



Approved: April 6, 2022

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
PLANNING COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2021
6:30 P.M. - ARDEN HILLS CITY HALL**

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, Chair Paul Vijums called to order the regular Planning Commission meeting at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present were: Chair Paul Vijums, Commissioners Marcie Jefferys, Kurtis Weber, Jonathan Wicklund, and Clayton Zimmerman.

Absent: Commissioners Steven Jones and Subbaya Subramanian.

Also present were: City Planner Jessica Jagoe, Planning Consultant Jane Kansier, and Councilmember Fran Holmes.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – DECEMBER 8, 2021

Commissioner Wicklund moved, seconded by Commissioner Jefferys, to approve the December 8, 2021, agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

November 3, 2021 – Planning Commission Regular Meeting

Commissioner Zimmerman moved, seconded by Commissioner Jefferys, to approve the November 3, 2021, Planning Commission Regular Meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

PLANNING CASES

- A. Planning Case 21-028; 1901 Lake Valentine Road – Planned Unit Development Amendment – *Public Hearing***

Planning Consultant Kansier stated at their May 22, 2019 and subsequently amended on April 27, 2020, the City Council approved Planning Case 18-014 for a Planned Unit Development with Mounds View Public Schools for Mounds View High School. The approved PUD allowed for

several additions to the existing high school, a reconfiguration of the existing parking lot, and the use of the property at 1901 Lake Valentine Road, for parking and other school purposes. The amendment approved in April, 2020, added 14 additional conditions to the existing Planned Unit Development to address existing traffic and pedestrian safety issues based on the findings contained within the traffic study report, an evaluation of existing site conditions, and the Planned Unit Development Agreement. The terms of the PUD approval require the School District to implement safety improvements on Lake Valentine Road to address traffic and increased pedestrian crossings between the school building and the north parking lot, including installation of turn lanes and other access improvements, trail and sidewalk improvements, pedestrian signal, signage and striping modifications, and drainage and utility improvements.

Planning Consultant Kansier explained the Applicant originally proposed two separate phases of traffic and pedestrian safety improvements for Lake Valentine Road. Phase 1 safety improvements, installed in 2020, included installation of a pedestrian traffic signal system, crosswalk markings, temporary painted center median, curb ramps and sidewalk pedestrian routes to the front of the school.

Planning Consultant Kansier reported the Phase 2 traffic and pedestrian safety improvements were scheduled for construction in 2021 in order to allow the School District to acquire additional property from the State of Minnesota. This additional property would have allowed the relocation of the west entrance to the north parking lot to align with the drop-off/pick-up lot on the south side of Lake Valentine Road. Additional improvements include construction of a center median at the crosswalk, modifications to the south boundary of the north parking lot, and the construction of dedicated right turn lanes for westbound traffic accessing the east parking lot entrance and for the eastbound traffic accessing the drop-off/pick-up lot. The Applicant worked with the State of Minnesota for nearly two years on purchasing property, but has been unsuccessful in obtaining an easement or acquisition of land. The State indicated they were at least another year out in considering the sale of this land. As a result, the Applicant believes this option is no longer feasible and asked the City Council to consider a revised alignment. The City Council reviewed this issue at their May 17, 2021, workshop. The Council noted the use of the State property is preferred; however, they understand there is no guarantee the school district will be able to purchase that land. Safety is the most important factor. In August, 2021, the City Council approved an extension of the original Phase 2 construction to 2022.

Planning Consultant Kansier reviewed the surrounding area, the Plan Evaluation and provided the Findings of Fact for review:

1. The properties located at 1900 and 1901 Lake Valentine Road are located in the R-1 Single Family Residential District.
2. The proposed conditions when implemented will create a safer environment for pedestrian movement across Lake Valentine Road.
3. The proposed roadway improvements will improve traffic flow through the road section adjacent to the school.
4. With the applied conditions, the application is not anticipated to create a negative impact on the immediate area or the community as a whole.
5. The traffic and pedestrian study was reviewed as part of the April 2020 Amended PUD application by City and School District staff.

6. The City and School District staff concur on the proposed conditions and recommended improvements.

Planning Consultant Kansier stated staff recommends approval of Planning Case 21-028 for an Amended PUD at 1900 and 1901 Lake Valentine Road, based on the findings of fact, as amended by the conditions in the December 8, 2021, Report to the Planning Commission:

- a) The road construction and realignment as shown on the approved plans must be completed prior to the start of the 2022-2023 school year.
- b) All other conditions of the original Planned Unit Development and Amended Planned Unit Development shall remain in full force and effect.

Planning Consultant Kansier reviewed the options available to the Planning Commission on this matter:

1. Recommend Approval with Conditions
2. Recommend Approval as Submitted
3. Recommend Denial
4. Table

Chair Vijums opened the floor to Commissioner comments.

Commissioner Jefferys asked if these changes were due to the addition of the north lot.

Chair Vijums discussed how the school property had been renovated over the past few years, noting they made more room for parking and was also working to improve pedestrian safety.

Mike Tierney, Bolton & Menk, representing the applicant, explained the school acquired the bus garage property and was working to bring it into compliance. He reported the drop off at the front entry has been working well.

Commissioner Jefferys questioned how the City calculated the number of parking spaces a school needed.

Planning Consultant Kansier stated the required number of parking stalls was based on the number of students and staff members. She explained there were approximately 1800 students plus staff which led the City to recommend 622 spaces. She noted the additions were not expected to increase enrollment but rather were to manage the students currently in the school.

Commissioner Wicklund asked if the applicant was supportive of Condition A.

Planning Consultant Kansier commented she believed the applicant supported this condition.

