

City of Excelsior  
Hennepin County, Minnesota

Minutes  
Planning Commission

Monday, August 26, 2019

1. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Harrison called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Barnes, DiLorenzo, Emfield, Harrison, Holste

Commissioners Absent: Chair Wallace, Craig

Also Present: City Planner Becker and City Attorney Staunton

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) Planning Commission Meeting of August 12, 2019

Motion by DiLorenzo, seconded by Holste, to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes of August 12, 2019. Motion carried 5/0.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

***a) Single Family Standards Task Force Recommendations***

DiLorenzo wanted to clarify that the Single-Family Standards Task Force felt that a review board should be adopted only if the City adopts more subjective standards and that if more objective standards are adopted, a review board may not be needed. DiLorenzo asked for clarification on whether the goal was to go through all of the Stillwater Conservation District Design Guidelines or if the review done by Bruce Noll was sufficient. Bruce Noll, 242 First Street, explained that he worked with a few other members of the Task Force to create his list of applicable guidelines. He feels that the guidelines should be vetted to ensure that they are applicable. Harrison had the same question about whether the Planning Commission was tasked to review all 27 guidelines or the Task Force distilled version of ten items. Barnes likes the idea of a review board so that an expert can look at an application and review mass and scale along with a number of other people. Emfield is concerned that it would be adding another layer of bureaucracy and would allow people with potential agendas to potentially deny certain projects. He feels that changes to zoning could potentially solve the issue. Holste would feel comfortable with a review board so long as it was comprised of experts and not just residents. She likes the idea from Santa Barbara, CA which only requires a review board if the project utilized 85% or more of the allowed lot coverage. Harrison believes that objective standards are not a one-size-fits-all and believes that the idea of a review board in regard to mass and scale makes sense. However, she believes it would be more productive and less costly to create a separate set of "Good Neighbor" guidelines without a separate entity. She believes that the Planning Commission should re-review & potentially tighten up the

existing building and lot coverage percentages. She also wanted to review Floor Area Ratio calculations and sky planes percentages in the future. She suggested that a review board could potentially be triggered if a proposed home increased their existing footprint by a certain percentage (ie 25%) or at all. Bruce Noll pointed out that no group has been able to come up with definitive numbers that solves all the problems. Peter Hartwich, 186 George Street, believes that we need to have both more stringent codes and a review board. He believes our advisory review board would help start a conversation of creating a culture of appreciation.

Stillwater Conservation District Design Guidelines were discussed. DiLorenzo felt it was difficult to define neighboring structures and wondered if the requirement that that mass and scale be compatible with neighboring structures limited design. The Commission believed that the guidelines should state that special attention should be paid to adjacent structures. They liked the requirement to respect existing rhythm of the streetscape. The Commission felt that the spirit of this was already captured in the current Zoning Code. They felt that Number 2 of the Suggested Contextual Design Guidelines should be used. There was thought that restrictions on roofs were too limiting. They liked Number 5, 6, 7 & 8 of the Stillwater Guidelines. There was desire to discuss flat and/or low roof pitch in the future. The Commission wanted to keep significant trees and maintain the canopy. Numbers 10 and 11 are already covered with the current ordinance. The Commission liked Number 12 from Stillwater Guidelines & the example illustrations. They felt that number 13 should be discussed potential future design guidelines. Number 14 was already covered in the existing Code. Stillwater Guideline 15 was acceptable. Guideline 16 should not be utilized because it discourages variety of housing. Stillwater Guideline Number 17 was appropriate, and 18 was already covered by ordinance. Stillwater Guidelines 19 and 20 should be combined, as well as guidelines 21 and 22. Stillwater Guidelines 23, 24, 25 and 26 should be included. 27 is already covered in the current ordinance.

Staunton suggested that the Commission should revisit whether they felt a review board would be appropriate given the standards that were suggested and what should trigger a review by a review board. DiLorenzo proposed that applicants be required to conduct a self-review of their design using the suggested standards before submitting to the City. Any application that doesn't meet all the criteria would go to the Planning Commission or Council to review. There was a recap that stated that two of the five members present were not supportive of a review board and that of the three that were supportive felt that it should be conducted as a test. DiLorenzo, Emfield, and Harrison said that they would be available to attend the Council meeting at which this would be discussed.

Step downs were discussed. Harrison was not comfortable with the numbers in the step-down language as it is unrealistic and punitive in some situations and suggested that this standard instead be implemented with a guideline used in review by a potential review board. The Commission wanted to revisit this at a future meeting and possibly explore the idea of a floor area ratio.

5. ADJOURNMENT

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DiLorenzo moved, Holste seconded, to adjourn at 10:30 pm. Motion carried 5/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Becker  
City Planner

DRAFT