



Approved: May 6, 2020

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
PLANNING COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2020
6:30 P.M. - ARDEN HILLS CITY HALL**

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, Chair Nick Gehrig called to order the regular Planning Commission meeting at 6:30 p.m. Due to the COVID-19 crisis this meeting was held virtually.

ROLL CALL

Present were: Chair Nick Gehrig, Commissioners Marcie Jefferys, James Lambeth, Subbaya Subramanian, Paul Vijums, Kurtis Weber, Jonathan Wicklund, and Clayton Zimmerman.

Absent: Commissioner Steven Jones.

Also present were: Community Development Manager Mike Mrosła, Associate Planner Joe Hartmann, Public Works Director/City Engineer Todd Blomstrom, and Councilmember Steve Scott.

OATH OF OFFICE

Community Development Manager Mrosła administered the Oath of Office to newly appointed Planning Commission members Marcie Jefferys and Kurtis Weber.

Chair Gehrig welcomed Commissioners Jefferys and Weber to the Planning Commission.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – APRIL 15, 2020

Chair Gehrig stated the agenda will stand as published.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 5, 2020 – Planning Commission Regular Meeting

Commissioner Zimmerman moved, seconded by Commissioner Lambeth, to approve the February 5, 2020, Planning Commission Regular Meeting as presented. A roll call vote was taken. The motion carried 6-0-1 (Commissioners Jefferys abstained).

PLANNING CASES**A. Planning Case 18-014; Mounds View High School Amended Planned Unit Development – Public Hearing**

Community Development Manager/City Planner Mrosla stated on May 22, 2019, the City Council approved Planning Case #18-014 for the Mounds View High School PUD, subject to several conditions. The terms of the PUD approval requires the Mounds View 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. Following approval of Planning Case #18-014, the School District and City proceeded with a study to identify specific traffic and pedestrian improvements for Lake Valentine Road. The traffic and pedestrian study was recently completed and reviewed by City and School District staff.

Community Development Manager/City Planner Mrosla reviewed the Traffic Study 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 proposed school zone speed limit, the effective hours, and the extent of the school zone are recommended by City staff and Mounds View School District staff.
6. The traffic and pedestrian study was reviewed by City and School District staff.
7. The City and School District staff concur on the proposed conditions and recommended improvements.

Community Development Manager/City Planner Mrosla stated staff recommends approval of Planning Case 18- 014 for an Amended PUD at 1900 and 1901 Lake Valentine Road, based on the findings of fact and recommendations based on the findings contained within the traffic study, an evaluation of existing site conditions, and the Planned Unit Development Agreement, and as amended by the following conditions:

1. Realignment of the west parking lot entrance to align with the west school site entrance on the south side of Lake Valentine Road (Pick-up / Drop-off Access) to be completed prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year. The School District will need to negotiate in good faith to complete easement or property acquisition from the adjacent parcel owned by State of Minnesota to accommodate the realignment of the west parking lot entrance.
2. Elimination of eastbound left turn movements at the east parking lot access upon completing the realignment of the west parking lot entrance noted above.

3. Installation of perimeter fencing along the southwest portion of the parking lot upon completing the relocation of the west parking lot entrance noted above. Proposed fencing shall be four (4) tall decorative fencing.
4. Installation of a centralized traffic signal controlled pedestrian crossing at the location generally depicted on Figure 8 in the study report.
5. Installation of a small raised median and pedestrian refuge adjacent to the signal controlled pedestrian crossing as determined by the City Engineer during design of the signal.
6. Installation of sidewalk on the south side of Lake Valentine Road to route pedestrians from the signal controlled pedestrian crossing to the front entrance of the school building.
7. Installation of an additional street light at the signal controlled pedestrian crossing, in addition to the street lights previously installed at the east and west parking lot entrances.
8. Installation of School Zone Speed Limit signage as previously authorized by the City Council.
9. Installation of a 150-ft long exclusive right turn lane for eastbound Lake Valentine Road at the pick-up / drop-off access (south side of street).
10. Installation of a 150-ft long exclusive right turn lane for westbound Lake Valentine Road at the east parking lot access (north side of street).
11. Installation of sidewalk along the north side of Lake Valentine Road between the east parking lot entrance and Janet Court.
12. Installation of a 2-inch mill and overlay along Lake Valentine Road between the construction limits of right turn lane construction (#9 and #10 above) to repair the existing pavement as a result of improvements noted above and utility crossings associated with the site improvements, as well as accommodating new pavement and crosswalk markings.

Community Development Manager/City Planner Mroska 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 Gehrig opened the floor to Commissioner comments.

Commissioner Lambeth asked if the school speed zone signage would be installed in the spring of 2020.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom reported the school has a plan in place for the speed zone signage and after receiving approval from the City the signage would be installed. He explained he did not have a specific date, but he anticipated installation would take place in the next six weeks.

