

**WILLMAR PLANNING COMMISSION  
CITY OF WILLMAR, MN  
WEDNESDAY, JULY 20, 2022**

**MINUTES**

1. The Willmar Planning Commission met on Wednesday, July 20, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. at the Willmar City Offices Conference Room #1.  
  
\*\*Members Present: Jonathan Marchand, Stacy Holwerda, Jeff Kimpling, and Cletus Frank  
  
\*\*Members Absent: Stephanie Carlson, Jasmine Miller, and Steve Dresler.  
  
\*\*Others Present: Justice Walker - Planning and Development Director, Kayode Adiatu – City Planner, Matthew Smith – Planning Intern, Jennifer Kotila – WC Tribune, Jason Butler – Willmar, Ben Fischer – Danube, Carol Gilbertson – Willmar, Troy Johnson – Fergus Falls, Tim Jackson – Rockstep LLC, Aaron Backman – Willmar, Justin Paffrath – Kandiyohi MN, and Daniel Tempel – Willmar.
2. MINUTES: The Planning Commission approved the minutes from July 6, 2022 meeting as presented.
3. CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA: There were no changes to the Agenda.
4. ROCKSTEP PLAZA REZONE 22-04: Planner Adiatu presented the Rockstep Plaza application to rezone the property from the Shopping Center to the General Business District. He informed the Commission that staff sent out a public hearing notice to all property owners living or doing business 350 feet from the Rockstep Mall, so they can attend the meeting and be heard. Planner Adiatu also informed the Commission that a representative of the Skylark mall contacted the City to ask about the benefits of rezoning their property to the General Business District and what implication the rezone might cause should they sell the property. Planner Adiatu informed the Commission that staff responded to all their questions and concerns accordingly.

The public hearing opened at 6:33 pm. Mr. Paffrath noted that the rezone of the Rockstep Plaza to GB is a great idea. Commissioner Frank reiterated the intent of the City to eliminate the Shopping Center District, and asked what steps staff has taken to rezone the Skylark mall since it is the only property left in the Shopping Center District. Planner Adiatu responded that talks are ongoing with a representative from the Skylark mall management to rezone the property to the General Business District. Mr. Jackson informed the Commission that their application is separate from the Skylark mall and they would like to move forward with the process.

The public hearing was closed at 6:48. Commissioner Frank moved to approve the rezone of the Rockstep Plaza from the Shopping Center District to the General Business District. Commissioner Kimpling seconded the motion.

There being no further discussion on the matter, all voted in favor and the motion carried.

5. PAFFRATH LAND SALE: Director Walker presented the sale of four city-owned parcels located at 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, to the Planning Commission and informed them that the City Council has determined and approved a sale price as reflected in the purchase agreement. He further stated that the Planning Commission decision would allow the applicant to move forward with their development plans on the properties.

Commissioner Kimpling moved to approve the sale of four city-owned parcels to Justin Paffrath. Commissioner Holwerda seconded the motion.

All but Commissioner Frank voted in favor of the purchase agreement. The motion carried.

On why he voted “Nay”, Commissioner Frank clarified that he voted “Nay” not on the transaction or the intended use of the property by the purchaser but on the City’s sale price, which is less than half of the estimated fair market value. He however acknowledged that “the parcels have been in the City coffers undeveloped and that there is a benefit to the transaction”.

6. BEN FISCHER SHED MOVE: Director Walker presented the move of a shed by Mr. Fischer from 223 Benson Ave SE to another property located at 532 Benson Ave SE. The intended use of the property in the new location is for a contractor shop. He further stated that although the property is in the Renaissance zone, staff does not think they qualify for open zoning. Director Walker also informed the Commission that the lot they are moving the shed to is smaller than the lot size requirement and so consolidating to the adjoining lots would make the project work. Mr. Fischer and Mr. Butler both addressed the Commission about their plans and the challenges they are facing.

Commissioners examined their plans and considered several options to make the project work. Commissioner Frank asked how much of the adjoining lot the applicant would need to bring the lot into compliance. Director Walker responded that they would need 8200 SF. He later pointed out that resubdividing the lot in the future may render the lot non-conforming and that the applicant should review their plans before moving forward.

All parties agreed that subdivision is the only way to making the plan work, and there being no discussion, the hearing was closed.

7. UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES REZONE FROM SC – R-5: Planner Adiatu presented an application by Mr. Herzog to rezone the property on 1400 Lakeland Dr. NE, from Agriculture to High Density Multi-family Residential District. The proposed rezoning is to allow for 216 housing units in the said property (72 units in each building). Planner Adiatu informed the Commission that the hearing is only an introduction and that they are only reviewing the introduction of the rezone and setting a public hearing date.

Mr. Johnson briefed the Commission about their development records and the need for more housing in Willmar. He further informed the Commission about their plans to provide other housing facilities to the development. Director Walker informed the applicant that they

would have to come back for a Conditional Use Permit since housing developments above 24 units in R-5 district requires a CUP.

There being no further discussion on the matter, the hearing was closed.

8. PARKING MAXIMUMS: Director Walker informed the Commission of the need to change the parking standard in the City. He clarified that the current parking minimum requirement (based on SF) is causing excessive parking in some areas; citing the new subway parking stall. Director Walker also informed the Commission that staff would be implementing traffic analysis as a part of the new parking requirements, bearing in mind the uniqueness and parking needs of each project. Commissioner Frank asked what would be the implication of implementing parking maximums if a new business on the same property needs more parking. Director Walker responded that buildings could be repurposed, and remodeled to fit the use change, just like with housing redevelopment. He further stated that implementing parking maximums would only allow for a better land use plan.

Commissioner Holwerda stated that parking maintenance get astronomical if requirements are based on SF; citing the Rockstep Plaza parking lot as an example. Director Walker informed the Commission that it is only preliminary and that staff would present the new parking requirements to them at the next meeting.

There being no further discussion on the matter, the hearing was closed.

9. MISCELLANY: Director Walker informed the Commission about lot minimums and the need to reduce them so that people with smaller lots can still develop their property. He further informed the Commission that reducing lot minimums would promote infill development and density in the City. Commissioner Kimpling asked if this would be applied to tiny homes development. Director Walker responded that the change is being proposed for housing developments in the R-2 district but staff can also propose the change in the R-1 district.

Director Walker also informed the Commission that staff is currently working on phase 2 of the comprehensive plan and that staff would bring a draft of the future land use plan for them to review.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Best Regards



Kayode Adiatu

# ROCKSTEP REZONE



# PAFFRATH LAND SALE





# BEN FISCHER SHED MOVE



# UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES REZONE

