

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES - CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS

Tuesday, March 6, 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
Dennis Wippermann
Pat Simon
Tony Scales
Paul Hark
Victoria Elsmore
Mike Schaeffer

Commissioners Absent: Harold Gooch

Others Present: Tom Link, Community Development Director
Heather Botten, Associate Planner

L&D SIGN – CASE NO. 12-03PDA

Reading of Notice

Commissioner Simon read the public hearing notice to consider the request for a Planned Unit Development Amendment to increase the size of the existing multi-tenant free-standing monument sign for the property located at 9087 Broderick Boulevard. 10 notices were mailed.

Presentation of Request

Heather Botten, Associate Planner, explained the request as detailed in the report. She advised that the existing sign for Holiday Gas Station was installed in 2000 and is 113 square feet in size. The applicant is requesting to increase the sign to 122 square feet whereas the approved PUD development plans included a 118 square foot monument sign. The actual monument is not changing. The additional signage is being added to the bottom half of the sign; the applicant is requesting to remove the existing reader board and add a digital price display and an electronic reader board. Staff recommends approval of the request with the conditions listed in the report.

Opening of Public Hearing

Joe Keisling, L & D Signs, stated he was available to answer any questions.

Chair Bartholomew asked if the applicant agreed with the conditions listed in the report.

Mr. Keisling replied in the affirmative.

Commissioner Wippermann asked if the electronic message center would constantly roll or if the screen would remain stationary for a period of time.

Mr. Keisling stated it would vary.

Commissioner Wippermann asked if there were any code issues concerning a rolling message board.

Ms. Botten replied if the electronic sign was smaller than 100 square feet there were no issues.

Commissioner Hark asked if there were any applicable regulations regarding brightness.

Ms. Botten stated the City has lighting requirements prohibiting more than one foot candle measured at the centerline of the street. She stated these regulations tie into signage as well; however, the City has not seen signs that exceed the requirement.

Commissioner Hark stated that although it was not a concern at this location, the brightness could be a potential issue if the electronic sign was near a residential neighborhood.

Ms. Botten stated if there would be a complaint about the brightness, the applicant/property owner would be required to submit a lighting plan to ensure they meet the City's one foot candle requirement.

Chair Bartholomew asked for clarification of a previous discussion regarding how long signs could remain in the static position before shifting.

Ms. Botten replied that specific requirements were approved for electronic billboards, but not for smaller electronic message centers such as the one being proposed.

Planning Commission Recommendation

Motion by Commissioner Elsmore, second by Commissioner Schaeffer, to approve the request for a Planned Unit Development Amendment to increase the size of the existing multi-tenant monument sign, with the two conditions listed in the report, for the property located at 9087 Broderick Boulevard.

Motion carried (8/0). This item goes to the City Council on March 12, 2012.

OTHER BUSINESS

IGH Economic Development Authority (EDA) Update

Mr. Link made an informational presentation regarding the structure, financing, and benefits of the Inver Grove Heights EDA. He explained that the EDA was reaffirmed in January 2011, consists of the current City Council members, and meets quarterly to promote economic development in Inver Grove Heights. For the past two years the EDA's programs and activities have been financed by allocating \$500,000 each year from Host Community Fees paid by the landfills. He explained that the benefits of an EDA include explicit powers, financial tools, a simpler process, flexibility, reduced liability, positive image in regards to economic development, competitiveness, and a focus on development issues. He advised that thus far the EDA has accomplished the following items: 1) reaffirmed and organized the EDA (i.e. bylaws, etc.), 2) developed a policy for the acquisition and disposal of real estate, 3) agreed to purchase the excess golf course properties, and 4) had extensive discussions regarding a potential small business loan program. Mr. Link advised that in the next year the EDA is planning to complete the sale of the excess golf course properties, adopt a small business loan program, review the structure, financing, and activities of other cities' EDAs, and discuss the potential purchase of the Gun Club site. He explained the services provided by Progress Plus and advised they have a close relationship with the EDA.

Chair Bartholomew asked if the number of boardmembers on the EDA could be increased; perhaps by adding citizen involvement.

Mr. Link replied that one of the things they will look at later this year is how other cities structure their EDAs.

