

## PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES - CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS

Tuesday, March 17, 2015 – 7:00 p.m.  
City Hall Chambers - 8150 Barbara Avenue

Chair Maggi called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Armando Lissarrague  
Joan Robertson  
Annette Maggi  
Pat Simon  
Tony Scales  
Dennis Wippermann  
Harold Gooch

Commissioners Absent: Bill Klein (excused)

Others Present: Tom Link, Community Development Director  
Allan Hunting, City Planner  
Scott Thureen, Public Works Director

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes from the March 3, 2015 Planning Commission meeting were approved as submitted.

Chair Maggi advised that the second item on the agenda was a presentation and public hearing only; no action would be taken at tonight's meeting.

### **CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS – CASE NO. 15-11X**

#### **Reading of Notice**

There was no public hearing notice and no notices were mailed.

#### **Presentation of Request**

Allan Hunting, City Planner, explained the two-part request as detailed in the report. On February 23 the City Council approved the alignment of the trunk sewer line between Blackstone Vista and Blackstone Ridge, which is known as the 71<sup>st</sup> Street Alignment. The Council also called for a hearing on the city project for the construction of the sewer. This specific capital improvement project was not part of the five year CIP and therefore the Planning Commission is being asked to make a recommendation on the consistency of this project with the Comprehensive Plan. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission find the project consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Simon asked if the proposed sewer line would affect the existing wetland east of the power lines.

Brian Hildgardner, Bolton & Menk, replied that the sewer alignment shown on the map was just a generalized alignment and they would do whatever they could to avoid impact to the wetland.

#### **Planning Commission Recommendation**

Motion by Commissioner Gooch, second by Commissioner Lissarrague, to find City Project 2015-13 to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Motion carried (7/0).

## **CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS – CASE NO. 15-08PA**

### **Reading of Notice**

Commissioner Simon read the public hearing notice to consider the request for a comprehensive plan amendment consisting of a change to Chapter 5, Transportation by identifying a corridor for realignment of Argenta Trail between points at Highway 55 on the south and near I-494 on the north end. 383 notices were mailed.

Chair Maggi advised that the City Council had already made a decision regarding the southern portion of the Argenta Trail realignment, and tonight they would be focusing on the north section of the realignment. She advised that the Planning Commission dealt with land use only and anything related to the economic portion of this decision should be addressed with the City Council.

### **Presentation of Request**

Allan Hunting, City Planner, explained that on February 23 City Council directed the Planning Commission to hold a public hearing to address the comprehensive plan amendment, take testimony, and then hold open the public hearing and continue the meeting to April 7, 2015 in order to get more direction from the Council on the preferred alignment of Argenta Trail.

Scott Thureen, Public Works Director, advised that in 2010 the City partnered with Dakota County, MNDOT, the Federal Highway Administration, Metropolitan Council, and the cities of Eagan, Mendota Heights, and Sunfish Lake to look at the transportation system on a regional basis. Eagan and Inver Grove Heights had a desire to have another access onto I-494. That portion of the City is planned for intense use and access would be critical to that being successful. This study, the Regional Roadway System Visioning Study, was completed in 2010 and initiated the discussion of realignment and potential expansion of Argenta Trail between TH 55 and I-494. The study looked at a number of alternatives with regard to access to the interstate. Alternative E was ultimately chosen which included improvements to the existing system and the addition of an interchange on I-494 on the new Argenta Trail alignment.

Bill Klingbeil, Kimley-Horne and Associates, discussed the project goals for the south project area and the three alignment alternatives. Alignment 2 was approved by City Council at its February 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting because it had the best balance of meeting the design criteria and avoiding most of the wetland impacts, as well as reduced right-of-way utility impacts. It also repaired the existing skew at the intersection. The County Board will act on recommendations on April 21. If approved by the Council and the Board, the right-of-way process will begin in April/May 2015 and final design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction is planned to occur in 2016. The realignment of the south portion of Argenta Trail required a new alignment for 77<sup>th</sup> Street. Alignment A was chosen by City Council on February 23 and will go to the County Board for action on April 21; final design, right-of-way acquisition and construction should take place in 2016. A similar process occurred for the North Study. The study goals included planning for a future interchange connection at I-494, identifying a 200 foot right-of-way corridor, coordinating with the south project, and providing guidance for future development. Five alignment alternatives were identified. A project cost differential was calculated for the north area since it will not develop at once. He advised that from a technical standpoint, one alignment does not stand out over the others. He explained the five alignments shown in the study, as well as Alignment 3A, which was brought forward by the neighborhood. There was a lot of public involvement, including two open houses, a neighborhood meeting, and individual meetings with property owners. The next steps include the Council consideration on the North Study alignment on March 23, County Physical Development Committee consideration on the South Project and North Study alignments on April 14, and then formal adoption by the County Board on April 21.

