

**WILLMAR PLANNING COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7th, 2023
333 6TH STREET SW, CONFERENCE ROOM 1
MINUTES**

1. The Willmar Planning Commission met on Wednesday, June 7th, 2023, at 6:30pm at the City Hall

Members Present: Chair Jonathan Marchand, Kelsey Vosika, Stacy Holwerda, Yvon Fils-Aime and Christopher Buzzeo.

Members Absent: John Christianson and Steve Dresler.

Others Present: Director Justice Walker, City Planner Guilherme Motta, Jennifer Kotila, Leslie Valiant, Steve Kuepers, Christine Soma, Michelle Haefner, Troy Peterson, Kevin Marti, Steve Blom, Philip Kvam, Justin Paffrath, Aaron Backman, Dan Tempel, Jason Ver Steeg, Bridgette Venosdel.

2. Chair Marchand called for order at 6:30pm. He started by moving agenda item 6 (Rail Park Subdivision, Final Plat) to the next meeting. Commissioners reviewed minutes from May 17th. Commissioner Buzzeo asked for changes in the item 1 regarding to corner setbacks and item 7 regarding budget belongs from WMU. Commissioner Buzzeo motioned to approve with the corrections, and Commissioner Vosika seconded. All members present voted aye to approve. The motion was approved.

3. KUEPERS – CUP AND MINOR SUBDIVISION – PUBLIC HEARING.

Director Walker gave an overview of the project and read the staff recommendation. He explained it is a minor subdivision, all the utilities are provided and just need to hook up on the existing ones.

The public hearing was opened at 6:41pm.

Mr. Backman said it would be a good investment and a great addition for the city.

Mr. Kuepers commented that he hopes to go on with the project and there is a similar existing development built in front of the proposed lot.

No more comments for the public. Public Hearing closed at 6:43pm.

Commissioner Buzzeo asked about engineering comment 20, regarding the lighting plans, and Director Walker responded that lighting plans are usually reviewed and approved with the full construction plans. He commented about the concern with storm water calculation for the housing development considering the original plat was approved for commercial purpose. Director Walker commented that all plats will be approved prior to the construction permits and all recommendation from the engineering and others will be considered.

Staff recommended in favor of the approval for the CUP and the Minor Subdivision.

Commissioner Buzzeo motioned to approve the Conditional Use Permit, and Commissioner Fils-Aime seconded. Chair Marchand made the affirmative findings according to Ordinance 1280. Commissioner Vosika voted aye, Commissioner Holwerda voted aye, Commissioner Fils-Aime voted aye, Commissioner Buzzeo voted aye and Chair Marchand voted aye. The motion was approved.

Commissioner Buzzeo motioned to approve the Minor Subdivision; Commissioner Holwerda seconded. Commissioner Vosika voted aye, Commissioner Holwerda voted aye, Commissioner Fils-Aime voted aye, Commissioner Buzzeo voted aye and Chair Marchand voted aye. The motion was approved.

4. JUSTIN PAFFRATH TINY HOMES – PUD AND PUBLIC HEARING

Director Walker gave an overview of the project and read the staff recommendation; he explained that they are still providing utility plans and information to be submitted for comments and planning commission should have more information to approve the project.

Public Hearing was opened at 6:52pm.

Director Walker commented that the Planning Commission has authority to determine all the requirements for PUD approval considering the standards for approval and setbacks.

Mr. Paffrath commented that Minnesota Department of Labor excluded the exterior wall for calculation of the tiny houses area. He said the project is not as dense as apartments would be and the proposed setbacks will allow the option for building the garages.

No one else commented and the Public Hearing was closed at 6:58pm.

Chair Marchand motioned to table until Planning Commission has more information to approve the project and could be voted. All members present votes aye.

5. TEXT AND MAP ZONING AMENDMENT – I-3 INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT – PUBLIC HEARING

Director Walker explained the proposal for the creation of the new I-3 Industrial District. He explained the distinction between the I-1, I-2 and I-3 Industrial Districts and the intention is to create an exclusive rail focused district.

Chair Marchand opened the Public Hearing at 7:04pm.

Mr. Backman is supportive of the proposed text and map amendment and all developments in the proposed zoning may be rail related or they may look for land in other spot. Several companies have already contacted interested in the area.

Mr. Paffrath asked what the affected areas are and if all of them are city properties.

Mr. Philip Kvam owns a parcel and wanted to know how he would be affected.

Chair Marchand asked about the BNSF certification criteria and Mr. Backman explained it is related to soil, environment assessments, surveys, boundaries and topography.

Director Walker explained that there is a concern about the environmental issues.