Commissioner Lambeth questioned if the school zone would be enacted during special events at the school.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom reported the school speed zone would be in effect “when children are present” per State Statute. He discussed how the school speed zone worked near the Valentine Hills Elementary School. He explained compliance levels were higher

when the school speed zone was active only during school days. He commented further on how the school speed sign could be programmed.

Commissioner Vijums stated he supported the proposed changes and indicated he appreciated the traffic studies that have been completed. He explained he did have concerns with the traffic entering and exiting the horseshoe drop off area. He inquired if this entrance would be changed.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom commented one of the challenges was for vehicles traveling eastbound and wanting to make a turn into the west parking lot entrance on the north side of the road, they were in a left turn lane which conflicted with the vehicles trying to turn into the parent drop off area (the horseshoe). He explained this was the primary motive for moving the west parking lot entrance to the west and aligning it with the parent drop off entrance. He indicated this would address the confusion of traffic exiting from the west parking lot.

Commissioner Vijums indicated the restriping of the roadway would also help with traffic and pedestrian safety. He asked how the school was going to address the stacking of traffic along the roadway.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom stated these vehicles should not be stopped and were located in a “No Parking Zone”. He stated a right hand turn lane would be added and vehicles would not be allowed to be parked in this area as they would be blocking traffic. He indicated the City would have to work with the Sheriff’s Department on enforcement.

Commissioner Vijums recommended “No Stopping” or “No Drop Off Area” signs be posted along this side of the roadway.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom reported these signs could be posted.

Commissioner Vijums supported the City recommending “No Stopping” and “No Drop Off Area” signs be posted to address the parents that are parking along the roadway.

Community Development Manager/City Planner Mroska reported “No Parking” signs were already in place and stated the school district was aware of this enforcement concern. He indicated additional enforcement would be necessary in order to educate parents.

Commissioner Subramanian asked what the timeline was for this project and if there would be delays from the State of Minnesota.

Community Development Manager/City Planner Mroska commented the State of Minnesota does have a backlog of 300 projects and noted conversations had begun between the State and the school district. He reported the State was in the investigative mode at this time.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom stated if negotiations with the State of Minnesota were not successful the realignment of the west parking lot entrance with the parent drop off could still be done without encroaching onto State property.

Commissioner Jefferys indicated she was pleased to see these plans moving forward. She questioned how the success of this plan would be monitored by the City.

Community Development Manager/City Planner Mrosła reported staff would be working closely with the school district to monitor the new signage. He explained certain signage required approval from the State of Minnesota.

Commissioner Zimmerman thanked staff, the City Council and school district representatives for their efforts on this project. He was pleased that all student safety concerns were being taken into consideration.

Chair Gehrig agreed stating he recalled reviewing this project previously and understood there were concerns regarding traffic and safety. He was pleased to see these concerns were now being addressed.

Chair Gehrig opened the public hearing at 7:14 p.m.

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

Elizabeth Garsky, 1795 Lake Valentine Road, explained she sent an email to the Planning Commission. She feared that too much signage would be installed and that it would be ignored. She recommended the parent drop off location be changed. She stated she was very concerned about the backups being caused by parents picking up and dropping off students. She commented further on the difficulties she has getting to her home in the evening hours. She feared that the residents that live in the area had given up on voicing their concerns because all of these changes have come about so quickly. She questioned why this project would move forward if the school district did not receive land from the State of Minnesota.

There being no comment Chair Gehrig closed the public hearing at 7:20 p.m.

Commissioner Weber discussed how structured medians assist with properly directing traffic. He questioned what the size of the median would be. He recommended a full-length median be considered for safety purposes.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom reported the intent of the small raised median was to provide some pedestrian protection and refuge. He explained the challenge of putting in a longer median was that it reduces the capacity of the left turn lane. He stated the City would have to work through the best balance during the project design phase. He indicated he has had some discussions with the school district regarding the parent drop off location but the school has not proposed make a change to the locations at this time.

Commissioner Vijums commented the parents parked along Valentine Road for drop off and pickup and questioned how this concern would be addressed going forward.

Community Development Manager/City Planner Mrosła suggested the Commission add conditions to address this concern. He stated Condition 13 could read: Additional signage be placed stating “No Parent Drop Off or Pickup”. He reported Condition 14 could read: Pavement marking shall be added to the parent drop off and pick up area or the western access.

Commissioner Vijums supported these additional conditions.

Commissioner Lambeth stated he believed the traffic study completed by WSB was very thorough and in depth. He believed the realignment of Valentine Road may be a potential solution for expansion of the roadway without creating additional traffic concerns.

Chair Gehrig indicated the high school has grown and would continue to grow. He explained the current property has restraints when addressing the needs for the growing community. He stated he appreciated the efforts that have been put into this traffic and pedestrian safety plan.

