

Approved Minutes Planning Commission Meeting April 15, 2020

Chair Anderson called a Meeting of the Plymouth Planning Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 3400 Plymouth Boulevard, on April 15, 2020.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Marc Anderson, Commissioners Bryan Oakley, Donovan Saba, David Witte, Michael Boo and Julie Jones

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Justin Markell

STAFF PRESENT: Planning Manager Barbara Thomson, Senior Planner Kip Berglund, Senior Planner Lori Sommers, City Engineer Chris LaBounty and Laurie Hokkanen, Director of Administrative Services

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Ned Carroll

Chair Anderson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Plymouth Forum

Approval of Agenda

Motion was made by Commissioner Witte, and seconded by Commissioner Oakley, to approve the agenda. With Oakley, Saba, Witte, Boo, Jones and Anderson voting in favor, the motion carried.

Consent Agenda

Motion was made by Commissioner Oakley, and seconded by Commissioner Witte, to adopt the Consent Agenda that included the following item:

(4.01) Planning Commission minutes from meeting held on March 18, 2020.

With Oakley, Saba, Witte, Boo, Jones and Anderson voting in favor, the motion carried.

Public Hearings

(5.01) Public hearing on site plan amendment and conditional use permit for the Parks and Recreation Department for the Plymouth Creek Center located at 14800 34th Avenue. (2020016)

Senior Planner Sommers reviewed the staff report.

Commissioner Boo asked for input on the process to ensure that the traffic study is completed and how that information is reviewed.

City Engineer LaBounty stated that the city's traffic study consultant will look at historic data from earlier this year when the schools were active. He anticipated that information would be available to review later this summer. He stated that the report from 2018 did not anticipate significant increases from this development. He explained that the new report would identify if any improvements would be needed.

Chair Anderson asked if the timeframes for the study would be different than rush hour traffic.

City Engineer LaBounty explained that the busy time for a community center would differ from typical rush hour times and the consultant is taking that into account. He stated that staff will review the level of service for intersections and the ratio of volume to capacity.

Commissioner Jones stated that she visited the site and was pleased to see the number of people using the park, including the disc golf course. She stated that the disc golf course seems to be in an area that would be replaced with parking and asked if that feature will be reconfigured during this process. She asked where the 144 trees would be relocated. She asked if there have been discussions related to this level of parking at a facility of this nature. She commented that there may be a need for an electric vehicle charging station at this facility. She stated that even if the City were not going to install that feature now, the conduit could be run at this time to make it easier in the future.

Senior Planner Sommers replied that she is unsure where the trees will be replanted, but noted that she could reach out to the city forester for that information. She stated that she is not aware if the disc golf course would be modified, but advised that the bocce ball will be relocated as that is in the path of the addition. She stated that at this time there are no electric vehicle charging stations planned for this site, but noted that the City could look into that as an option in the future.

Chair Anderson introduced Diane Evans, Director of Parks and Recreation, who stated that the consultant team, including Andrew Holmgren, Erik Hansen and Nancy Blankford with HGA Architects would be making the presentation. Director Evans responded that infrastructure will be installed for electric vehicle charging. She stated that the trees would mostly be relocated to the greenway area and the disc golf course will be restructured and remain.

Andrew Holmgren, HGA Architects, stated that he is present to support the project and address any questions.

Chair Anderson asked for details on the construction timeline and whether the facility can be used during that time.

Mr. Holmgren stated they are hopeful that everything moves forward as planned and reviewed the timeline, which would start construction in August or September. He stated that construction is estimated at two years, and the plan would be to keep the facility open and functional during that time, although some areas may be closed during certain periods of construction.

Chair Anderson opened the public hearing.

Chair Anderson noted that one e-mail was received and asked Director of Administrative Services, Laurie Hokkanen for details.

Director Hokkanen read the e-mail aloud that raised concerns about the current mid-block crosswalk between City Hall and the entrance to the Creek Center. The e-mail stated that many drivers ignore that today and with more traffic from an expanded facility, safety could be further impacted.

City Engineer LaBounty stated that the City does not yet have an answer to that question and would review the results of the traffic study, noting that staff can look at the details for that specific area as requested by the resident.

Chair Anderson closed the public hearing.

