

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ST. CLOUD PLANNING COMMISSION

A meeting of the St. Cloud Planning Commission was held on October 11, 2011, at 6 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. Members present were Anderson, Chirhart, DeVine, Holtberg, Radaich and Thometz. Andzenge was absent. Council representative Goerger was present.

Open Forum: No one was present to speak at the open forum.

Consent Agenda: Anderson moved to accept the staff reports for October 11, 2011, as part of the official record. Holtberg seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously. Anderson moved to approve the minutes of September 13, 2011. The motion was seconded by Thometz and carried by a vote of 5-0-1 (DeVine abstaining as she was absent last month).

General Development Plan Amendment/W 300 Block, LLC on Behalf of Wedum St. Cloud Student Housing, LLC: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, stated that the original Planned Unit Development (PUD) included specific allowed uses. Applicant is proposing to add "fitness center" as an allowed use which would require a PUD amendment. Staff is recommending in favor of the request as it is consistent with the intent of the other allowed uses and will provide primary service to people living in the area. Chairperson Radaich opened the public hearing and invited testimony on a request from W 300 Block, LLC on behalf of Wedum St. Cloud Student Housing, LLC to amend the 5th Avenue Live Planned Unit Development (PUD) General Development Plan to include "Fitness center" in Section 3 - Allowed Uses, which will allow a proposed Snap Fitness to operate on the ground floor of the 5th Avenue Live building. (Location: 305 5th Avenue South) (DPA-2011-03). The following persons testified:

Steve Ludwig Admin. Vice Pres., SCSU	SCSU leases and operates the student housing on that site. The fitness center would be beneficial to the students that lease housing there.
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There being no one else wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed. Chirhart moved to recommend to the City Council approval of the GDP amendment to add fitness center as an allowed use in the 5th Avenue Live PUD. The motion was seconded by DeVine. Anderson asked if it is

anticipated that most of the fitness center clients would be foot traffic as opposed to driving to the center. Dan Franklin, part owner of two existing fitness center locations and proposing to open the 5th Ave. Live location, stated that he would expect much of the clientele to arrive on foot. However, there is sufficient parking on street as well as in the parking area behind the building. Anderson then asked the proposed hours of operation, and Franklin responded that it is a 24 hour operation. Radaich asked if they have a signed lease, and Franklin answered that they do have a lease. The motion carried unanimously.

Land Development Code Amendment/C4 Parking Requirements: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, stated that discussion on C4 parking requirements began in 2010 and was followed by a public hearing. At that time, the Planning Commission directed staff to prepare an amendment to the off-street parking regulations for the C4 zoning district which is the area around the downtown (C3 district). It was the understanding that staff was to bring forward the parking reduction discussion as well as urban design elements of the W. St. Germain corridor as recommended by the Comprehensive Plan. Glaesman stated that significant time has been dedicated to developing those design guidelines, particularly on the South Side. He stated that at this point, it would be appropriate to separate the urban design guidelines from the parking discussion. Glaesman stated that standards from other cities range from a 10% to 50% reduction in parking requirements in the C4 zoning district which encourages people to use mass transit, bike, or walk. Staff recommends an approximate 20% reduction in the commercial standards; staff does not recommend reducing the residential parking requirements. Chairperson Radaich opened the public hearing and invited testimony on a request from the St. Cloud Planning Commission to amend Article 16 - Off-Street Parking and Loading to reduce the number of required parking spaces for uses within the C4, Fringe Central Business District. (LDC-2011-05). There being no one wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed. Holtberg stated that several months ago the owner of the former East Side Glass property on E. St. Germain was requesting rezoning of the property to allow more uses on the property. Holtberg asked staff for an example of how the amendment would affect redevelopment of that property or one along

W. St. Germain. Glaesman responded that the East Side example may not be relevant since there was no available off-street parking on the property. More relevant examples would be on the W. St. Germain corridor on 14th and 15th St. and across the street from City Hall on 5th Ave. In those examples, the developments were just under the required off-street parking. In the case of the W. St. Germain development, a variance from the parking requirements was granted by the ZBA. Reducing the requirement would make the land in the downtown area more valuable and developable. Another benefit would be that it would encourage people to use modes of transportation other than motor vehicles. Chirhart asked how a reduction would have affected the parking required for the library as there appears to be excess parking spaces on that site. Glaesman answered that the library development used two blocks. Less than half a block was used for the building, and the City mandated that over a half a block be used for parking. The library is a good example of why a parking requirement reduction may be a good idea. Chirhart asked about a shared parking space concept. Glaesman answered that shared parking and off-site parking allowances were included in the LDC update. Anderson inquired if the Downtown Council is in support of a 25% reduction. Glaesman clarified that a parking reduction was supported by the DTC in 2010. DeVine commented that she was on the Downtown Council Board in 2010, and the Board supported a reduction in the required parking for the C4 District to encourage development. DeVine said she thinks it would be a great benefit to reduce the required off-street parking by 25% to bring business into that area. She commented that she does not believe the C4 on West St. Germain St. and the C4 on East St. Germain St. can be compared because they are so different. Chirhart asked for an explanation for why staff doesn't support a reduction in residential parking requirements. Glaesman explained reduction in parking requirements for residential may allow another dwelling unit to be added in a structure. That is of particular concern in the Southside University area. Anderson moved to recommend to the City Council adoption of an ordinance amending the LDC to reduce the off-street parking requirement for commercial uses in the C4 zoning district by 25%. He clarified that his motion includes the C4 districts on both the west and east sides of the river. Holtberg seconded the motion.

