



**Meeting of the Planning Commission
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Tuesday, April 23, 2024**

Members Present: Chair Perry Beise, Commissioner Tony Mauren, Commissioner Eric Johnson, Commissioner Robert Rydberg, Commissioner Dennis Booth

Members Absent: Commissioner Jill Larson-Vito

Staff Present: Community Development Director Zack Carlton, Senior Planner Chris Leeseberg, and Sr. Admin. Assistant Jennifer Green

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting was called to order at 06:51 PM by Chair Beise.

2. CONSIDER AGENDA

Moved by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Booth to approve the April 26, 2024, Planning Commission agenda. Motion carried 5-0.

3. CONSIDER MINUTES

3.1 Planning Commission Minutes 03-26-2024

Moved by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Rydberg to approve the Planning Commission minutes from March 26, 2024. Motion Carried 5-0.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

4.1 Conditional Use Permit: PUD Amendment for Taco Bell Signage

Mr. Leeseberg presented the staff report.

Chair Beise opened the public hearing. There being no one to speak to this matter, Chair Beise closed the public hearing.

Moved by Commissioner Robert Rydberg and seconded by Commissioner Dennis Booth to recommend approval of a PUD amendment limiting the freestanding sign height consistent with the C-3 (Highway Commercial) sign ordinance as requested by Taco Bell, 19131 Freeport St. NW. Motion Carried 5-0.

4.2 Preliminary Plat: Natures Edge Business Center Fifth Addition

Mr. Carlton presented the staff report.

Chair Beise opened the public hearing. There being no one to speak on this matter, Chair Beise closed the public hearing.

Moved by Commissioner Eric Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Dennis Booth to recommend approval of the Preliminary Plat of Natures Edge Business Center Fifth Addition with the condition that the closing for the purchase of city-owned property occurs in conjunction with the recording of the plat. Motion Carried 5-0.

4.3 Ordinance Amendment: Spectrum Schools PUD

Mr. Carlton presented the staff report.

Chair Beise opened the public hearing. There being no one to speak to this matter, Chair Beise closed the public hearing.

Moved by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Booth to recommend approval of the proposed ordinance amendment establishing the PUD district and standards for Spectrum Schools. Motion Carried 5-0.

4.4 Ordinance Amendment: Bradford Park PUD

Mr. Carlton presented the staff report.

Chair Beise opened the public hearing. There being no one to speak to this matter, Chair Beise closed the public hearing.

Moved by Commissioner Booth and seconded by Commissioner Johnson to recommend approval of the proposed ordinance amendment establishing the PUD district and standards for Bradford Park. Motion Carried 5-0.

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

There was no general business discussed.

6. COUNCIL LIAISON UPDATES

Councilmember Westgaard updated the commission on recent council decisions.

7. MOTION TO ADJOURN REGULAR MEETING

Moved by Commissioner Rydberg and seconded by Commissioner Booth to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 07:57 p.m.

8. WORK SESSION – UPPER TOWN CONFERENCE ROOM

The worksession opened at 7:06 p.m.

8.1 Concept Review: Rueter Walton - Proposed Apartments

Mr. Leeseberg presented the staff report. He stated the applicant is requesting informal, non-binding feedback regarding this proposed residential apartment project.

Jared Ackmann with Rueter Walton presented details regarding the proposed housing project. He stated the property is under contract with the current owner and is looking for feedback from the city. He provided a background on Rueter Walton and projects they've built in the Twin Cities. He reviewed the site itself and felt the natural topography and tree coverage naturally screened the building from neighboring properties. Based upon feedback from the neighborhood meeting, they made two minor adjustments; one change was to add a privacy fence along the eastern side of the property adjacent to the garages to help with screening; the other change was moving the dog run to the southwest corner of the property. He stated they will be asking the city for a parking variance to the parking ordinance to allow for 1.88 stalls per unit as they feel their request would provide sufficient parking spaces to the point of being over parked. He stated this request is backed up from data on other family-style housing projects they've built, and along with parking studies, stated these current projects use 1.3 to 1.6 parking stalls with no issues. He stated Elk River has a stronger, outdated parking ordinance. Mr. Ackmann then went into the covered parking requirement and will be proposing 30 covered stalls; the city requires 96. He indicated it comes down to financial feasibility and the cost for one covered parking unit is \$25,000. The market doesn't allow the necessary rent to cover the cost of constructing covered parking for all units and it isn't financially feasible. He outlined the amenity package for tenants such as a playground, fitness center, in-unit laundry, community areas, and noted these were high quality housing amenities. He stated they would be applying to the state for tax-exempt bonds that would allow them to sell for tax credits to finance the project. He stated with this financing, that they would be restricted to income that renters could make, and the rent charged, which would be 60% Area Median Income (AMI) as dictated by Sherburne County. Mr. Ackmann outlined the proposed rents and explained the goal of this project was to provide affordable housing for the 'missing middle' workforce housing. He noted the current market of homes for sale and stated this project provides another housing option for young families or couples trying to work or live in the area.

Commissioner Mauren asked for more clarification on AMI and asked if this was considered low-income housing. Mr. Ackmann explained Sherburne County is lumped into the metropolitan counties when calculating the midpoint of a metropolitan area's income distribution, which is 60% of the average median income. Therefore, income cannot be more than \$52,200 for an individual, \$59,640 for 2 adults. This allows Rueter Walton to get a grant to lower the costs of rent to offset the costs of development. Mr. Ackmann states it does restrict their rental pool. They utilize a management company that does a rigorous income verification process to ensure compliance of renters. Mr. Ackmann explained this type of program is called Section 42 housing, where the tax credit encourages developers to build affordable housing to meet the need of the community. He stated CommonBond was a similar project in Elk River, which went through Minnesota Housing; this project would go through the state.

The Planning Commission then provided feedback on the concept plans submitted. They discussed the following:

- Parking requirements - typically 2-1 requirement with proof of parking, which shows where they could build additional parking spots should they need it
- Parking lot design and snow removal/storage
- Landscape plan and stormwater plan - need more information
- Local motorcycle dealership on-street overflow parking - busy roadway

Chair Beise then allowed members of the audience to ask questions and state concerns.

Justin Trevorrow - 19587 Concord Street, entered an email on the the record and summarized it to the commission. Concerns with traffic, does it align with the comprehensive plan, felt low-income housing had dysfunctional families/children, and doesn't want to start a precedence for other low-income housing projects in Elk River.

Bruce Smith - 18965 Carson Circle - felt it didn't make sense to add that many residents to such a small area, and felt it would increase crime and accidents. He began an online petition opposing the project and asked the Planning Commission to deny it.

Ken Lueck - 11388 198th Ave. NW - distributed a list of concerns which was entered into the record.

Gretchen Lauken - 11366 196th Ave. NW - stated she has contacted police regarding Harley overflow parking and how dangerous it makes the streets, and felt this project would increase those parking hazards. She is a relator and provided housing stats for the current number of homes for sale.

The consensus of the Planning Commission was that they weren't opposed to low-income housing but didn't feel the proposed location was a good fit to support this project.

9. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Moved by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Booth to adjourn the worksession.

The meeting adjourned at 07:57 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Jennifer Green.



Perry Beise, Chair



Tina Allard, City Clerk