

**WILLMAR PLANNING COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, MAY 17th, 2023
333 6TH STREET SW, CONFERENCE ROOM 1
MINUTES**

1. The Willmar Planning Commission met on Wednesday, May 17th, 2023, at 6:30pm at the City Hall

Members Present: Chair Jonathan Marchand, Christopher Buzzeo, John Christianson and Steve Dresler.

Members Absent: Kelsey Vosika, Stacy Holwerda, Yvon Fils-Aime

Others Present: Director Justice Walker, City Planner Guilherme Motta, Jennifer Kotila, Kevin Marti, G. Simons, Monica, Adam Gregory, Matthew Runke, Aaron Backman, Jason, Bridgette Ben Osdel and Leslie Valiant.

2. Chair Marchand called for order at 6:30pm. He started with the review of minutes from May 3rd. Commissioner Marchand asked for a correction in item 3, changing parking lots for parking spaces. Commissioner Buzzeo motioned to approve with the correction, and Commissioner Christianson seconded. All members present voted aye to approve. The motion was approved.

3. ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT – GB / AP RENTALS – PUBLIC HEARING.

Director Walker gave an overview of the project and read the staff recommendation. Chair Marchand opened the public hearing. Mrs. Monica asked why she had received the notice, and she explained her concerns of a 5ft setback on the corner lots, considering street crossing, concerns about the signs scale in the front setback, and asked who the applicant is. Director Walker explained the gains in the walkability in the district, the future creation of a boulevard and the difference between the businesses located on 1st Street, north and south Willmar Ave. Simons asked the impact of the change for the businesses. Director Walker explained almost all constructed buildings already have less than 25ft setback and the changes are for new construction. These changes don't affect the existing ones and 5ft is a minimum and owners can opt for a more than 5 feet front setback. Public Hearing was closed at 6:52pm. Commissioner Buzzeo asked why not a zero setback and asked how this would effect corner lots. Director Walker stated that corner lots have sight line setbacks that will not be affected by a tighter setback. Commissioner Dresler questioned the position of the utilities and Kevin Marti (of WMU) explained that they are in the rear of the properties, not at the front.

Staff recommended in favor of the approval for the setback changing.

Commissioner Buzzeo motioned to approve, and Commissioner Dresler seconded. Chair Marchand and Commissioner Christianson voted aye. The motion was approved.

4. ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT – NEW GB-2 AND PARK MINIMUM – PUBLIC HEARING

Director Walker gave an overview of the project and read the staff recommendation; he gave examples like the Subway project to clarify the need for changes in the parking minimums. Chair Marchand opened the Public Hearing at 7:10pm. Nobody spoke, and the public hearing was closed. Commissioner Christianson asked where 30,000 square feet change came from. Commissioner Dresler asked if there are lots available in the proposed area and if the General Business 2 is a new zoning including the 30,000 feet area and new uses. Commissioner Buzzeo talked about the issue for the lots that are less than 30,000 square feet. Commissioners suggested a lot minimum of 25,000 square feet lot to include smaller lots already existing in the district instead of 30,000 square feet minimum lots,

Staff recommended in favor of the approval for the changes in the parking minimum ordinance and for the creation of the General Business 2 zoning.

Commissioner Dresler motioned to approve the changes in the parking minimum as suggested and the creation of the General Business 2 zoning with 25,000 square feet minimum area for lots. Commissioner Christianson seconded. Commissioners Marchand and Buzzeo voted aye. The motion was approved.

5. LES SCHWAB TIRES, SUBDIVISION – PRELIMINARY

Director Walker explained the proposal for the minor subdivision according to the agenda overview, saying it is a preliminary review. Dresler asked where the access for the development is and asked where the Menard's pond is located. Director Walker explained the access is on private property on a private road that Menard's owns. The pond for stormwater is on the south side of the property. There were no more comments.

6. RAIL PARK, SUBDIVISION – PRELIMINARY

Director Walker gave an overview of the project according to the agenda, he told the commission that the environmental issues will not affect the preliminary and final plats approval. The construction of the park will be done in three different phases and no buildings will be constructed at the moment. EDC Director Backman talked about the stages of the project, buying and developing the land. First stage is expected to start late 2023 summer and the second late fall. Kevin Marti explained that utilities are being built in the region. Commissioner Buzzeo confirmed what is the first stage and explained his concerns about the traffic. No more comments.

7. WMU PURCHASE AGREEMENT

Director Walker overviewed the WMU purchase agreement and explained it is preliminary. Kevin Marti explained the agreement to the commissioners. Commissioner Dresler asked what kind of facilities they have. Commissioner Buzzeo asked how many employees they have. Kevin

Marti responded they have about 25 total office employees. Commissioner Christianson asked if the City and WMU wouldn't join the buildings. Kevin Marti answered that they have different needs. Commissioner Dresler questioned where the money goes. Administrator Valiant explained that the City owns the land, but WMU has authority to spend their funds but need to submit to council approval. The proceeds from the sale will go to WMU. Technically, WMU cannot own land, so their sales must go through City procedure. No more comments.

8. CLAY BRIDGETTE, PLAN REVIEW - PRELIMINARY

Director Walker gave an overview of the project according to the agenda. Commissioner Christianson asked if it needs to be rezoned. Chair Marchand asked if it is a single unit. No more comments.

9. MISCELLANNEY

Director Walker explained it is a busy summer with a lot of projects to be approved. He asked for attention for the PUD file sent by e-mail for helping in the PUD approval in the next meetings. No more comments.

10. ADJOURN

Commissioner Dresler motioned to adjourn at 8:08. Seconded by Commissioner Buzzeo. The motion carried. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Minutes presented by City Planner Guilherme Motta