Chair Anderson stated that the City has a facility that is well-used, and the expansion has been planned for some time and will provide additional amenity.

Commissioner Witte stated that he would be interested in hearing results of the traffic study during certain events, such as winter soccer or a craft show, rather than one season. He also referenced a blind curve on 34th Avenue, which could present problems with high volumes of traffic entering and exiting the site. He stated that this is a wonderful addition, and he will support the project.

Commissioner Boo stated that he also supports the project and has been impressed with the site and its activity to date. He agreed there could be an issue with traffic looming because of the increased activity that would occur. He encouraged the City to think about the elements mentioned by Commissioner Witte related to high volume times for the facility.

Motion was made by Commissioner Witte, and seconded by Commissioner Boo, to recommend approval of site plan amendment and conditional use permit for the Parks and Recreation Department for the Plymouth Creek Center located at 14800 34th Avenue. With Oakley, Saba, Witte, Boo, Jones and Anderson voting in favor, the motion carried.

New Business

(6.01) Public meeting on site plan amendment for Anderson-Johnson Associates, Inc. for parking upgrades at Wayzata High School located at 4955 Peony Lane. (2020021)

Senior Planner Sommers reviewed the staff report.

Commissioner Witte asked if this project involves the road before someone would turn into the parking area and whether there would be a boulevard or median planned for the intersection.

Senior Planner Sommers replied that there is a median when turning in, to separate the entering and exiting traffic. She explained that a previous study was done to review the intersection and the City Council approved moving forward with the roadway improvements, which will tie into the project. She confirmed that the project timelines will run concurrently.

Chair Anderson explained that the commission is looking at the site plan, as the road improvements have been approved by the City Council.

Commissioner Jones referenced the tree replacement and noted that 21 of the 32 trees would be maple trees. She asked if the City could encourage the applicant to use a wide variety of trees rather than a majority of maple trees.

Planning Manager Thomson replied that staff could speak with the applicant to determine if they would be willing to make changes on the types of trees.

Chair Anderson introduced Jon Deutsch, representing the applicant, who stated staff did a great job of presenting the request and noted that he is present to address any questions.

Commissioner Witte asked the parking capacity that would be provided with this expansion.

Senior Planner Sommers replied that with this project the total number of parking stalls at the high school would be 2,058.

Chair Anderson stated that he is pleased with the road work that will occur to eliminate the crosswalk from the bus entrance/exit area along with lane reassignments.

Chair Anderson welcomed any comments from the public.

There were none.

Motion was made by Commissioner Witte, and seconded by Commissioner Boo, to recommend approval of site plan amendment for Anderson-Johnson Associates, Inc. for parking upgrades at Wayzata High School located at 4955 Peony Lane. With Oakley, Saba, Witte, Boo, Jones and Anderson voting in favor, the motion carried.

(6.02) Public meeting on home occupation license for Sara Bidler to operate therapy services from the home located at 6065 Kirkwood Lane. (2020005)

Senior Planner Berglund reviewed the staff report.

Chair Anderson asked the hours of operation.

Senior Planner Berglund replied that the majority of the clients would come during general daytime hours with the exception of one client that would come in the evening and a few clients that would come during daytime hours every other Saturday.

Commissioner Jones stated that this request is within her ward and neighborhood. She stated that despite some of the negative reactions the applicant has had from this neighborhood, she has moved into a nice neighborhood. She suspected that what is occurring is that neighbors are simply reacting to a neighbor moving out and a new person moving in with a license request. She said she hoped that she would be well welcomed into the neighborhood. She commented that there are some problems with traffic in the neighborhood, with drivers cutting through to avoid construction in other places. She stated that the problem with traffic would not be a result of the home business, but with drivers attempting to avoid traffic and construction in other areas. She encouraged residents in the neighborhood to reach out to Hennepin County staff through the transportation website page and share their input for a potential future improvement in that area. She stated there are many things other than this home occupation that could impact the value of homes in the neighborhood that could be addressed through the City's code enforcement process, for example, outdoor storage. She stated that she would support approval of this request.

Commissioner Witte asked the process the City follows for this type of request, specifically whether City Council approval is needed as well.

