

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ST. CLOUD PLANNING COMMISSION

A meeting of the St. Cloud Planning Commission was held on December 13, 2011, at 6 p.m. in the St. Cloud City Hall Council Chambers. Members present were Anderson, Andzenge, Chirhart, Holtberg, and Radaich. Council representative Goerger was also present. DeVine and Thometz were absent.

Open Forum: Mel Tadych, 2118 28th St. So., St. Cloud, spoke relative to the “quiet zone” in E. St. Cloud. About three years ago, there was a plan to quiet trains in the City, and measures were implemented to accomplish that. The first was by the Lincoln Depot where a barricade was erected in the street. Sauk Rapids and Sartell have done extensive work to quiet trains, particularly by the paper mill in Sartell and several locations in Sauk Rapids. However, the train whistle still blows by the Fairgrounds on the east side. Therefore, the East side has not effectively been relieved of train noises. Tadych said he has been working on the quiet zone for two years. The City investigated project costs for the east side; the fairgrounds intersection was delayed because of the cost. Python's Recycling Center is located near the tracks, and he believes they have opposed the quiet zone because it would be an obstruction to their business. Tadych noted that he met with Mayor Kleis several days ago, who suggested he bring the issue up at the Planning Commission meeting. Tadych said he talked to the Engr. Dept last year who informed him that a great deal of costly electronics must be installed in addition to barricades. Tadych encouraged implementation of quiet zone measures during the upcoming construction season by the Fairgrounds and asked that the City start the construction as soon as possible. It would be a relief for that neighborhood to have a quiet zone in that location. He said it doesn't seem to make sense to have several quiet zones on each end of the city and one area where the whistle still blows. Glaesman commented that this is an appropriate time for Mr. Tadych to address this issue as staff is in the middle of the CIP process. Implementation of quiet zone measures would meet the CIP's minimum cost threshold and should be considered.

Consent Agenda: Holtberg moved to approve the consent agenda as follows:

Acceptance of staff reports for December 13, 2011, as part of the official record.

Approval of minutes from the November 8, 2011 Planning Commission meeting.

The motion was seconded by Radaich and carried unanimously.

Public Input Session #1 for 2013-2018 Capital Improvements Program (CIP): Matt

Glaesman, Planning Director, explained the purpose of the CIP. The CIP identifies capital projects, which are those that cost more than \$250,000 or have an anticipated life of five years or more. The CIP is also a tool for planning and financial analysis and project prioritization. The CIP acts as a guide for private decision/investments. The plan under consideration is for 2013-2018 projects. Some of the scheduled 2012 projects include improvements to the airport, trails, the MAC, utilities and corridors; reinvestment in neighborhoods, and new roadways. Glaesman pointed out that there is a City website page dedicated to the CIP. He noted that there will be another opportunity for public input prior to adoption of the CIP. Chairperson Anderson opened the public hearing, and the following persons testified:

Jay Vora
1114 Riverside Dr. SE

He is a representative of the Southeast St. Cloud Neighborhood Preservation Coalition. The Coalition is actively working to preserve and protect the valuable historical, cultural and environmental resources of the City and the greater St. Cloud area. The SE Neighborhood Coalition opposes the University Dr. corridor project. Section 106 of the National Historical Preservation Act requires a process to assess the effects of the corridor on historical properties and the environmental assessment process of the National Environmental Policy Act, neither of which have been completed. Those two processes are federally mandated processes; therefore, the Planning Commission and City Council should table all discussions and postpone all decisions regarding the University corridor project.

Lowell Olson
23 Pandolfo Pl.

He emphasized the importance of making trail connections and extensions of existing regional trails including the Beaver Island and Lake Wobegon Trails for continuity and to make them accessible throughout the City. It is also important to include parkland acquisition as an unprogrammed priority project (UPP), for example, one of the last remaining natural prairie properties within the City (the Campbell property) which adjoins the River Bluffs Regional Park and the proposed Beaver Island Trail segment which is planned for 2012. He also encouraged leveraging of local dollars by applying for grants and collaborating with other jurisdictions on regional projects. The

Mississippi River is a community asset and should be taken into consideration when planning and implementing projects. He also supports implementation of the complete streets policy and sustainability initiatives.

