

City of Excelsior
Hennepin County, Minnesota
Minutes
Planning Commission
Monday, March 22, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Wallace called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Wallace, Black, Craig (arrived at 6:16pm), DiLorenzo, Harrison, Noll

Commissioners Absent: Holste

Also Present: City Planner Becker, City Architect Larson and City Attorney Staunton

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) Planning Commission Meeting of February 22, 2021

Motion by DiLorenzo, seconded by Noll to approve the February 22, 2021 Planning Commission meeting as amended. Motion carried 5-0 (Craig not yet present).

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

(a) 678 Pleasant Street (Revised PC No. 20-21)

Becker and Larson presented their reports. Larson clarified that he did a side by side diagram showing the changes. Harrison asked if the footprint has been changed, and Mark and Kari Knapp, applicants, clarified that the garage is approximately 100 square feet less and is a reduction of 14% in size. Harrison asked about the skylights and if this was an original desire of the applicant or if it was a result of the reduction in massing. Kari Knapp clarified that it was a result of the reduction in size, and that the replacement of the windows with the skylight would result in the loss of the view of the lake. Noll asked if the applicant had considered placing the stairs outside of the building, and the applicants explained that placing the stairs outside would not allow for aging in place. Black clarified if the upper level would still be able to be used as office space with the reduction of the dormer, and the applicants clarified that they felt that they would have enough space. Black also asked if the dormer was removed to reduce the height, and the applicants explained that they removed the

dormer per the request of the Council and to reduce the height. Harrison had concern if the applicants would be able to fit furniture into the space with the revised design. Peter Hartwich, 186 George Street, asked if the garage was moved back from the street, and the applicants answered that they are moving it away from the hydrant per the requirement by the City Engineer. Hartwich also asked about the tree and if the proposed location would have a negative impact on the tree, and Becker replied that the City Arborist had reviewed the proposed layout and did not find that it would have a negative impact on the tree. Motion by DiLorenzo, seconded by Black, to approve the revised Residential Review Permit for 678 Pleasant Street. Harrison commented that she liked the original design as opposed to the revised design, specifically at the east and west elevations. Wallace felt that the City needs to be cautious of stripping character as a sacrifice for reducing mass and scale. Motion carried 6-0.

(b) 344 Water Sign Variance (PC No. 21-06)

Becker presented the report. Black wanted to know if the sign would in fact be shorter than the adjacent building, as it appeared in the older photo that it would be taller than the adjacent building, and it was clarified that the adjacent building now has a much taller cornice and has at least visually increased in height since the old photo shown in the packet. Black asked how the sign would be affixed, and Tim Caron, applicant, explained that the bike shop sign is affixed to the building, and the bracket holding up the bike sign would be used to hang the proposed sign. He also clarified that a portion of the sign would be below the parapet and that the majority of the sign would be above the building. Black asked if the applicant had considered affixing the sign on the building so it didn't extend above the building. Caron clarified that the building doesn't have many places to which to affix the sign, and the goal is to preserve the historic redwood siding on the building. Black was concerned about the precedent and the streetscape including many signs like this to cause visual clutter. Caron felt that there were only three or four buildings at most that would meet the same criteria of the same time frame the subject building was constructed and the historical significance this building has. Harrison pointed out that the sign would be shorter than the existing streetlights and would be one of the taller signs on the streetscape. Harrison asked if the applicant had considered hanging the sign below the existing bike shop sign similar to the historic sign. Caron clarified that hanging a sign below the existing bike shop sign would result in not meeting the required clearance, and he also indicated that the bracket could not be moved to move the existing sign higher up. Hartwich stated that he supported the requested variance and felt it was an elegant way of supporting the Knapps. DiLorenzo supports the sign and its quirkiness, which is characteristic

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of Excelsior. Noll feels that the sign is appropriate for this instance. Motion by Craig, seconded by DiLorenzo, to support the sign variance request for 344 Water Street. Motion carried 6-0.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) Residential Review Process Work Session

Craig needs clarification on what the Planning Commission's role is and if they should be questioning the comments from the City Architect. Larson clarified that he sees his role similar to similar to staff in that he is giving his best judgement and has no issues with any disagreements. Harrison felt that the terminology in the Good Neighbor Guidelines should be clarified. It was agreed that Larson should give a report after Becker. Noll felt that a sketch plan was pertinent to the process. Wallace felt that we should have a running list of items that need to be worked on and do a quarterly check-in on the process.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Craig, seconded by Harrison, to adjourn at 7:13 pm. Motion carried 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Becker
Planning Director