Commissioner Weber indicated he was not supportive of the colorized concept plan. He noted this did not match with the submittals within the engineering plan. He stated he would prefer to see a concept plan that resembles what would be done. He reviewed the overhead plan and explained he did not see value in having cars from the west turn to go east out of the west exit.

He suggested these be restricted during school hours to keep traffic from crossing in front of the signal.

Jake Bongard, Traffic Engineer with Bolton & Menk, indicated this was something that was discussed and he understood how important it was to keep people away from the crossing. He stated the difficulty was that when trying to control movements, this had to be done with raised surfaces, otherwise it becomes an enforcement issue. He noted signing could be looked at. He reported the other thing that was discussed was that it would be easier for people to use the east access to go east. His hope would be that people would attempt to avoid the crossing signal.

Commissioner Weber commented the last time he saw this he recommended medians be installed. He stated signage would be another option. He then reviewed ADA requirements regarding curb ramps. He recommended the ramps be changed to one directional ramps.

Mr. Bongard indicated this was something he could review.

Commissioner Zimmerman suggested the area have runway lights in order to delineate the walkway for the pedestrians using the crosswalk.

Planning Consultant Kansier reported there were street lights in this area.

Commissioner Weber stated ground lighting may be difficult and wouldn't work in the winter months when covered by snow and ice. He noted the crosswalk would be painted and illuminated by street lights.

Chair Vijums asked if Commissioner Zimmerman was making a suggestion or would he like the lighting be made a condition for approval.

Commissioner Zimmerman commented he would like this to be a suggestion that the applicant looks into further.

Tyler Erdahl, Wold Architects and Engineers, believed the new light poles within the parking lot, along with the street lights would provide adequate light the site. He noted the striping would also be improved.

Chair Vijums asked how 119 parking spaces were lost from the original plan.

Planning Consultant Kansier stated these spots were lost due to the islands and drive aisles.

Chair Vijums questioned if the Commission supported the applicant providing additional parking spaces if the landscaped islands were eliminated.

Commissioner Wicklund commented he would like to hear from the applicant regarding this matter. He wanted to better understand if the school would appreciate having more parking spaces, or was the 591 parking spaces sufficient.

Mr. Erdahl stated currently the area north of the bus garage was not being used for student parking. He discussed how the school issued parking permits and noted the entire north lot was not being used at this time. He indicated the 591 parking spaces was sufficient at this time.

Chair Vijums commented he supported the loss of the parking spaces for safety reasons. He explained he appreciated the proposed changes and believed they would assist with improving both traffic and pedestrian safety.

Chair Vijums opened the public hearing at 7:36 p.m.

Chair Vijums invited anyone for or against the application to come forward and make comment.

Elizabeth Garsky, 1795 Lake Valentine Road, reported she was the last house on Lake Valentine Road in Arden Hills. She noted she sees a lot of traffic passing her home and she was concerned about the safety of this traffic. She explained she sees danger with how many cars are backed up in this area in the morning and afternoon and then there are students crossing into the parking lot to get to their vehicles. She stated she was worried about the gas pump islands. She asked if the trees that were previously planted near the tennis courts would be eliminated. She recommended that everyone using the north lot be forced to turn right for safety reasons.

Planning Consultant Kansier reported the gas pump islands would be removed and the area would be graded and the only thing that would remain on that site would be the building.

Chris Paquette, Director of Operations for Mounds View Schools, discussed the plans for the site noting the building would be reroofed and resided to make it aesthetically pleasing. He reported any ground contamination would be corrected prior to the parking lot being completed.

Councilmember Holmes explained the City Council was concerned about the traffic coming to and from the school. She indicated the Council asked the Ramsey County Sheriff to observe this area for two weeks and made some findings. She reviewed these findings noting the traffic deputy believed the traffic flowed smoothly and safely.

Rich Beardsley, 1771 Janet Court, stated he has lived in his home for over 25 years. He asked questions about student enrollment noting the enrollment at Mounds View has declined over the years. He reviewed numbers noting in 2005 the school had 1900 students and in 2013 the school had 1600 students. He questioned if the City took into consideration the declining enrollment when considering these projects. He noted he walked the parking lot and there were an average of 85 empty parking spaces in the morning. He asked if this kind of data was taken into consideration.

Chair Vijums reported the City was being asked to alleviate a concern that was occurring right now in order to help traffic flow more smoothly. He noted the number of parking spaces being provided by the school was dictated by City Code.

There being no additional comment Chair Vijums closed the public hearing at 7:53 p.m.

Commissioner Zimmerman moved and Commissioner Weber seconded a motion to recommend approval of Planning Case 21-028 for an Amended PUD at 1900 and 1901

Valentine Road, based on the findings of fact, as amended by the conditions in the December 8, 2021 Report to the Planning Commission. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

UNFINISHED AND NEW BUSINESS

None.

REPORTS

A. Report from the City Council

Councilmember Holmes provided the Commission with an update from the City Council. She thanked the residents that came out to provide comments this evening. She commented on the Scannell Property project, noting the Council discussed this matter at length and recommended approval. She reported the City Council would be holding a Truth in Taxation Hearing on December 13. She noted the State of the City address was available on the City's website. She encouraged people to visit the City's light displays and vote for the best display by December 13. She encouraged residents with broken holiday lights to recycle them at City Hall. She explained Councilmember Dave McClung passed away several weeks ago. She indicated the Council would be holding interviews for this open position the first week of January.

B. Planning Commission Comments and Requests

Chair Vijums thanked Commissioner Subbaya Subramanian for his dedicated service on the Planning Commission and to the City of Arden Hills.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Zimmerman moved, seconded by Commissioner Wicklund, to adjourn the December 8, 2021, Planning Commission Meeting at 8:02 p.m. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).