- Unidentified He asked the start times for the improvements to 33rd St. and the Hwy. 15 interchange with the grant money allocated to that project. He also asked about the budgetary figures for the right-of-way acquisition for that project.
- Matt Glaesman He stated that the 33rd St./Hwy. 15 interchange is a 2012 project and is Planning Director not addressed by the 2013-2018 CIP. The City has the final design from MNDOT, and appraisals will be done by the end of the year. Construction will start Fall of 2012 and continue into 2013. The intent is that the interchange should be open in 2013/2014.
- Charlotte Stephens
23 Pandolfo Pl. She concurred with Olson's comments on parks and trails and the importance of their continuity. She encouraged looking at complete streets concepts in road projects and allowing space for bike and pedestrian traffic.
- Nancy Stigard
1633 13th Ave. SE She has lived in her residence for 14 yrs. She opposes the University Dr. corridor project as it will devastate her neighborhood. She feels the Southeast Neighborhood Preservation Coalition has no success in stopping this project and believes the neighbors are being totally ignored. She said three more portions of that corridor project are being considered in the CIP which would affect her property. Over two years ago, she stated that she spoke to the Planning Commission about the plan which includes blocking 13th Ave. SE which would necessitate a street between 12th and 13th Aves. She and several of her neighbors met with the City Engineer, and he showed them other circuitous routes. However, the most logical choice is to take 17th St. through her backdoor neighbor's house and her house. There are 22 homes on the City's map with crosshatching where the street could go through. The problem is that those property owners don't know where they stand because a decision has not been made. She would prefer that the University Dr. corridor not be approved; however, if it is approved, she asked that the remaining decisions be made right away so the property owners are not held hostage and are unable to make any decisions on their properties. If the project continues, she asked that her home be taken because she doesn't want to live in St. Cloud anymore.

There being no one wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed. Chairperson Anderson stated that the public can continue to offer input throughout this process. Chirhart asked staff for an explanation of the process. Glaesman stated this meeting was the first opportunity to provide comment. Public input is welcome throughout the next five months. For the next three months the

CIP will be discussed internally followed by a working session with the Planning Commission (public meeting) in March. The final step is another public hearing in March prior to adoption.

Proposed Park Land Donation of Lots within the Proposed Felicity Park Plat and Approval of the Preliminary and Final Plats of Felicity Park: Glaesman explained that the purpose of the plat is to create a number of parcels in order to redefine applicant's personal property, and make a number of land donations along the river corridor. Applicant's residence is on the far north end of the Lucille Lane termination. Applicant is proposing to donate three proposed outlots to the City for public use, two of which are contiguous to existing City parkland. Glaesman noted that there is no intended use of the property except for limited active and passive recreation. Chirhart moved to recommend to the City Council approval of the preliminary and final plats of Felicity Park (location: 1957 and 1960 Lucille Ln.) and to accept the donation of lots for parkland. He thanked the Weitzel family for their generosity. The motion was seconded by Radaich and carried unanimously.

Recommendation Regarding Changing Street Names and Addressing within the 1000 Block of County Road 134 and 900 Block of Chestnut Court: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, explained that as a result of the completion of the West Metro corridor improvements, there are a number of properties that no longer directly access Co. Rd. 134 or Co. Rd. 4 but remain addressed off of those streets. Due to the elimination of that direct access, there is an emergency service delivery issue as well as a private delivery issue. The City has met with the affected property owners, and they indicated their support for changing both the street names and house numbers. Glaesman stated that staff's recommendation would be Option 1 which would rename the entire corridor from Walnut St. on the west end all the way to the northeast end of the cul-de-sac to Chestnut Ct. This option was supported by the affected neighbors. Holtberg moved to recommend to the City Council approval of Option 1 changing both the street names and house numbers. The motion was seconded by Andzenge. Anderson asked the reason for the preference for Option 1. Glaesman answered that option is preferred because it follows the numbering sequence from the Mississippi River to the west. The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion of Article 17 Landscaping, Screening and Buffering of the St. Cloud Land