Senior Planner Berglund replied that this item will go forward to the City Council, which will make the ultimate decision. He stated if approved, the license would be valid for one year from the date of approval, and after that time the applicant can request an extension of the license for three-year periods. He stated that at the one-year review, staff reviews records to determine if any issues have arisen.

Commissioner Witte stated he was aware the applicant would be conducting therapy sessions and asked if the applicant would also be completing marriage counseling.

Senior Planner Berglund confirmed that the applicant would be serving clients for both the therapy element and marriage counseling. He noted that the applicant also has another part-time home occupation that does not involve working with clients.

Commissioner Witte asked the safeguards the City would have to ensure that the business would not expand past the scope approved.

Senior Planner Berglund stated that the City responds on a complaint basis. He stated if the conditions of the resolution are not met, the license would be reviewed and possibly revoked.

Commissioner Witte stated he is concerned with introducing commercial activity into a neighborhood. He referenced the comment in the staff report that as long as this remains a small portion of the use of the property, it would not impact property values.

Senior Planner Berglund confirmed that language to be true, noting that given the limited number of clients and prohibition of any type of exterior advertising of the business, there would be no impact on adjacent property values.

Commissioner Oakley stated he understands that a general standard would be applied to any applicant and asked if the parking standard specified is general or specifically applied to this applicant.

Senior Planner Berglund replied that staff has included a condition in the draft resolution that goes above the general standard to prohibit on-street parking because of concerns from the neighborhood and the availability for clients to park in the driveway. He stated that the applicant is in agreement with the condition as proposed.

Chair Anderson introduced Sara Bidler, the applicant, who stated that her license is as a marriage and family therapist. She stated that typically she conducts individual therapy, but sometimes a client would have their partner or parent come to a session, but they would travel in the same vehicle. She stated she is well aware that change produces anxiety for people and recognized that the first letter mentioned up to eight clients per day, but did not include the maximum of 12 clients in one week. She stated that after speaking at the Planning Commission's March open forum, she was able to talk to some of the neighbors and has been able to make some good connections. She stated she has a strong vested interest in this going well and therefore will do everything she can to ensure that this activity does not disrupt the neighbors.

Commissioner Oakley asked if the prohibition of on-street parking concerns the applicant.

Ms. Bidler replied that she has one vehicle and a three-car driveway, therefore she is comfortable with clients parking in her driveway.

Chair Anderson asked Senior Planner Berglund to read the letter that was received after the packet was sent to the commissioners. He noted the request that the letter be read aloud at the meeting.

Senior Planner Berglund read the letter received from John and Carol Meyers, 6045 Kirkwood Lane. The Meyers stated this neighborhood is set off from the rest of Plymouth, and thus is quiet and safe. That is important to them as they have a non-verbal speaking special needs child. Adding more strangers and cars will compromise the current level of safety, which is why this request should be denied.

Ms. Bidler stated that she visited the Meyers' home, but was not able to talk to them about their concerns as of yet. She stated that through meeting some of the neighbors she became aware that there are others conducting home employment, but they did not receive licensing, and therefore the process of receiving notification from the City was alarming for some residents.

Commissioner Jones confirmed that there are many other businesses being operated in the neighborhood, and she said she is not aware of any of those having a license, therefore she is comfortable with this licensed activity because the City has control in terms of enforcement.

Commissioner Boo stated that this request meets the city code and the applicant has been very forthcoming in her request and comments. He stated that he will support this request.

Commissioner Witte stated that he sympathizes with some of the neighbors concerned with commercial activity, but noted that this is not a VRBO property and is instead a low key professional business. He noted if the applicant had a large family with teenagers that could be more of a driving safety risk than this type of business activity. He stated if approved by the City Council, the term would be one year, and the City would review the activity after that time to ensure the activity has been appropriate, and therefore any concerns he had have been alleviated.

Commissioner Oakley stated he will also be supporting the request. He noted he would like to see the no parking on the street condition eliminated as that is not typically a condition from the City, but also noted that because the applicant does not oppose the condition, he will support the request as proposed.

Motion was made by Commissioner Jones and seconded by Commissioner Oakley, to recommend approval of a home occupation license for Sara Bidler to operate therapy services from the home located at 6065 Kirkwood Lane. With Oakley, Saba, Witte, Boo, Jones and Anderson voting in favor, the motion carried.

Adjournment

Chair Anderson adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.