



**CITY OF LONG LAKE
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
August 11, 2009**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Chair Crump.

Present: Committee Members Hultmann, Crump, Skjaret, and Loosen; City Administrator Post; and Planning Consultant Ann Perry.

Absent: Committee Member Hoen; City Councilmember Liaison Olson

APPROVE AGENDA

Commissioner Hultmann moved to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Skjaret seconded. Ayes: all.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes of the July 14, 2009 Planning Commission Meeting

It was noted on page one, under roll call, Commissioner Loosen was listed as present but he was actually absent, with notice.

Commissioner Loosen moved to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Commissioner Skjaret seconded. Ayes: all.

OPEN CORRESPONDENCE

None.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Planning Case #09-02, John Patch, 1865 Wayzata Boulevard, Land Use Application Requesting a Variance for and Additional Freestanding Sign

Planning Consultant Perry explained that the applicant has applied for a freestanding sign at 1865 Wayzata Boulevard, which is one of the two properties that compose the Town Center shopping center. She displayed an aerial view of the location and summarized the current ordinance in relation to the request from the applicant. She displayed a proposed sign and stated that it would be 29 feet high and would include 190 square feet. The sign would include an identification space with space for the separate tenants to display the

names of their businesses. She then displayed pictures of the current signage existing on the property. She stated that staff finds, in reviewing the ordinance that the proposed sign would not be allowed by the City ordinance. She advised that the ordinance does not give guidance on whether or not a second sign would be allowed. She stated that the Planning Commission would first need to decide if they agree with the interpretation of staff or whether they would like to allow a variance. Staff recommended not allowing a second sign, but if they do allow a second sign, staff would like the authority to amend the ordinance to allow a second sign in the business district. She stated that allowing a second sign would set precedence for other businesses to request a second sign for their business. Staff was concerned that having more than one sign for a piece of property would detract from the small town “village” atmosphere. She stated that staff felt if the Commission disagreed and allowed a variance that it would be difficult to find a hardship that would distinguish it from other properties in the City. She advised that the current site has the maximum amount of signage allowed for the property and felt that the property owner had other options. Staff recommended denial of the request. Staff felt that if the Commission was sympathetic to the property owner’s request, the request should still be denied and staff should be directed to amend the sign ordinance to allow this request within the district.

Chair Crump opened the public hearing at 6:45 p.m.

John Patch, the applicant, addressed the Commission. He stated that he believed that the request should be considered as a variance. He believed that the reduction in traffic from the recent bypass has caused hardship to the businesses in the City. He did not think it would likely that other businesses would request additional signage, but questioned what would be wrong with promoting the City and the businesses within the City. He advised that a portion of the sign would include a reader board, which would promote events in the City, such as Corn Days. He reviewed the other questions proposed by staff in the report and provided his reaction to those items. He questioned how the addition of this sign would create a cluttered area when there are no other signs near this proposed location. He believed that this sign would promote the businesses along with the City.

Commissioner Hultmann stated that MnDOT is working with the Chamber of Commerce to provide accurate signage on both ends of town by September of this year. He did agree that the property was unique but felt that this would set a precedent within the City. He stated that the traffic situation is something that was foreseen. He did not feel that it was an effective sign.

Commissioner Skjaret questioned what the other options would be for the property owner.

Planning Consultant Perry stated that one option would be to relocate the existing freestanding sign to the proposed location, and another would be to add additional wall signage.

Chair Crump stated that the existing freestanding sign would not be able to be relocated, as it is non-conforming.

Commissioner Skjaret stated that he was concerned with whether the sign would be able to be seen from the neighboring homes on the other side of the property.

Chair Crump stated that he liked the idea of promoting his business in a more efficient manner but did not feel that the proposed request was the correct way to do that. He stated that he did not think that the sign would fit well with the "village" feel of the City, and that additional trees would need to be cut down in order to see the proposed sign. He did not feel that every tenant within Town Center would be able to be advertised on one sign without that sign being too large. He stated that a precedent would be set by allowing this sign and was concerned that Burger King would then present a hardship to allow a sign that would be seen from Highway 12. He stated that he wanted to be able to help the business owner but did not think that the proposed request was the way to do that.

Mr. Patch stated that the request would not benefit him but would benefit the business owners in the Town Center and the town itself. He suggested changing the appearance to the sign, whether that is the height or general appearance. He stated that he just wanted to promote the businesses and the City to promote Long Lake as a destination.

Commissioner Loosen was sympathetic to the concept of the applicant. He agreed with promoting the businesses within the Town Center and trying to get people into the City. He did not feel that this request was the best way to do that with the current ordinances. He thought that staff could work with the applicant to develop a sign that would be allowable under the current sign ordinance, without setting precedent. He suggested that the applicant join the Chamber of Commerce to work on a solution with MnDOT and help to draw people into the town. He advised the applicant to work with staff on the sign and to bring

Rene Fadden stated that she had previously driven through town regularly but no longer does because of the bypass. She felt that the proposed sign would help to promote the businesses within the town for passersby.

