

Commissioner Weber indicated he still did not believe this was enough of a setback. He explained he lived on a lake and he feared there was too much leeway within this request. He recommended the side yard setbacks be set at 15 feet.

Chair Vijums reported the Commission could recommend approval of this request with one additional condition to read: The side yard setback for Tract A shall be 10 feet.

Chair Vijums moved and Commissioner Bjorklund seconded a motion to add Condition 20 to read: The side yard setback for Tract A as measured from the south property line shall be 10 feet. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

Chair Vijums moved and Commissioner Bjorklund seconded a motion to recommend approval of Planning Case 23-003 for a Minor Subdivision and Variance as submitted by the Applicant in Site Plan B at 1174 Edgewater Avenue, based on the findings of fact and the submitted plans, as amended by the conditions in the March 8, 2023, report to the Planning Commission with Condition 20. The motion carried 4-1 (Commissioner Weber opposed).

Chair Vijums recessed the Planning Commission meeting at 8:01 p.m.

Chair Vijums reconvened the Planning Commission meeting at 8:06 p.m.

B. Planning Case 23-004; Zoning Code Amendment to Chapter 13 to Allow Solar Energy Systems in the Conservation District – Public Hearing

Community Development Director Jagoe stated Alatus LLC, “The Applicant,” is proposing an amendment to the language of Chapter 13 – Zoning Code of the Arden Hills City Code to allow for the conditional use of solar energy systems within the Conservation District in City Code Section 1320.05 – Land Use Chart.

Community Development Director Jagoe explained in 2013, the City adopted two zoning code amendments to establish the Parks and Open Space Zoning District and Conservation Zoning District within the city code. Prior to this, there were no zoning districts designated for “parks or open space areas” that corresponded to two of the City’s future land use designations in the 2030 (and now 2040) Comprehensive Plan.

- Park and Open Space defined as “areas designated as public parks”
 - o Consists of 529 acres of land of City owned public parks, Ramsey County parks, and other open spaces for trails or stormwater easement ponds owned by the City, Ramsey County, the State of Minnesota, and private property owners/homeowner’s associations.
- Park Preserve defined as “areas designated as natural or scenic areas that are to be preserved for public use or open space”
 - o Consists of 1,449 acres all located on the Arden Hills Army Training Site

Community Development Director Jagoe explained by creating the Parks and Open Space Zoning District and Conservation Zoning District, the City was working towards compliance with Minnesota State law, which mandates that local zoning codes are consistent with adopted comprehensive plans. Specific to this application, the Conservation District is guided by the Park Preserve future land use classification in the Comprehensive Plan. The CD District only applies to

the Arden Hills Army Training Site (AHATS). In 2014, the City rezoned 2/3's of the AHATS property to the Conservation District and then in 2016 the remaining acreage was rezoned. The City did not rezone the entire AHATS property originally in 2014 because Ramsey County was working with the Federal Government to purchase some of the area to be incorporated into their park system.

Community Development Director Jagoe discussed the AHATS background, commented further on the Zoning Code Text Amendments, and provided the Findings of Fact for review:

1. Alatus, LLC, The Applicant, is proposing amendments to the language of Chapter 13 – Zoning Code of the City Code.
2. Currently, Section 1305.04 does not include a definition for Solar Energy System.
3. The Applicant is proposing the City amend the zoning code to add a definition for Solar Energy System to Section 1305.04 of the Zoning Code.
4. Under the City's Zoning Code Section 1320.05, a Solar Energy System is considered a prohibited land use in the Conservation District.
5. The Applicant is proposing an amendment to alter the Land Use Chart in Section 1320.05 of the Zoning Code to allow a Solar Energy System as a Conditional Use in the Conservation District.
6. The City is proposing to add Solar Energy System design standards to Section 1320.15 – Special Requirements for the Conservation District.
7. Amendments to the Zoning Code regulations require a public hearing prior to action by the City Council.
8. If the zoning amendments were approved, an Applicant would be required to submit a Conditional Use Permit land use application for the permitting of a Solar Energy System within the Conservation District.

Community Development Director Jagoe reviewed the options for Planning Case 23-004 for a Zoning Code Amendment to Chapter 13 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 Bjorklund asked for clarification on what properties were being impacted.

Community Development Director Jagoe clarified primer tracer property is located within the Conservation District, rather the zoning code text amendment would be applicable to all of the land within the conservation district, not just site specific.

