Planning Commission

January 4, 2023
7:00 PM
Fridley City Hall, 7071 University Avenue NE

Minutes

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

Present
Pete Borman
Amy Dritz (arrived at 7:02 p.m.)
Mark Hansen
Mike Heuchert
Terry McClellan
Ross Meisner
Stacy Stromberg, Planning Manager
Scott Hickok, Community Development Director

Approval of Meeting Minutes

1. Approve November 16, 2022, Planning Commission Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Meisner to approve the minutes. Seconded by Commissioner McClellan.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Chair Hansen declared the motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing

2. To Consider a Comprehensive Plan Amendment, CPA #22-000001, by Roers Companies to Modify the Future Land Use Designation and Map from Commercial to Multi-Family for the Property at 6257 University Avenue N.E.
3. To Consider a Rezoning, ZOA #22-000001, by Roers Companies to Rezone the Property at 6257 University Avenue N.E. from C-3, General Shopping to S-2, Redevelopment District to Allow for the Construction of a Multi-Family Housing Project
4. To Consider a Plat, PS #22-000003 by Roers Companies to Replat the Property at 6257 University Avenue N.E. to Redevelop the Property for a Multi-Family Housing Project

Stacy Stromberg, Planning Manager, explained that the three public hearings are related to one case. She stated that she will provide one presentation and the public hearings will be opened and closed individually with individual recommendations.

Commissioner Dritz arrived.

Motion by Commissioner Meisner to open the public hearing to consider a Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Seconded by Commissioner Borman.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Chair Hansen declared the motion carried unanimously and the public hearing was opened at 7:02 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Meisner to open the public hearing to consider a Rezoning Request. Seconded by Commissioner McClellan.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Chair Hansen declared the motion carried unanimously and the public hearing was opened at 7:02 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Meisner to open the public hearing to consider a plat. Seconded by Commissioner McClellan.

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.

Ms. Stromberg presented a request for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment, a Rezoning, and a Plat which would allow for redevelopment on the Moon Plaza located at 6257 University Avenue. She stated that Comprehensive Plan Amendment would propose to change the land use designation from Commercial to Multi-Family; the rezoning would propose to change the zoning from C-3, General Shopping to S-2, Redevelopment District; and the plat would create one new lot. She reviewed the history of the Moon Plaza including different users and noting that the property has been a topic of criticism for many years. She reviewed details on the proposed project which would create 169 units of affordable housing with a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units. She provided more details on the Comprehensive Plan analysis, rezoning analysis, and plat analysis. She provided a summary of the proposed site plan and also reviewed details of the housing study, traffic study, and recommended stipulations for each request as recommended by staff.

The Commission asked and received confirmation that parking would be allowed on the frontage road. The Commission asked for additional details on parking allocations.

Andy Bollig, Roers Companies, replied that underground parking stalls are rented first come first serve meaning that the last two units would be allocated surfacing parking. He provided more details on parking allocations and the different methods that could be used. He noted that because this is affordable housing, they generally see less roommate scenarios in multiple bedroom units. He provided additional details on the income limits and general management of the facility.

The Commission asked for details on whether there have been issues with parking at other multi-family buildings. Ms. Stromberg replied that there have not been any issues with parking for buildings with similar parking ratios. She noted one building that had issues because of phased construction but has not had issues upon being fully built out.

Mr. Bollig explained how the affordable housing works and noted that this would not be Section 8 and all renters would be paying their own rent.

The Commission asked for details on the encouragement for electric charging. There was also inquiry as to whether solar energy has been considered. The Commission also asked for an update on the commercial location at another Roers multi-family building in Fridley. Mr. Bollig replied that they do install conduit in multiple locations for electrical vehicle charging in the underground areas and could investigate adding a location on the surface lot. He stated that they will explore all solar options with Xcel Energy.

Shane LaFave, Roers Companies, replied that they have the commercial pad available and continue to actively market that site for many different options but there has not been much activity or interest. He hoped that as they get further out from covid they would be able to find a complimentary use to a residential building such as a restaurant, daycare, or fitness use.

The Commission asked the current occupancy of Moon Plaza and whether anything was learned through the previous development with Roers for this type of development and whether this would compete with that building. Ms. Stromberg replied that the Moon Plaza building is fully occupied at this time. Mr. Hickok replied that it was a very good experience that resulted in a very good building. He stated that the market was very much matched with the availability of units. Mr. Bollig replied that existing project rented much more quickly than anticipated and they still receive interest, therefore they could refer those interested parties to this project.