Commissioner Loosen questioned if Ms. Fadden had a relationship to the Town Center.

Ms. Fadden stated that she designed the sign.

City Administrator Post reported that trying to make Long Lake a shopping destination through rebranding is a goal of the Chamber of Commerce. He stated that one of the City goals for the next 18 months would be to determine what the City can do to energize the business area in general. He advised that there had been some discussion for a clock tower monument that would be visible from the Highway 12 bypass.

Commissioner Loosen questioned if the applicant would be willing to participate in something similar to that idea, on his property.

Mr. Patch stated that he was in favor of being a participant.

Commissioner Hultmann also suggested that the applicant join the Chamber of Commerce, as he felt that the applicant represented a large group of businesses and could help the group with his input regarding the MnDOT signage.

Mr. Patch advised that he had intended to join the Chamber previously and would do so in the near future.

Chair Crump closed the public hearing at 7:12 p.m.

Commissioner Loosen reviewed the options for the Commissioner concerning the request of the applicant.

Commissioner Hultmann stated that he thought that the best option would be to table the motion and have the applicant meet with staff and the Chamber to work on the request further.

Chair Crump reviewed the options regarding tabling the issue or denying it. He thought that there might be another option, other than a variance in regard to a PUD.

Planning Consultant Perry recommended doing some view studies to determine what could be seen by Highway 12. She advised of additional options and felt that the problem would come in with all the tenants being listed.

Mr. Patch acknowledged that he would be able to list the tenants on the wall of the building, but did not feel that would be appropriate. He thought that the time and temperature would draw attention to the area and believed that the proposed sign would be more attractive.

Commissioner Loosen advised that pylon signs are not allowed by current ordinance.

City Administrator Post stated that during earlier City discussions of possibilities for a monument type clock tower, the focus was on a community reader board rather than a signage listing businesses. He questioned if the applicant would be willing to partner with the City to allow a sign of that type on his property.

Chair Crump stated that he felt that the proposed sign would not be seen from Highway 12 until it was too late. He thought there were a lot of opportunities for the applicant and the City to work together to develop something that would benefit the City.

Mr. Patch stated that people would want to know which businesses are in the City and what events would be going on. He thought that the reader board would be beneficial to

the City. He stated that if the businesses were not listed they would not want to pay for the sign.

Chair Crump did not feel that a solution would occur tonight, as changes would need to be made to the ordinance.

Commissioner Hultmann moved to recommend approval and adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 2009-2 recommending denial of the application for a variance for an additional freestanding sign for the Long Lake Town Center, based on the findings in the staff report and resolution and the conditions noted in the staff report. Commissioner Skjaret seconded. Ayes: all.

Jim Smale, owner of Little Acorns Daycare stated that he was impacted negatively by the bypass. He advised that his business posted a wall sign on the highway side and immediately received calls from people that did not know the business existed.

Commissioner Hultmann advised that the Chamber would also like the input of that business owner.

City Administrator Post advised that at the September 9th meeting of the Chamber of Commerce MnDOT would be present to discuss the upcoming mill and overlay project. He felt it would be beneficial for interested Town Center business owners to attend.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Continue Discussion Regarding Green Technologies in Relationship to Existing Zoning Ordinance

City Administrator Post confirmed that the intention of the Commission included conducting a joint session with the City Council, on September 8th, to further discuss green technologies.

OTHER BUSINESS

Council Liaison Report

Nothing to report.

Commission Member Business

Commissioner Hultmann thanked staff in regard to the removal of the former Billy's Lighthouse freestanding sign.

Chair Crump stated that he hoped the stone work occurring in the future in regard to the ditch waterway by Kenny's Market would be more natural, as he did not feel that the work so far looked natural because of the uniformity of the stone size. He asked that staff

check the plans for the remaining work on that project to ensure that the outcome would be something the City would want.

Commissioner Loosen stated that he wanted to publicly say that he was impressed that the police took an active role when the tornado occurred and the power was out. He stated that he believed that both the Wayzata Blvd Gateway Landscaping and the Nelson Lakeside Park storm water projects should have gone through the Planning Commission prior to the projects beginning, as he felt that things could have been guided better.

Staff Business

City Administrator Post stated that he agreed with the police actions of directing gawker traffic away from the business district after the tornado. He stated that he received an email regarding possible relocation of businesses to the Long Lake Caribou strip center to make room for a grocery store in Orono. He advised that the City of Orono would have to revise the site PUD to allow grocery deli sales. He advised that a land use application may come forward in the next month to expand the dog grooming business to allow an expanded use.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Hultmann moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:42 p.m. Commissioner Skjaret seconded. Ayes: all.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Post
City Administrator