Development Code: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, explained that the landscaping, screening and buffering requirements of the Land Development Code (LDC) have been an issue for the Planning Commission and City Council in recent development proposals, particularly in the CVS Pharmacy development as it relates to transitioning from residential to non-residential uses. Therefore, the City Council expressed an interest in reviewing the LDC to strengthen the standards. Glaesman stated that staff's memo offers five options. Holtberg said he would like the Planning Commission to hold a public hearing on an amendment. Radaich stated that he does not believe that Option #5, maintaining the current standards, is an option. He suggested staff apply different options to past developments. Chirhart commented that it would be helpful for staff to apply the five different scenarios to the CVS project. Glaesman asked for guidance from the Planning Commission to narrow down the options. Council representative Goerger stated that the City Council discussed re-addressing all parts of the LDC that were not passed. He added that the City Council asked that the Planning Commission consider the five options, and stated that the City Council does support some type of buffer between commercial and residential properties, especially where there will be drive lanes or parking. A common concern is headlights shining into residential windows. Goerger supported consideration particularly of Options 2-4. Chairperson Anderson noted that Option 3, amending the LDC to require screening of all off-street parking adjacent to a residential use seems to leave the most room for interpretation. Glaesman concurred that Options 2-4 would leave some discretion, but that Option 1 is excessive in mandating design. Chirhart stated that Options 2, 3 and 4 deal with the situation between commercial and residential properties and asked if there are other situations where there should be some provisions for buffering uses. Glaesman answered that consideration could be given for other abutting uses, such as apartments from single family. Chairperson Anderson said his preference would be a combination of Options 3 and 4. Glaesman said staff will draft new language for the public hearing. Council representative Goerger believed that the buffer yard (Option 4) will probably be controversial. He said he would like screening to be

permanent, e.g., berm, fence, and/or live vegetation that is thick year round. Holtberg requested that staff also consider other uses besides commercial that may abut residential uses when drafting the amending language.

Discussion of Planning & Zoning Department Draft 2012 Work Program: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, stated that the work program should be a document that can be looked to for direction by the public, administration, City Council and other City departments. Tasks that have been completed in the last 4 years are included in the work program as there may be followup steps from those plans that need to be addressed. Holtberg emphasized the importance of addressing tax forfeit and serviced vacant lot strategy. He asked staff for a map indicating all of the PUDS. Holtberg noted that discussion occurred at the 5:00 meeting with the Arts Commission regarding an arts assessment. Glaesman stated that some of those are included in the studies/initiatives, and the City has applied for grants to achieve some of those. The role of the Development Fund (DF) is important, particularly in meeting grant matches. Glaesman pointed out that both the Joint District Plan (JDP) and the Comprehensive Plan (CP) are 10 years old and are in need of updating. He stated that the growth stages of the current CP are what the City still wants or can expect in the future. Although much of the CP is still valid, there are sections that should be reconsidered. The Development Fund (DF) budget includes payment of staff salaries; therefore, available funds for pro-active planning has decreased. Glaesman noted the 2011/2012 studies/initiatives as well as future studies/initiatives. Staff is skeptical about a regional approach to some of the projects due to lack of monetary participation by other entities. Chairperson Anderson pointed out that the City is currently in a maintenance stage rather than a growth stage. Chirhart believed it would be valuable to reassess the CP. For example, there are a large number of vacant lots in the Donovan Lake development currently zoned residential. He stated that single family residential homes are not in high demand at the present time, but apartments are in demand. Therefore, he thinks rezoning of some of these undeveloped areas should be considered. Glaesman stated that the University Dr. corridor study needs to be completed. However, there are others that are not time sensitive. Chairperson

Anderson said he agrees with the testimony given during the CIP public hearing that a decision must be made on the University Dr. corridor study. Glaesman explained that federal funds are tied to that project for the study as well as for implementation. Those dollars have been passed on to other jurisdictions for their projects in light of a federal highway decision that would not honor an environmental assessment (EA) unless the City made a significant step toward implementation. Therefore, the required 106 process is not necessary; however, it is essential that a decision is made so that property owners know where they stand. That will hopefully be accomplished in 2012. Andzeng asked if a public hearing has been held and if the entire project has been approved. Glaesman responded that the improvements on the west end of the corridor were under a separate EA. Improvements on the east end of the corridor have not yet been undertaken because the study process must first be completed. Glaesman said that the 2012 work program can be carried over to January.

