023 Planning Commission meeting dates. Seconded by Commissioner Dritz.

UPON A VOICE VOTE, ALL VOTING AYE, CHAIR HANSEN DECLARED THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Evanson to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Meisner.

UPON A VOICE VOTE, ALL VOTING AYE, CHAIR HANSEN DECLARED THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY AND THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:28 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Staple, Recording Secretary