Chair Gehrig moved and Commissioner Zimmerman seconded a motion to recommend approval of Planning Case 18-014 for Amended PUD at 1900 and 1901 Lake Valentine Road, based on the findings of fact and recommendations based on the findings contained within the traffic study, an evaluation of existing site conditions, and the Planned Unit Development Agreement, and as amended by the fourteen (14) conditions in the April 15, 2020, report to the Planning Commission and two recommended by staff. A roll call vote was taken. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

B. Planning Case 20-001; 2040 Comprehensive Plan Amendment – *Public Hearing*

Community Development Manager/City Planner Mroska stated Minnesota State law requires that all communities within the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area update their Comprehensive Plans every ten years. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to establish the policies that guide the future physical and community development of Arden Hills. It is also a reference document for the Planning Commission and City Council when evaluating private development projects, such as Summit Development’s Parkshore proposal (see Planning Case 19-002). The Comprehensive Plan and all its amendments must reflect the adopted regional policies in the Metropolitan Council’s system and policy plans. Local planning efforts are linked to the larger regional infrastructure of parks and trails, road networks, and wastewater infrastructure, and the City’s plan must conform to the regional vision. An amendment to the Comprehensive Plan requires a recommendation from the Planning Commission following a public hearing, adoption of a resolution by the City Council, and review and approval by the Metropolitan Council.

Community Development Manager/City Planner Mroska reviewed the background, the Plan Review and provided the Findings of Fact for review:

1. Minnesota state law requires that all communities within the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area update their Comprehensive Plans every ten years.
2. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to establish the policies that guide the future physical and community development of Arden Hills.
3. The Metropolitan Council has previously denied the Comprehensive Plan Amendment citing that it does not have language supporting increasing the densities above the maximum permitted in a specific land use district.
4. The proposed amendment only affects the High Density Land Uses.
5. The proposed amendment only effects land guided for High Density south of Highways 96 and 10.
6. The proposed amended language has been vetted and is supported by the Metropolitan Council.

Community Development Manager/City Planner Mrosla reviewed the proposed language change in further detail and recommend the Planning Commission recommend approval of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment base don the findings of fact and the report submitted to the Planning Commission on April 15, 2020.

Community Development Manager/City Planner Mrosla 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 Gehrig opened the floor to Commissioner comments.

Commissioner Lambeth clarified for the record, this was not a TCAAP project. He then commented on the history of the Comprehensive Plan and asked how the Met Council can deny a previously approved request before reviewing the City’s revised Comprehensive Plan.

Community Development Manager/City Planner Mrosla explained the City was unable to submit the Summit Development request until the City received approval of the Comprehensive Plan, which occurred in February of 2020. After that time, the City submitted an amendment and the Met Council found the request to be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan given the fact the City does not have a policy to address the proposed density. For this reason, the City has to amend the Comprehensive Plan to include the new language.

Commissioner Lambeth discussed the history of this project. He believed that because this project was approved last July by the City and the Met Council preliminarily approved the Comp Plan in last November, this was a retroactive enforcement of a rule that didn’t previously exist. He did not believe it was fair to the applicant to delay the project further. He objected to the way the Met Council has handled this matter.

Commissioner Subramanian stated the City needs to consider what type of problems and projects the community will be facing in the future when it comes to high density developments.

Chair Gehrig opened the public hearing at 7:50 p.m.

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

There being no comment Chair Gehrig closed the public hearing at 7:51 p.m.

Commissioner Lambeth moved and Commissioner Jefferys seconded a motion to recommend approval of Planning Case 20-001 for a 2040 Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment, based on the findings of fact and the report submitted to the Planning Commission on April 15, 2020. A roll call vote was taken. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

UNFINISHED AND NEW BUSINESS

None.

REPORTS**A. Report from the City Council**

Councilmember Scott provided the Commission with an update from the City Council. He welcomed new Commissioners Marcie Jefferys and Kurtis Weber. He explained the Council has been rather busy these last few weeks. He reported on March 23rd the Mayor declared a Local State of Emergency and the full Council met to continue this emergency until further notice. He stated City Hall has been closed to the public and only key staff was working onsite. He commented on the staffing model that was being followed for Public Works personnel. He reported all essential City services would continue. He stated all City recreational programs have been canceled to keep in line with surrounding communities and playgrounds have recently been closed. He encouraged residents to get outdoors and to take advantage of the City's trail system. He provided further comment on the actions the Council has taken on Planning Commission cases. He stated the City Council would continue to meet on the second and fourth Monday of the month.

B. Planning Commission Comments and Requests

Chair Gehrig welcomed Commissioner Jefferys and Commission Weber to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Vijums explained he was able to tour the Mounds View High School and stated the improvements were extremely impressive.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Lambeth moved, seconded by Commissioner Vijums, to adjourn the April 15, 2020, Planning Commission Meeting at 8:01 p.m. A roll call vote was taken. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).