The Commission noted that many old commercial properties have been converted to residential in recent years and asked if that could impact the small businesses in the community. Mr. Hickok commented that direct access to University is important for commercial/retail users and as that direct access has been removed, that interest has changed. He believed that the changes occurring better match what a land use plan would look like with that changed access, creating better commercial nodes that match the market.

The Commission asked for details on screening. Ms. Stromberg provided details on the different screening proposed through landscaping. She noted that they are not requiring fencing, nor is the applicant proposing fencing.

The Commission asked for details on the City's plan for mixed use development, especially with more high-density housing continuing to be constructed. Mr. Stromberg replied that certain areas are guided for mixed use, but the timing is not great for commercial users. Mr. Hickok commented that they are focusing on multi-modal transportation and planning. He stated that while they plan for retail, they do not want to plan for retail that will not come and end up with vacant space.

The Commission asked for details on the building orientation. Mr. Bollig commented that they did look at different orientations and in cooperation with staff they support this orientation. Mr. Hickok provided more details noting that this provides more architectural interest along the corridor.

The Commission also asked for details on tax impact in changing commercial to residential. Mr. Hickok commented that this would take a tired and diminishing value commercial building, perhaps valued around $1,000,000 and creates a much more vibrant development with a building cost of between $30,000,000 and $50,000,000 which is incredible for the tax base. He noted that this would also bring students to the school district and would be a positive change for the tax base.

Mr. Bollig thanked staff noting that this has been a great cooperative process and they are excited to bring another great project to Fridley.

There were no comments from the public.

Motion by Commissioner Borman to close the public hearing for consideration of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Seconded by Commissioner McClellan.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Chair Hansen declared the motion carried unanimously and the public hearing was closed at 8:03 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Borman to close the public hearing for consideration of a rezoning. Seconded by Commissioner McClellan.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Chair Hansen declared the motion carried unanimously and the public hearing was closed at 8:03 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Borman to close the public hearing for consideration of a plat. Seconded by Commissioner Heuchert.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Chair Hansen declared the motion carried unanimously and the public hearing was closed at 8:04 p.m.

The Commission thanked the applicant for considering another project as they believe it would be an asset to the community. The Commission agreed that this transition from commercial to residential would be a benefit to the community and this location. The question was asked as to whether there is a sense of what the commercial businesses will do. Ms. Stromberg replied that staff was not aware and noted that would be between the property owner and its tenants. Mr. LaFave noted that all conversations and processes with the commercial tenants at Moon Plaza is following the lease stipulations. He noted that ideally, they would like to break ground in late spring or early summer.

The Commission stated that perhaps there is a stipulation that parking on the frontage road could be restricted, should that become a problem. Another member of the Commission suggested removing that section of the frontage road to create additional greenspace and parking. Mr. Hickok confirmed that staff has had those conversations and has removed frontage roads in other areas when appropriate. He noted that other businesses may oppose closing the frontage road at this time.

Motion by Commissioner McClellan recommending approval of CPA #22-000001. Seconded by Commissioner Borman.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Chair Hansen declared the motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Commissioner McClellan recommending approval of the rezoning request for ZOA #22-000001 with the stipulations recommended by staff. Seconded by Commissioner Heuchert.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Chair Hansen declared the motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Commissioner McClellan recommending approval of the plat #22-000003. Seconded by Commissioner Borman.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Chair Hansen declared the motion carried unanimously.

It was noted that this item will move forward to the City Council for consideration on January 9, 2023.

<u>Other Business</u>

5. Election of Vice Chair

Ms. Stromberg noted that Commissioner Evanson previously served as Vice Chair but has since been elected to the City Council and therefore a new Vice Chair would need to be elected. Commissioner McClellan volunteered to serve as Vice Chair.

Motion by Commissioner Meisner to elect Commissioner McClellan as Vice Chair. Seconded by Commissioner Dritz.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Chair Hansen declared the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Stromberg noted that because this special meeting was held, the regular January meeting has been canceled. She provided an update on recent cases that the Planning Commission has provided a recommendation on and noted an upcoming commission training session.

Adjournment

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

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Chair Hansen declared the motion carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Staple, Recording Secretary