DeVine said she does not believe the amendment will be enough to foster development on E. St. Germain St. and asked how development on the east side can be encouraged. Glaesman stated that the potential for redevelopment will probably require consolidation of properties. He added that a reduction in off-street parking requirements should benefit property owners who wish to change the use of a small parcel or business to a business that may normally require more parking. The motion carried unanimously.

Presentation of Temporary Shelter Facility Task Force Report: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, noted that the Temporary Shelter Task Force did not come forward with a specific recommendation relative to maximum length of stay for temporary shelter facilities. Thometz, a Task Force member, stated that the City has two temporary shelters, Anna Marie's and The Salvation Army. Anna Marie's is known for helping women get their lives in order and get back into the work force. The Salvation Army provides shelter as well as counseling and assistance in finding jobs. When she learned that the Salvation Army does more than just provide shelter, she felt more comfortable with extending the length of stay to 90 days. Several options were discussed. Thometz stated that the service providers were not comfortable with a blanket statement for a 90 day maximum stay. They wanted to have the opportunity to determine whose stay could be extended, depending on the progress being made toward their client's goals. Holtberg stated that the average length of stay is in the 45 day range. However, economic conditions prompted the necessity for requesting an extension. He stated that the Task Force discussed an option that would allow a specific percentage of the residents to have their stays extended, but the Task Force decided that would be difficult to track and enforce. Glaesman pointed out that the intent of the organizations is not to have people stay indefinitely, but to help them get their lives in order and get a job. There are some people that need to stay longer than others. DeVine asked for the reasoning behind the sunset provision option. Holtberg explained that was just another option that was discussed. He added that when the economy improves, people may not need to stay as long. DeVine asked how the current 45 day maximum is enforced. Glaesman answered that it is not enforced unless there is a complaint. He stated that if the

Commission wishes to extend the maximum stay to 90 days for a percentage of the clients, the City could require a monthly report from the provider. Chirhart said he supports the across the board change with discretion by the agency on the length of stay. However, his concern would be that extending the maximum stay from 45 to 90 days may encourage "flop houses." Glaesman responded that the "flop house" is the reason why the temporary shelter definition should not be removed. The separation requirement between temporary shelter facilities would be the primary tool that would address the concern. Anderson asked if the current two TSFs require licensure. Glaesman stated that they are licensed through the City's rental housing program. Anderson asked if the City would be alerted through rental registration if "flop houses" were becoming an issue. Glaesman responded that would not be an effective tool because they may not register their house as a rental prior to opening. He reiterated that the City would probably become aware of "flop houses" because of a complaint(s). Holtberg assumed that both of the City's current TSFs would have an internal system to track clients' progress and length of stay. Goerger asked if during the Task Force discussions either of the existing TSF operators mentioned an extension percentage they would favor. Thometz responded that they didn't state a percentage, but concurred that they did not favor a blanket extension. They favored having the discretion of who would be granted an extension, depending on their progress toward meeting their goals. Glaesman commented that the providers seemed to want the percentage to be on the smaller side to discourage people from assuming they could stay the full 90 days. Anderson questioned if it would be acceptable for the ordinance amendment to state that the standard length of stay is 45 days but that a maximum length of stay of 90 days is allowed at the discretion of the provider. Thometz said she believes the providers wanted an amendment that would state a specific percentage of clients that could stay longer. Chirhart moved to hold a public hearing on the ordinance. Holtberg seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Vacation Request/St. Cloud Hospital: Chairperson Radaich stated that this is an add-on to the agenda. Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, explained that the St. Cloud Hospital campus is in the process of being replatted into one lot and block. Title research has identified old public easements

that had been dedicated to the City. In January, the Planning Commission recommended vacation of two easements that were no longer necessary. Recently three more were identified that are no longer needed by the City. Staff supports the vacation as the utilities within the easement are private mains that are the Hospital's responsibility. Glaesman stated that the line continues further to the north; therefore, a new easement to cover the connection to the manhole is necessary. Staff supports vacation of the easements up to the manhole and that a new public easement be dedicated in the replat. Holtberg moved to recommend to the City Council approval of the vacation of the three sanitary sewer easements located in Lots 7, 9, 10 and 11 of Riverview Heights subject to dedication of a new easement on the replat that will allow the City access to the public manhole at the north end of the vacated area. The motion was seconded by Chirhart and carried unanimously.

