

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES - CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS

Tuesday, January 17, 2012 – 7:00 p.m.
City Hall Chambers - 8150 Barbara Avenue

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

Commissioners Present: Tom Bartholomew
Armando Lissarrague
Paul Hark
Dennis Wippermann
Pat Simon
Harold Gooch
Tony Scales

Commissioners Absent: Mike Schaeffer
Victoria Elsmore (excused)

Others Present: Tom Link, Community Development Director
Allan Hunting, City Planner

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the January 3, 2012 meeting were approved as submitted.

DAKOTA COUNTY CDA – CASE NO. 10-27CS

Reading of Notice

Commissioner Simon read the public hearing notice to consider the request for a final plat for a one lot subdivision, a conditional use permit to construct a 24 unit multi-family development, a conditional use permit to exceed 25% impervious surface coverage in the shoreland overlay district, a variance from the internal private roadway minimum width, and a variance from the minimum setback requirement between two buildings for the property located east of Blaine Avenue, along College Trail. 17 notices were mailed.

Presentation of Request

Allan Hunting, City Planner, explained the request as detailed in the report. He advised that Dakota County Community Development Agency (CDA) is proposing a 24 unit multiple family affordable/workforce housing project. The property is currently zoned and guided for multiple family residential. The proposed plat consists of one lot on 2.92 acres of land. The proposed 24 units will result in an overall density of 8.2 units per acre. Park dedication will be required and staff is requesting a 10 foot trail easement along the south property line to be used for a future trail. The proposed development will have 13 guest parking spaces. The entire property is within the Shoreland Overlay District; therefore impervious surface coverage is limited to 25% of the lot but may be increased by conditional use provided the City has an approved stormwater management plan affecting the subject site. In this case the proposed property improvements would total about 40% impervious surface, and the applicant is working with the City to approve a stormwater management plan for the parcel. The DNR has received the plans but the City has received no comment from them. The first variance is to allow a 20 foot private roadway whereas 30 feet is required. Parking would be prohibited along the proposed road. Staff and the Fire Marshal are comfortable with the loop layout design being proposed. The second variance being requested is to allow a 42' building separation whereas 60 feet is required. The applicant is providing a recreation area/tot lot to the west of Building 2 and staff feels there is ample area between the

units. Staff recommends approval of the request with the conditions listed in the report.

Commissioner Simon stated typically the fire marshal required two entrances to a development.

Mr. Hunting agreed, stating in this instance, however, the fire marshal was comfortable with the proposed arrangement.

Commissioner Simon asked if the proposed development could utilize the existing semi-driveway on the Granite Bluff property.

Mr. Hunting stated there were no cross access easements put in place in regards to that driveway so the CDA will not be using that access. However, it would likely give the fire department another means of getting a truck or hose to other parts of the complex if needed.

Commissioner Simon asked if the apartment complex to the west was still owned by the college.

Mr. Hunting replied he did not believe it was.

Commissioner Lissarrague asked when the subject property was rezoned to R-3C.

Mr. Hunting replied 1987.

Commissioner Lissarrague asked if the homes in the area were built before or after the 1987 rezoning.

Mr. Hunting replied that most of the nearby residential units were built after the rezoning to multiple family housing had occurred.

Commissioner Wippermann asked who would enforce the no parking regulations on the internal roadway.

Mr. Hunting replied that no parking signs would be posted per the Fire Marshal and the City would enforce the parking through its fire code requirements.

Commissioner Lissarrague asked if the issues mentioned in a letter from a neighbor in regards to Granite Bluff Apartments were on-going.

Mr. Hunting replied he was not sure as Planning staff had no involvement with those types of issues.

Commissioner Wippermann asked for clarification that Granite Bluff Apartments was not operated by the CDA.

Mr. Hunting replied it was not.

Chair Bartholomew asked how long the typical timeframe was for a response from the DNR.

Mr. Hunting stated the DNR should respond within 60 days, but typically the City would receive a response only if they had questions or comments. Staff is assuming they have no issues since they did not forward on a response.