Project Authorization from 2012 Development Fund Budget: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, stated that when the Development Fund (DF) budget was approved in July, revenue was much larger than anticipated due to being frugal in past years. The available budget was approximately \$1.2 million. Typically, approximately \$300,000 to \$500,000 is spent for operations and staffing expenses. Subject to the Planning Commission's direction, \$12,000 has been committed to the fourth round of the Healthy Neighborhoods Partnership Program (HNPP), and the Mississippi Riverfront Plaza analysis has started (\$30,000). Another possible expenditure would be for the Joint District Plan (JDP) update at a cost of approximately \$250,000. The cost of a Comprehensive Plan (CP) update is estimated at about \$400,000. The Planning Commission had expressed interest in increasing the training budget. Glaesman stated that another possible project to be considered for DF expenditure is the 5th Ave. corridor revision, changing it to make it more pedestrian friendly and to enhance its aesthetics. He added that if the Commission believes this is a worthy project, Planning and Engineering can attempt to remove the on-street parking and put in "share the road" lanes, install bollards, traffic signals, banner poles, etc. in 2012. In addition, some traffic changes on the corridor

could be made. Staff could develop a detailed budget to make those changes. The SSUNA has offered \$10,000 to proceed with aesthetic treatments. Chirhart inquired if there is any available State money to help pay for updates to the JPD. Glaesman answered that he did not believe State monies would be available; however, the City could apply for other grant dollars. In regard to the update of the Joint Planning District Plan, staff's memo states that "support of area cities and counties for this project is uncertain at best" and asked if that is based on an anecdotal statement or if it is the policy of the counties. Glaesman stated that he has had discussions with the Planning Directors who state that they have limited budgets, and some are already updating their comprehensive plans with staff resources without an updated joint district plan. Chirhart stated that creates a disjointed plan for the area. He asked if it is advisable for the City to update the CP without any other support for an updated JDP. Glaesman said he believes in a regional vision, and the JDP is in serious need of review. Radaich asked if the majority of the CP is still valid and wondered if only certain sections are in need of updating. That would reduce the expense. Glaesman answered that probably 70-80% would still be valid; however, the growth elements should be addressed. St. Cloud's CP encourages higher density and mixed use development. Holtberg asked if other jurisdictions would honor the JDP if it is updated and funded solely by the City of St. Cloud. Glaesman said it is his hope that if the City funded 50 to 60% of the JDP update, that there would be other jurisdictions that would fund the remaining portion. Holtberg said he would support staff updating the CP at a cost of \$100,000. He also believed some of the 5th Ave. improvements are a good idea. Glaesman stated that the city can move forward on 5th Ave. depending on available resources. Intersection controls are costly, but removal of on-street parking and striping the roadway for "share the road", installing bollards, and some smaller aesthetic treatments would be reasonable. Radaich said he would promote additional budget dollars for training and believes that \$20,000 is justified. Anderson asked how the Joint District Plan differs from the Comprehensive Plan. Glaesman explained that the Joint District Plan addresses regional issues, including growth boundaries. Minimum dollars would be spent on transportation because that is addressed by the APO. Chairperson Anderson asked for an explanation of what

would be included in the riverfront plaza analysis. Glaesman explained that the analysis would test the reality of the concepts, e.g. soils, impact on parking, etc. Anderson asked if the skyway plan has ever included a link from City Hall to Wells Fargo because he has heard comments from people about the safety issue in crossing Division St. Glaesman stated there are no second level destinations on the south side; therefore, the skyway system would stay north of Division St. Radaich asked when action on the work program should occur. Glaesman responded that the Commission could take action at this meeting. He stated that the 5th Ave. project is most time sensitive. Chirhart asked the current status of First Methodist Church and stated that he would object to improvement of 5th Ave. if there are no plans for further development along it. He said he would prefer to update the CP rather than completing the revitalization of 5th Ave. Holtberg concurred. Chirhart added that he wants to proceed with the update of the CP even if there are no funds available for the JDP update. Glaesman noted that the City can still do some inexpensive improvements to 5th Ave. Holtberg said he would be comfortable with a \$200,000 commitment for the CP update over a two year period. Radaich stated that staff is quite knowledgeable and asked that staff inform the Planning Commission on what portions of the CP are in need of updating and the associated costs. Glaesman said he can draft a memo that would outline that information.

Miscellaneous Reports: Community Development Director Glaesman informed the Commission that "Miscellaneous Reports" will continue to appear on the Planning Commission agendas.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Emil Radaich, Secretary