Commissioner Buzzeo asked what the logic of the I-3 Industrial District is. Director Walker explained it is to maximize the rails infrastructure and investments.

Mr. Backman said the zoning will determine the size of areas and they should be big areas considering the proposed requirements for trails use and the rail goes near all of the buildings, working as a hub.

Commissioner Holwerda asked what are the uses permitted on I-3 Industrial District and City Planner Motta presented a table of uses.

Chair Marchand asked if anyone has any more questions. Public Hearing was closed at 7:29pm.

Commissioner Holwerda motioned to approve the Text and Map Zoning Amendment; Commissioner Vosika seconded. Chair Marchand voted aye Commissioner Fils-Aime voted aye, Commissioner Vosika voted aye, Commissioner Holwerda voted aye and Commissioner Buzzeo voted nye. The motion was approved.

6. This item was moved to the next meeting.

7. RAIL PARK, PLAN REVIEW 1ST STAGE – FINAL

Director Walker gave an overview of the project according to the agenda and comments provided. He explained Minnesota rules for the acreage of the development and Environment assessment workshop will be required. He read the attorney recommendation regarding the EAW concerns and that Phase 1 could be approved but the EAW will need to be provided. Mr. Backman pointed out that the Council approved accepting a grant funding Highway 40 improvements including access for the Rail Park, considering trucks access in a safe manner. He said they would need at least a line of rail to start the project. Commissioner Holwerda asked about the size of the building and the water utilities availability and if WMU will be supporting it. Director Walker explained that all buildings will be reviewed separately in the future and submitted for WMU and engineering comments and so utilities can be requested and provided by developer, if necessary. Each new development will need separate approval, will be subject to new comments and has to be submitted to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Buzzeo motioned to approve Rail Park Plan Review; Commissioner Holwerda seconded. Chair Marchand made the affirmative findings according to Ordinance 1280. Chair Marchand voted aye, Commissioner Fils-Aime voted aye, Commissioner Vosika voted aye, Commissioner Holwerda voted aye and Commissioner Buzzeo voted aye. The motion was approved.

8. WMU PURCHASE AGREEMENT - FINAL

Director Walker overviewed the WMU purchase agreement according to the agenda. He showed the location of the area in the GIS and mentioned there is a WMU representative in the meeting. Chair Marchand suggested that commissioner read the minutes from 05/17 to remind the past questions.

Commissioner Vosika motioned to approve WMU Purchase Agreement; Commissioner Fils-Aime seconded. Chair Marchand voted aye, Commissioner Fils-Aime voted aye,

Commissioner Vosika voted aye, Commissioner Holwerda voted aye and Commissioner Buzzeo voted aye. The motion was approved.

9. VENOSDEL, PLAN REVIEW – FINAL

Director Walker gave an overview of the project according to the agenda. He explained that there is no alteration in the exteriors and only interior remodeling. No more comments.

Commissioner Fils-Aime motioned to approve Venosdel Plan Review; Commissioner Holwerda seconded. Chair Marchand made the affirmative findings according to Ordinance 1280. Chair Marchand voted aye, Commissioner Fils-Aime voted aye, Commissioner Vosika voted aye, Commissioner Holwerda voted aye and Commissioner Buzzeo voted aye. The motion was approved.

10. BETHESDA – REZONING INTRODUCTION

Director Walker gave an overview of the proposal according to the agenda. He explained the project and that they would need a rezoning to permit the development. They are going to build senior housing. Christine Soma explained the difference between assistant and independent living, considering that the second if or residential propose. Justice commented that it has to be rezoned and platted. A Conditional Use Permit / PUD would be required. Chair Marchand asked what their timeline is. Director Walker said the approvals could stretch into August. Mr. Backman said Bethesda extends their housing to the Willmar Ave and senior living is the number one category considering housing needs in the city. He was supportive of the development and said it is a step forward giving people housing options. He was also supportive of the high-density rezone request. Mrs. Soma asked if Limited Business is a more flexible zoning than the Residential ones. Director Walker explained that as a PUD they can do what they want with flexibility with Planning Commission approval, not depending on the zoning they are. No more questions.

11. MISCELLANNY

1. Mr. Temple presented a proposed subdivision on Highway 12 to split in two lots and develop a storage building as a basic storage structure. He presented a preliminary plat for the subdivision.
2. Director Walker broached the topic of short-term rentals. He stated that he has seen an uptick in inquiries over the last few months. He said he would like to see an ordinance adopted that prohibited non-homesteaded short-term rentals.

12. ADJOURN

Commissioner Holwerda motioned to adjourn at 8:25pm. Seconded by Commissioner Fils-Aime. All members present aye. The motion carried. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Minutes presented by City Planner Guilherme Motta