Review and Discussion of Revised Downtown Sidewalk Utilization Standards: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, stated that the City Council recently approved an ordinance that would open up utilization of downtown sidewalks for sales, tables and seating for restaurants as well as liquor sales within the public right-of-way. Prior to this ordinance, the uses were already allowed with a permit. This ordinance continues to allow those uses without a permit, but places the burden on the owner to meet the ordinance requirements. Anderson asked if the title of Section 810:04, Subd. 9(b)5. should be changed from "No Live Entertainment" to "Live Entertainment." Glaesman said he assumes that should be changed and will correct it. DeVine expressed her support for this amendment to the Code of Ordinances because it encourages growth of downtown businesses and improves the relationship between the City and downtown businesses. Radaich concurred and said use of public sidewalk space in downtown areas is the trend in many cities nationwide. Glaesman pointed out that there are still provisions in the amendment that will address public concerns for mobility and public safety.

Update Regarding Complete Streets Policy Discussion: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, gave an update regarding the complete streets policy discussion. Glaesman noted that the draft policy that was presented to the Planning Commission was forwarded to the City Council but

was not approved. The City Council has tabled its consideration of the policy in order to receive answers to questions that were raised during discussion. Chirhart commended staff for addressing the issues raised by the Council and complimented Commissioner Anderson for his letter to the St. Cloud Times supporting Complete Streets. Chairperson Radaich asked staff about the process. Glaesman explained that the resolution establishing the City's policy on Complete Streets was presented to the City Council. The Council discussed it at a study session and at two regular meetings. No revisions were made to the policy, but after a number of failed votes, the Council tabled consideration of the policy until further information is gathered. The Council may now choose to re-introduce the resolution with the Q&A memo having been presented. Holtberg said he believes that Complete Streets is important and is common sense. He believes it is easier to include Complete Street elements in the design stage, hopefully at very little cost, rather than trying to put them in later. DeVine commented that the biggest misconception about Complete Streets is the cost. The policy doesn't mandate the design, but is a guide for design. She pointed out that the APO Board unanimously supported a Complete Streets policy with the exception of one community who was concerned with cost. Chairperson Radaich said he did not believe the Council had a justifiable reason to not approve the policy. He added that staff devoted much time and effort into Complete Streets, and it has been discussed for a long time. He stated that because of City staff and Administration, St. Cloud is on the cutting edge for new ideas and would like this issue to be revisited. Anderson clarified that his letter to the St. Cloud Times was written more from a citizen's perspective than as a Planning Commission member. He said his concern is that the policy is adopted, but that Complete Street elements are never incorporated into projects because of cost concerns. He encouraged adoption of the policy by the City Council. Council representative Goerger stated that the Council has spent many hours talking about Complete Streets. He said his position on Complete Streets has been clear from the beginning of discussions; it is a cost issue. The City Engineer indicated to him that there would be additional costs; however, that position changed at a City Council meeting. Goerger clarified that his problem is not with City initiated road projects because the Council can decide if they

are too expensive; his issue is with the cost to private developers. During budget discussions, it was noted that there are currently many delinquent assessments on private developments that have gone bankrupt. The Council asked what incentives the City could offer to encourage other builders/developers to pick up those properties and turn them into taxpaying properties. Goerger stated that in many cases, Complete Streets will cost a developer additional money. He expressed concern that if a Complete Streets policy is adopted, negotiations by a private developer to develop a substantial plat will include elements of Complete Streets. Those may be cost prohibitive for developers. Chairperson Radaich said it was his understanding that the Policy would not make inclusion of Complete Streets elements mandatory in projects. However, the word "shall" is used in #4 of the resolution. Glaesman said staff's opinion is that the policy is balanced and does not need to be changed because it offers exceptions and primary considerations.

Election of Officers: Chairperson Radaich opened nominations for officers. DeVine nominated Anderson for Chair, Thometz for Vice-Chair, and Radaich for Secretary. There being no further nominations, nominations were closed. The slate of officers as nominated was unanimously approved.

Other Business: Holtberg commented that the MN APA conference was very informative. He stated that he visited the site of the new boat landing at River Bluffs Regional Park and commended the City Park Dept. for its work. Anderson said someone brought to his attention that it may be helpful to place directional signs to Lake George on existing light posts beginning downtown at the new Civic Center. Glaesman stated that there has been discussion about how to direct people into the appropriate parking spaces with the Civic Center expansion. Technology that provides information on available parking spaces will be incorporated into the Civic Center expansion which will expand into a way finding system to public amenities.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Dick Andzenge, Secretary