Chair Bartholomew asked what would happen if a response was received after the 60 day period.

Mr. Hunting replied that staff would likely review their comments; however, the DNR does not have approval authority and the City is not obligated to meet their request.

Opening of Public Hearing

The applicant, Kari Gill, Dakota County CDA, explained that the CDA is proposing this development to help further their mission of providing workforce housing opportunities. She stated the site is appealing because of its proximity to the college and the demand for affordable housing in Inver Grove Heights. Construction is expected to begin in 2013 and be completed in 2014. Ms. Gill explained that the CDA creates a public/private partnership for the purpose of developing workforce housing for moderate income families. The CDA would be the developer and property manager for the site. They have constructed 19 such developments throughout Dakota County with two of those being in Inver Grove Heights. She stated there are approximately 540 households on the waiting list for the two developments in Inver Grove Heights. Ms. Gill explained the income guidelines, and advised that the rent in similar developments was \$630-\$685 per month. She advised that the CDA does extensive screening, including rental, credit and criminal background checks. They also have an onsite resident caretaker to assist with property management.

Chair Bartholomew asked if the applicants were in agreement with the ten conditions listed in the report.

Ms. Gill replied in the affirmative.

Commissioner Lissarrague asked what the rate of vacancy was at the CDA's two existing multi-family housing developments in Inver Grove Heights.

Ms. Gill replied they have no vacancies as there are 540 families on the waiting list.

Commissioner Lissarrague asked what the vacancy rate was for Granite Bluff Apartments.

Ms. Gill replied that she was unsure as it was not owned or managed by the CDA. She added that the CDA's policy requires that not all of the adults in the household can be full-time students.

Commissioner Wippermann asked why the property owner in the staff report was listed as Inver Hills Family Limited Partnership.

Ms. Gill replied that each development has a unique name but the CDA is the general partner and is hired to manage the property. The limited partner in most cases is US Bank, who is 99.9% owner.

Commissioner Wippermann asked if the tenants would be required to sign a lease with regulations in regards to storage, parking, etc.

Ms. Gill replied in the affirmative, stating they have a very extensive lease and they enforce the requirements.

Chair Bartholomew asked for clarification of garage storage.

Ms. Gill stated they do not want residents filling their garage with so much storage that their vehicle cannot fit inside. They depend on their resident caretaker to ensure residents are using their garages for parking. The CDA also does annual inspections of the individual units.

Commissioner Hark asked if each unit would be responsible for their own garbage.

Ms. Gill stated the CDA contracts for the trash service and it is included in the rent. Each unit has bins that are kept in the garage and pulled out on trash day.

Jim Riley, 8255 College Trail, stated his experience is that tenants of CDA housing are typically very respectful of their neighbors as they do not want to get evicted. He stated he does have a concern, however, about the safety of College Trail. He stated it should be improved and widened and a walking path should be added prior to construction of the development. He stated he was concerned about the potential for school children to cross private property to get to the middle school and high school. He stated he did not see a hardship and asked if one was still required for a variance.

Chair Bartholomew advised that the variance criteria recently changed and a hardship is no longer required.

Commissioner Hark asked staff to address the future plans for College Trail.

Mr. Hunting stated the improvement of College Trail is in the 5 year CIP but it would likely occur within three years. It will be reconstructed back to the same design, a two-lane rural road as that is all the traffic volumes are suggesting. At the same time they will be extending and constructing the trail along the north side of College Trail.

Tom Link, Community Development Director, advised that the timing of road construction and improvements was under the purview of the City Council and he suggested the issue be raised at the City Council meeting.

Chair Bartholomew noted that the City Council would also be made aware of the concerns through the Planning Commission minutes. He stated he thought there was a walking trail to the north of the subject property heading to the school.

Mr. Hunting stated he was unsure, but noted that the subject property directed abuts the school property to the north.

Commissioner Simon stated Exhibit A showed what appeared to be a walking path from the north end of the subject property to the school. She asked for clarification of the location of the proposed walking trail on College Trail.