Mr. Thureen advised that the project management team is recommending that Alignments 2 and 3 be removed from consideration because of the cost of moving the Xcel transmission line and the impacts on regional stormwater basins.

Commissioner Lissarrague asked why Alignment 1 was still being considered since the neighborhood was opposed to it.

Mr. Thureen replied that from a technical view one alternative did not stand out above the others; however, everyone seemed to agree that alternatives 2 and 3 should be removed from the process.

Chair Maggi asked approximately how many lots would be lost in Blackstone Ridge with the different alignments.

Mr. Thureen replied that Alignment 3A would reduce the plat from 118 to 78 lots.

Mr. Deanovic stated that in his opinion Alignment 4 would not be viable, and Alignment 5 would reduce the plat by 28 lots as well as have other ramifications.

Commissioner Gooch asked what the objection was to widening the existing road.

Mr. Thureen replied that the County would not build along that road as it does not meet current design standards for a six lane road and would not be safe.

Mr. Klingbeil stated that widening the existing right-of-way to 200 feet would essentially wipe out the existing neighborhood to the east of Argenta Trail.

Commissioner Gooch stated that six lanes seemed excessive for a County road.

Mr. Thureen advised that the study showed that the expected future growth for the cities in this region could potentially drive a six lane road. It is advisable to preserve the necessary right-of-way up front rather than try to acquire developed properties at a later date.

Commissioner Gooch asked where MNDOT is suggesting the interchange be located.

Mr. Thureen showed the general location for the interchange that was a result of the study.

Commissioner Gooch asked if it would be a full interchange in all four directions.

Mr. Thureen replied that it would be a full access on and off to Inver Grove Heights.

Commissioner Robertson asked what the difference would be in land needed for a six lane versus a four lane road.

Mr. Thureen replied that a 150 foot right-of-way would be needed for a four lane road versus 200 feet for a six lane.

Commissioner Simon advised that the city of Eagan's CIP shows only a 150 foot right-of-way for Yankee Doodle Road out to the year 2030. She questioned why the road would have to expand to six lanes once it hit Inver Grove Heights.

Mr. Thureen replied that the key is TH 55 and the amount of traffic coming from the south to get up to I-494.

Commissioner Simon advised that drivers had the option of taking Robert Street.

Mr. Thureen noted that Robert Street is planned for expansion in the future as well but the study still shows the need for Argenta Trail. There will be a large volume of people coming up from the south and if the existing system clogs up drivers will start using neighborhood streets to get around slowdowns.

Commissioner Scales stated that when Highway 52 was built they preserved much more right-of-way than necessary and he is concerned that the same thing will happen here; that the City is planning for a level of future growth that is unlikely to happen.

Commissioner Simon asked for clarification of a portion of the evaluation criteria matrix.

Mr. Klingbeil explained that the colors on the south and north matrix were portraying a comparison of the alternatives from each segment to each other.

Commissioner Robertson asked if fewer parcels would be impacted if they preserved only 150 feet of right-of-way for a four lane road rather than 200 feet for a six lane road.

Mr. Thureen replied there would likely be a lesser number of acquisitions for Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 if they were to reduce the right-of-way to 150 feet; however, they would still be impacted. Alternatives 3A, 4, and 5 would move into the undeveloped land and the impact would likely not change much in terms of lots impacted; however, if the City preserved only 150 feet of right-of-way and needed an additional 50 in the future it would be difficult to obtain.

Commissioner Scales asked if going down to four lanes was even an option.

Mr. Thureen stated that he could not speak for the County but believed their recommendation would be to remain at six.

Chair Maggi asked Planning staff if they had any additional input regarding a four lane road.

Mr. Link replied that there has been no discussion of a four lane road. He advised that six lanes may seem large at first glance; however, they are anticipating a lot of growth in this part of the county, with the UMore property alone projected to be a community of 30,000. If the road system is not built properly traffic will find its way through local neighborhoods instead. He advised that this same discussion took place when they were planning Highway 52. If that were not built that traffic would be using Argenta, Babcock, Blaine and other local roads.

Commissioner Gooch questioned how residents of UMore or Lakeville would get to Argenta Trail, stating it seemed unlikely they would use this route.

Mr. Link replied that the County would be in a better position to address that comment because it involved road systems outside of Inver Grove Heights.

Commissioner Gooch asked if there would be any road restrictions on the realigned Argenta Trail.

Mr. Thureen replied that Argenta Trail is designed to carry heavy traffic.

### **Opening of Public Hearing**

Chad Hagman, 6710 Argenta Trail, advised that a recent article in the *Star Tribune* stated that UMore Park would likely not develop as planned. He stated that the collector street system

proposed back in 2008 showed the road going behind the exception neighborhood. The neighborhood has been planning their lives around that alignment and it is stressful to now find out that they would like to put the road through their homes.

