

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
PLANNING COMMISSION
LITTLE CANADA, MINNESOTA**

DECEMBER 9, 2021

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof a regular meeting of the City Council of Little Canada, Minnesota was convened on the 9th day of December, 2021 in the Council Chambers of the City Center located at 515 Little Canada Road in said City.

Chair Nick Schwalbach called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and the following members of the Planning Commission were present at roll call:

PLANNING COMMISSION: Johnson, Kwapick, Schwalbach, Buesing, Thorson, and Quarles. Absent: Kulousek

ALSO PRESENT: Community Development Director/ Planner Corrin Wendell

ADOPT AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

MINUTES

Commissioner Johnson made a motion to approve the November 10, 2021 Planning Commission minutes as submitted. Commissioner Kwapick seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

No comments.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

COMMISSION BUSINESS: ZONING MAP AMENDMENT (REZONING) – 0 NORTH OWASSO BLVD (TWIN LAKE BLVD) – CASE #1406

The Community Development Director presented a request for a rezoning for two properties located at 0 Owasso Boulevard. She stated that the rezoning would be from R-1 to R-3, which would be contingent upon a Comprehensive Plan amendment. She noted that the City of Little Canada is the property owner. She reported that when combined, the properties total 4.63 acres. She stated that this request would facilitate a proposal to construct two 60-unit residential buildings, each three stories in height. She stated that the housing product would be targeted towards families. She stated that the site is heavily wooded and advised that a border of trees would remain around the perimeter of the property. She noted that the City acquired the property through tax forfeiture in 1983 and it has remained vacant since that time. She displayed proposed elevations, noting that the design is not set in stone at this time. She reviewed the criteria that a zoning amendment should be reviewed against. She stated that a public hearing

**MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 9, 2021**

will be held at the December 15, 2021 City Council meeting and properties within 350 feet have been notified.

Chair Schwalbach commented that the property is currently guided for medium density housing in the Comprehensive Plan and acknowledged that this would be an increase to that density. He asked if there has been discussion on whether staff and/or the Council is supportive of that action.

The Community Development Director replied that a workshop was held with the City Council to discuss the proposal and the Council supported that change in density because of its transitional location. She commented that the change did seem to be welcome.

Chair Schwalbach asked if the property is surrounded by R-1 residential with the exception of Twin Lake.

The Community Development Director confirmed that to be true and provided details on surrounding zoning.

Paul Keenan, representing the applicant, provided details on the affordability that would be proposed for the units and the financing they would be attempting to obtain. He noted that this would be a two-phase project.

The Community Development Director stated that there has been an internal review committee to review the project and they have discussed access points, which seem favorable for Twin Lake Blvd. She confirmed that additional details on the project would be brought back through Site Plan review.

Commissioner Quarles asked if there are anticipated issues getting the Comprehensive Plan amendment approved by the Metropolitan Council.

The Community Development Director commented that she did not foresee any issues with that amendment.

Chair Schwalbach invited members of the public to speak.

Bill Dircks, 80 Twin Lake Boulevard, asked when details would be provided about the project itself.

Mr. Keenan anticipated that there would be a community open house in the spring to discuss project details.

Chair Schwalbach confirmed that there would also be another Planning Commission meeting to review the Site Plan once prepared.

**MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 9, 2021**

Commissioner Buesing asked what would happen if the Comprehensive Plan amendment were not approved.

The Community Development Director replied that the rezoning would not be approved if the Comprehensive Plan amendment were not approved. She confirmed that the increased density would provide additional housing opportunities for families and would meet many goals, therefore she believed the amendment would be seen as favorable.

Chair Schwalbach commented that he believes there would be interest related to screening, traffic flow and lighting from the adjacent R-1 properties as this moves forward.

Johnson introduced the following motion:

RECOMMENDING THE APPROVAL OF A ZONING MAP AMENDMENT TO REZONE 0 NORTH OWASSO BLVD, PID 313022310001 AND PID 313022310002 FROM R-1, LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL TO R-3, HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL CONTINGENT UPON A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT

The foregoing motion was duly seconded by Quarles.

Ayes (6). Nays (0). Motion passed.