Mr. Hunting advised the trail would be constructed on the north side of College Trail and tie in with the existing trail in front of the senior project on Broderick and College Trail.

Tom Hillstrom, 8425 Brewster Avenue, stated he was not aware of any groomed trails from this property to the school. He stated that the owner of 8215 College Trail had at one time requested to expand his driveway and was denied as he would be filling in the watershed. Therefore, he questioned why an exception would be made for this property to exceed 25% impervious surface coverage in the watershed area, and stated he felt the 20 foot wide roadway would be problematic.

Jim Zentner, 8004 Delano Way, Chair of the Inver Grove Heights Housing Committee, stated the Committee supported the request as there is a strong need in the City for workforce housing. He stated the Comprehensive Plan outlines this need and he feels the City has an obligation to try to fulfill it. The Housing Committee is hoping that tenants of this type of housing would eventually purchase homes in Inver Grove Heights as their earnings increase. He stated neighboring residents should take comfort in the knowledge that CDA projects are well managed and well governed. He supported improvements to College Trail and stated an important benefit of this

location is that public transit is available.

Cameron Kruse, 588 Sutcliffe Circle, Mendota Heights, spoke in favor of the proposed project, stating the CDA does an excellent job of design, construction, and management. He advised he is a member of a ministry team at Amazing Grace Lutheran Church at 71st and South Robert Trail which has been involved in and concerned about the availability of workforce housing in northern Dakota County for the last ten years.

Planning Commission Discussion

Commissioner Simon asked if any retaining walls would be constructed on the property.

Kim Bretheim, LHB Architects, replied a retaining wall will be constructed along the east property line as well as one along the north side of the pond that will be created. He advised that at the point where the subject property meets the existing roadway on the Granite Bluff property the grades will be at the same elevation; however, they will not be connecting to it. He advised that for unknown reasons the right-of-way is 17 feet wider in front of the subject property than it is on either side of it.

Commissioner Simon asked if the applicants planned to retain the existing trees on the east and north side of the property.

Mr. Bretheim replied that the trees on the east property line appear to be entirely off the property, and some of the trees on the north end will be affected as they extend into the grading area.

Commissioner Wippermann asked if the units had single or double car garages.

Mr. Bretheim replied they were all single car tuck-under garages with room for one car in the apron and half a car per unit in the visitor parking area.

Chair Bartholomew asked who owned the property west of the subject parcel along College Trail.

Mr. Hunting replied he was unsure.

Mr. Hillstrom stated the property previously had tennis courts on it.

Chair Bartholomew asked if the property in question was zoned Public/Institutional.

Mr. Hunting replied in the affirmative.

Chair Bartholomew stated he was in favor of the request; however, he would like to see the road issues addressed as well as the addition of a temporary walking trail connecting the subject property to Blaine Avenue.

Commissioner Gooch stated he supported the request. He recommended constructing a trail connecting the subject property to the existing trail on Blaine Avenue and suggested the City's Code Compliance Specialist be sent to Granite Bluff Apartments to ensure there were no property maintenance issues with trash, etc.

Commissioner Wippermann advised he supported the request, stating the CDA facilities he was familiar with were attractive and well managed.

Planning Commission Recommendation

Motion by Commissioner Simon, second by Commissioner Scales, to approve on a white ballot the

request for a final plat for a one lot subdivision, a conditional use permit to construct a 24 unit multi-family development, a conditional use permit to exceed 25% impervious surface coverage in the shoreland overlay district, a variance from the internal private roadway minimum width, and a variance from the minimum setback requirement between two buildings for the property located east of Blaine Avenue, along College Trail.

Commissioner Hark stated he supported the request. He suggested the residents that testified tonight bring their concerns before the City Council.

Commissioner Lissarrague stated he supported the request; however, he would like the City to take a look at the safety issue of pedestrians walking along College Trail.

Motion carried (7/0). This item goes to the City Council on February 13, 2012.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Hunting reminded the Planning Commission that their next meeting is rescheduled to Thursday, February 9 due to Caucus Night.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bartholomew adjourned the meeting at 8:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Fox
Recording Secretary