Mr. Deanovic stated that he did not think Argenta Trail should be constructed on his property, and he believed there was a benefit to the City in millions of dollars that it does not. He advised that he was willing to look at the proposed Alignment 3A provided it was financially feasible, and added that recently he was told he was going to receive an offer; however, that has not yet transpired.

Denny Wolf, 6742 Argenta Trail, stated that the realigned Argenta Trail was being pushed by the County and he recommended that the project be scrapped. He questioned the wisdom of bringing additional traffic to the 94 ring, an already overtaxed system. He stated that this issue began years ago due to a lack of foresight when they created the current road system. He suggested they start thinking about investing money with the farmers and large property owners near the existing ring instead in regard to developing a high commerce area. He felt it was an unnecessary hardship for the established neighborhood, as well as Mr. Deanovic, and was unfair to all involved.

Nikki Abbott, 6720 Argenta Trail, questioned whether this part of Dakota County would actually develop as densely as is being suggested. She stated that the plan was not thought out well enough, things have changed since the study was done, it did not seem likely that people coming from the south would use this route to get to I-494, UMore Park is not likely to develop as planned, and she urged the City to not rush into a decision that could affect their homes, investments, and relationships.

Chair Maggi clarified that the issue of four lanes versus six was a County issue and she questioned whether there was a public forum in which residents could give their input.

Mr. Thureen replied that they would likely take public input at the County Board meeting.

John Todd, 6689 Argenta Trail, stated that he lived in the Argenta neighborhood and worked in Lakeville and felt it very unlikely that Lakeville residents would take this route to get to I-494.

Laurie Wolf, 6742 Argenta Trail, stated that she would have preferred that the neighborhood had been brought into the discussion earlier, and asked the Commission to think thoroughly about their decision as a no vote was essentially a vote for Alternative 1.

Gil Von Ohlen, 7312 Argenta Trail West, stated he did not understand the logic of making Argenta Trail a six lane road and dumping it onto the already clogged four lane interstate, and did not believe they could predict the traffic volume needs 30 years into the future.

Chair Maggi asked if Met Council's 2030 plan included an expansion of I-494 in terms of number of lanes.

Mr. Thureen stated that the study speaks to it briefly by stating that additional modifications along I-494 will be necessary. In regards to connecting a six lane road to a four, Federal Highway and MNDOT were involved in the design for the system and everyone agreed that an interchange would work and actually improve some segments because it was able to spread access onto the system.

Commissioner Scales asked if the proposed plan for I-494 was to expand it to six lanes.

Mr. Thureen replied that he was unsure.

Debra Van, 6660 Argenta Trail, noted that the study stated that Alignment E would avoid undesirable direct impacts to the residences immediately north of I-494 and would also shift the alignment of Argenta Trail to the east of the developed residential area on the south side of I-494 as well.

Nikki Abbott, 6720 Argenta Trail, wanted to make sure that Alternative 5 was still being considered equally as 1 and 3A. She stated that Alternative 4 seemed unfair to Mr. Deanovic, and noted that one of her neighbors suggested a slightly better design for Alternative 5 which made the road straighter and greatly improved the impact to the Flannery property.

Mr. Deanovic stated there were many reasons why Alternative 5 did not work, including its close proximity to Robert Street. If the Commission was in support of Alternative 3A, he suggested they table the request and direct staff to figure out how to make the plan financially feasible.

Commissioner Lissarrague asked Mr. Deanovic what alignment he preferred.

Mr. Deanovic stated he had no issues with Alignment 3A as long as he was made whole. He advised that he has owned and paid taxes on the land for 15 years but has not had the benefit of living there.

Larry Flannery, 1466 70<sup>th</sup> Street, questioned the reasoning behind putting the road on top of the old Argenta for Alignment 3A rather than staying east of the existing power line on his property. He stated going east of the power pole would have the least impact to his property, and he felt they chose that alignment to use the County as a proxy for providing access to his western property.

Mr. Klingbeil stated one of the reasons they chose that alignment was that it was a cheaper cost to use the existing roadbed.

Mr. Flannery stated it was only a difference of ten feet.

Mr. Wolfe stated that moving Alignment 3A further east would eliminate the need for removal of the Von Ohlen, Sachs, and Swanson homes, and he stated there was no reason why Argenta Trail could not move up the hill from the intersection at Highway 55 and angle off to the 3A alignment. He stated that a no vote would essentially be a vote for Alternative 1, and he hoped that the City could do something to guarantee that this issue was final and they would not have to go through this process again.

Chair Maggi advised that the public hearing would remain open and the issue would be addressed by City Council on March 23 and the County Board on April 21.

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Fox  
Recording Secretary