COMMISSION BUSINESS: PRELIMINARY/FINAL PLAT AND VARIANCE – 3000 LABORE ROAD – CASE #1407

The Community Development Director presented a request for a preliminary/final plat and variance for the property at 3000 Labore Road. She stated that the City received a major subdivision and variance application from Nathan Faire of Landmark of Little Canada, LLC and is proposing to construct 15 single-family homes. She stated that the property is zoned R-1 and is about 9.6 acres in size. She displayed the proposed preliminary plat which identifies the lots. She displayed the grading and storm sewer maps, noting that engineering staff would continue to review and provide input to the applicant. She displayed the proposed placement of the homes, noting that some of the homes are proposed to be closer to the street. She reviewed the zoning code requirements and variance requirements. She stated that staff feels that there is a unique and special circumstance for the property because of the location of the wetland and topography of the site. She stated that staff agrees that this site layout is most conducive to the site and challenges it possesses. She reviewed the anticipated schedule moving forward. She noted that the City Council will hold a public hearing on January 26, 2022. She noted that the applicant was not able to be present tonight, but she could bring forward any comments the Commission may have.

Chair Schwalbach acknowledged that the Commission discussed this earlier when it reviewed the Comprehensive Plan amendment.

**MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 9, 2021**

Commissioner Quarles asked how closely staff working with the applicant related to home placement near the wetlands.

The Community Development Director commented that cluster development does provide benefit in allowing the natural environment remains and for protection of the wetlands.

Commissioner Quarles stated that she does prefer the cluster development. She asked if there should be a conservation easement over the wetland to provide that protection rather than includes those areas within the home lots.

The Community Development Director commented that she would assume the developer wants to maximize the land area for the homeowner. She stated that staff would be able to monitor the wetland area. She stated that a comment was received from a resident with stormwater questions and wetland management concerns. The resident wanted to ensure that the drainage would be handled on the site and not impact adjacent properties. She stated that staff would require as-builts to be submitted for each lot to ensure the properties would not impact anyone else.

Commissioner Johnson commented that she likes that the buildable area is much more compatible with this plan. She stated that she understands the depth needing to be adjusted because of the wetland. She stated that she is struggling to find a reason to issue a lot width variance as the reasoning would seem to be to support 15 lots rather than 14 lots. She stated that the variance of 77 feet equates to one lot and therefore she struggles to see a justification outside of financial factors.

Chair Schwalbach commented that while he agrees, he also acknowledges that in the previous case the City increased density. He stated that he also could not imagine the cost to complete the elements of this project and therefore is unsure that this project would be feasible without the last lot. He stated that he is happy to see there is a developer willing to make this project work. He stated that he would prefer this path over having the property sit vacant.

Commissioner Johnson stated that she does agree with this comment as opinion but struggles to find justification outside of financial hardship.

The Community Development Director stated that the previous discussion of the Commission focused on the density that would be needed to meet the guiding for the property. She stated that if one lot were removed, the site would not meet the required density for the site.

Commissioner Kwapick stated that when a previous plan for this project was reviewed about three years ago there was a much more compact plan because of the difficult topography and soil conditions on the site. He stated that proposal was denied because it was too much. He appreciated the creativity that was put into this plan and acknowledged that it is a tough property. He believed that this would be a good development for the site.

**MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 9, 2021**

Schwalbach introduced the following motion:

RECOMMENDING THE APPROVAL OF A PRELIMINARY/FINAL PLAT AND VARIANCES FOR FRONT YARD SETBACKS, LOT WIDTHS, AND CUL-DE-SAC LENGTH FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 3000 LABORE ROAD, PID 04-29-22-24-0015, WITHIN THE R-1, LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT AS STATED IN THE STAFF REPORT

The foregoing motion was duly seconded by Johnson.
Ayes (6). Nays (0). Motion passed.

REPORTS FROM STAFF

The Community Development Director stated that staff is going to be working with the University of Minnesota Resilient Communities Program again on an implementation project for the transit stops in Little Canada. She noted that this is the last meeting of Chair Schwalbach and thanked him for all the work that he has done on behalf of the Planning Commission. She stated that she will be having wrist surgery the following Monday and will be out of the office recovering therefore she was unsure if there will be a January meeting for the Commission.

REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Johnson thanked Chair Schwalbach for his service on the Commission noting that he has been a great person to learn from.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.