Chair Bartholomew stated in his opinion it would be advantageous to have people from the business community involved.

In regards to the City Council being members of the EDA, Commissioner Simon asked if it was a potential conflict of interest for the EDA to acquire and assemble property, sell it to a developer, and then approve or deny the request at the City Council level.

Mr. Link replied it was not a conflict of interest, but rather it was beneficial to have the two bodies the same as there were no inconsistencies in philosophy and direction.

Commissioner Wippermann asked if the City Council approved EDA expenditures as a City Council rather than in their role as an EDA.

Mr. Link stated the City Council has some control over their expenditures as they approve the EDA budget each year. Also, certain EDA activities require City Council approval.

Commissioner Wippermann asked if the EDA could grant TIF financing to a project without Council approval.

Mr. Link stated he was unsure.

Commissioner Wippermann stated if the EDA could grant TIF financing it would be beneficial to have the Council on the EDA because they would then be accountable as elected officials versus appointed individuals giving out the City's money.

Mr. Link stated one of the reasons the Council structured the EDA the way they did was because they wanted to maintain control over the financial matters of the EDA.

Commissioner Lissarrague asked if the EDA meetings were open to the public.

Mr. Link replied in the affirmative, stating they met on the first Monday of the months of February, May, August, and November.

Commissioner Hark asked if there were rules regarding how much money the EDA could amass.

Mr. Link replied he was not aware of any.

Commissioner Hark asked if there were limitations for how long the EDA could hold property.

Mr. Link replied he was not aware of any deadline by which they had to sell property. There is a statutory requirement, however, that the EDA must pay property taxes on any property they have held onto for more than eight years.

Commissioner Hark asked Mr. Link to explain why developers think it is beneficial for a city to have an EDA.

Mr. Link replied that having an EDA is an indication that there are programs and financial tools available to foster commercial and industrial development, as well as flexibility and a more streamlined process.

Commissioner Hark asked if EDAs were becoming more common because of the recession.

Mr. Link replied that most of the surrounding cities have had EDAs, HRAs or Port Authorities for quite some time.

Commissioner Hark asked when the landfills were anticipated to be filled to capacity.

Mr. Link replied that the City has three landfills. Based on current volumes Pine Bend Landfill is anticipated to close in approximately 9-10 years; however, the Host Community Agreement likely provides for payments beyond that. The Dawn Way Landfill has the potential to remain open for a couple decades, and the SKB Demolition Debris Landfill received approval for an expansion once they have filled their current site.

Chair Bartholomew asked if the EDA could take an equity position.

Mr. Link replied in the affirmative.

Chair Bartholomew asked if there were limits to the equity position the EDA could take on a project.

Mr. Link replied that he was unsure as the EDA had not expressed an interest in using that tool.

Chair Bartholomew questioned whether it would be a conflict for the EDA to rule as a governing body while having an equity position on a project.

Mr. Link replied that he was unsure, but would think that some of the equity might be in an activity that had a quasi-public function to it (i.e. housing project).

Concord Boulevard Neighborhood Study Update

Mr. Link advised that the City has been conducting a process to update the Concord Boulevard Neighborhood Plan and has held meetings with property owners, business owners, stakeholders, appointed and elected officials, and residents of the Concord Boulevard neighborhood. Recent public investments in the area include reconstruction of Concord Boulevard, acquisition and development of Heritage Village Park, construction of the Rock Island Swing Bridge, the Mississippi River Regional Trail, and land acquisitions along Concord Boulevard. The City Council has discussed possibly leveraging these recent public investments to attract private development and redevelopment. The Concord Boulevard Neighborhood Study has two phases. The City is in Phase 1 now which consists of refining the land use designations for the Concord area as well as identifying a site(s) for redevelopment. Staff is hoping to complete this phase by April 2012. The second phase consists of conducting a Market Strategy Study and creating design guidelines. Staff is hoping to complete this phase by December 2012. Following these activities, the City would look to promote private development in 2013. Mr. Link invited the Commissioners to attend the March 13 Open House. There are three concept alternatives that will be presented at the Open House. All alternatives provide for industry, retail, and residential.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bartholomew adjourned the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Fox
Recording Secretary