Commissioner Weber asked if there was interest in other parcels.

Community Development Director Jagoe stated she was not aware of any other property that the federal government owns, that they were considering selling.

Commissioner Bjorklund commented on the definition of solar array system. He recommended the size of an array be greater defined. He stated overall he supported solar systems on homes. He asked if other communities have allowed solar energy systems within their City Code. He believed it would be beneficial to review this language.

Chair Vijums asked what the acreage was of the federal government property.

Community Development Director Jagoe stated this property was 1,600 acres in size.

Chair Vijums questioned if there was any purpose of this land remaining greenspace for sustainability purposes.

Community Development Director Jagoe commented under the future land use designation this land was slated for parks and open space. She noted the intent of the conversation district was to hold the federal property.

Commissioner Bjorklund stated he was concerned with how a large portion of property could be sold for a solar farm and this could impact the redevelopment of this property.

Chair Vijums believed solar energy was a good thing, but he feared how the neighboring properties would be impacted if a large solar farm were installed.

Commissioner Bjorklund stated it would benefit the Commission to have an aerial picture of the conservation district property.

Community Development Director Jagoe commented the discussion before the Planning Commission was not specific to the primer tracer property. Rather, the Commission should consider the Conservation District overall.

Commissioner Mitchell recalled that the conservation land (AHATS and primer tracer property) would be difficult to clean to residential standards. For this reason, she was not concerned that an apartment building would be placed directly next to a solar array.

Community Development Director Jagoe discussed the listing for the 62 acres (primer tracer property) being sold by the federal government and noted the site had been cleaned to an industrial standard. She understood the sale document for this property would state this property could not be developed for residential.

Chair Vijums opened the public hearing at 8:43 p.m.

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

Lyle Salmela, 1480 Arden Vista Court, reported he sent comments to the Planning Commission prior to the meeting. He reviewed his comments noting he served as the Chair of the Restoration Advisory Board that was set up by the Army to clean up TCAAP. He noted he was also elected to Chair the Energy Resiliency Board in 2014 and 2015. He commented on the Energy Integration Resiliency Framework (ERIF) that was completed for TCAAP. He explained he understood Councilmember Tena Monson and County Commissioner Nicole Frethem met with the president of NSP, along with Bob Lux of Alatus. He recommended the primer tracer property be zoned for

a solar farm and not for any other use. He discussed his visions for TCAAP noting this project could be a potential model for microgrid and grid energy design. He commented further on how the solar array would benefit the entire TCAAP development. He reported the State of Minnesota passed zero net energy requirements, noting no natural gas can be used by 2030.

Chair Vijums asked how much of the City could be powered from a 60 acre solar array.

Mr. Salmela reported this would power everything to the substations in the area. He anticipated substations near Lino Lakes and below I-694 would be fed. He stated if the grid were to go down, a 60 acre solar array would provide enough energy for all of TCAAP.

Commissioner Bjorklund questioned if the lines for the solar array would be above ground or underground.

Mr. Salmela indicated the lines could be either above or below ground.

Rich Skoman, 4380 Arden View Court, reviewed a map of the TCAAP development that included the primer tracer property and discussed the location of the wildlife corridor. He stated it was his hope the AHATS property could be used for cross country skiing in the winter months.

There being no additional comment Chair Vijums closed the public hearing at 8:58 p.m.

Commissioner Bjorklund stated he supported the proposed zoning code amendment and he appreciated the fact that all future solar energy system requests would be a conditional use.

Chair Vijums moved and Commissioner Mitchell seconded a motion to recommend approval of Planning Case 23-004 for a Zoning Code Amendment to Chapter 13 of the Arden Hills City Code to Allow Solar Energy System as a Conditional Use in the Conservation District, based on the findings of fact and the submitted plans. The motion carried unanimously (5-0).

UNFINISHED AND NEW BUSINESS

None.

REPORTS

A. Report from the City Council

Councilmember Rousseau provided the Commission with an update from the City Council. She stated Planning Case 22-023 was approved by the City Council on February 7. She explained the Council has had a request that the sign code be reviewed. She anticipated staff would begin working on this issue and would be reporting back to the Planning Commission at a future meeting.

B. Planning Commission Comments and Requests

Commissioner Weber welcomed Councilmember Rousseau to the City Council.