

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE ST. CLOUD PLANNING COMMISSION

A meeting of the St. Cloud Planning Commission was held on April 10, 2012, at 6 p.m. in the St. Cloud City Hall Council Chambers. Members present were Anderson, Andzenge, Chirhart, DeVine, Holtberg, and Council representative Goerger. Radaich was absent. Chairperson Anderson announced that Commissioner Thometz has resigned and thanked her for her service.

**Open Forum:** Lawrence Lafler, 905 16th St. SE, stated that he is representing the Southeast St. Cloud Neighborhood Preservation Coalition which wants to preserve, protect and enhance the historic, cultural and environmental resources of SE St. Cloud. The Coalition opposes the University Dr. Corridor project. The Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act that assesses the effects of the proposed corridor project on historic properties has not been completed. The same applies to the environmental assessment process of the National Environmental Policy Act that assesses impact to natural and cultural resources. Lafler stated that federal law requires that outcomes of Section 106 and the environmental assessment be carefully considered. He stated that at one of their Coalition meetings, Mayor Kleis told them he is not in support of the proposed project.

**Consent Agenda:** Chirhart moved to approve the consent agenda as follows:

Acceptance of staff reports for April 10, 2012, as part of the official record.

Approval of minutes from the March 13, 2012 Planning Commission meeting.

The motion was seconded by DeVine and carried unanimously.

**2013-2018 Capital Improvements Program (CIP):** Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, explained that the CIP is a projection of when major capital projects will be built in the next five years and beyond. The projects range from construction of physical structures to land acquisitions to IT needs. Adoption of the CIP is the Planning Commission's responsibility; it is then presented to the

Mayor and City Council for consideration for the budget. Chairperson Anderson opened the public hearing and invited testimony. The following persons testified:

Lowell Olson  
23 Pandolfo Pl.

He said he is pleased with the projects for trail connections and extensions of existing regional trails including the Beaver Island Trail and the Lake Wobegon Trail. Parkland acquisition is included as an UPP (Unprogrammed Priority Project) which demonstrates a commitment to acquire property for parkland when the opportunity arises. The Campbell property adjacent to River Bluffs Regional Park is the last remnant of native prairie in the city. The ISD 742 property adjoining Neenah Creek Regional Park would also be valuable to the city in the future. He supports continuing leveraging local dollars by applying for grants and collaborating with other jurisdictions on regional projects. He also supports the City's implementation of the Complete Streets concept and sustainability initiatives.

Helen Ann Johnson  
1411 9<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE

She read a letter from Brenda Graves of 878 Pearlview, Sauk Rapids, and Alan Phillips of 1013 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE, St. Cloud, opposing the improvements to the University Dr. corridor in southeast St. Cloud as they believe it will negatively impact that cohesive neighborhood. They suggested working on alternatives for public transportation for students rather than bringing their cars to school. This project is certainly not needed now, if ever.

Dan Miller  
21932 Ridgeview Dr.  
St. Augusta

He expressed concern about the Co. Rd. 75/33rd St. So. project which is already slated for final design with construction in 2014. About a year ago, a number of property owners adjacent to the improvement project were invited to a meeting to look at concept engineering drawings by the county. The property owners were shocked by the proposed changes to accesses to some critical properties at that intersection. He owns a piece of the property on which Liberty Savings Bank is located. The person who owns Cenex, the owners of the 76 station (Vouk), and several other adjacent property owners are all concerned about the viability of the businesses if the plans are adopted. He has expressed his concerns to the Mayor. The current designs will shut down 4 or 5 businesses. It is his understanding that the design process will come back through the Planning Commission and City Council for approval. He asked that his remarks be considered.

Sue Wakefield  
1309 Cooper Ave.

She is representing much of her neighborhood. They petitioned the project that was presented to them but was delayed for several years. The residents along Cooper Ave. want representation from the beginning to the end of the Cooper Ave. renovation project this time. They would like all road issues to be analyzed and abated in any plan that will be considered. She said the residents want neighborhood representation on the Task Force that is putting together the plans for Cooper Ave. Traffic has almost tripled on Cooper Ave. and an updated traffic flow study for the area is needed, i.e. Cooper Ave., Hwy. 75 and Co. Rd. 136. They would also like to focus on the blocked roads for several miles to the east and west. The study should also cover traffic

rerouting viability, speed control, auto emissions, “Children Present” warning signs, possible property devaluation, and noise abatement. Traffic usually travels at least 15 mph over the speed limit. The property owners also want to be involved in planning of neighborhood streets which could impact Cooper Ave. Much traffic has been diverted onto Cooper Ave. as a result of blocked off neighborhoods, lack of east-west connections, vetoed road proposals, and absence of an operational southside traffic grid. She asked that any new Cooper Ave. renovations be delayed until the presently blocked alternative routes are reopened and until there is improved access to streets in the area.

Dave Pullis  
1845 Red River Trail

His concern is about the two projects on 33<sup>rd</sup> St. So. – the one dealing with the intersection at Co. Rd. 75, and the connection at Hwy. 15. He believes transportation project funding would be better spent on upgrading existing streets. He is concerned that if 33<sup>rd</sup> St. is built to the extent that is proposed, it will be in the same poor condition as the other streets in St. Cloud. Currently, he can sleep with his windows open at night even though 33<sup>rd</sup> St. is in his back yard. He is concerned about the noise if it becomes a 4-lane roadway. At the least, sound barriers should be included. He thinks the project is overdesigned and asked that the neighboring property owners be included in the design plan process. He stated that the City will take private property for the road construction, and the property owners will have to pay the assessments for the roadway project even though they are opposed to it.

Ed Schnettler  
2020 Lone Oak Circle

He is part of Schnettler Properties which developed the Deer Creek Crossing area. In talking to Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, and Steve Foss, City Engineer, it is his understanding that the improvements to 33<sup>rd</sup> St. that are being discussed do not include improvements in front of his properties at this time. He said he has made significant investments in that area. He asked the Planning Commission and City Administration to involve property owners/developers along that corridor in future design and planning for 33<sup>rd</sup> St. So. as it will have a significant impact on those neighborhoods. The integrity of those neighborhoods needs to be preserved.

Tim Kavanaugh  
Princeton, MN

He is the General Manager/CEO of Federated Coops which owns the convenience store on 33<sup>rd</sup> St. So. The design plan would eliminate two of their accesses. He hopes the City would work with the commercial businesses to provide better access to their businesses.

Alan Halbur  
1111 Cooper Ave. So.

He noted that the CIP states that the Cooper Ave. project justification is that this project is needed to improve the mobility and safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorized traffic. When all the projects in this area are completed, the result will be a thoroughfare from Hwy. 15 to Hwy. 10. That will not be a safe pedestrian roadway and will not improve property values.

Bob Olson  
1309 Cooper Ave. So.

He and his wife, Sue Wakefield, have visited with their neighbors, and there is a general fear of the traffic volumes. Many roadways in that neighborhood are blocked off from Co. Rd. 75. Any widening of Cooper

Ave. will worsen the traffic situation. A traffic flow study should be done to demonstrate the burden on Cooper Ave. as opposed to the roadways that parallel it. Alternate accesses need to be explored.

Matt Tornow  
1519 Cooper Ave. So.

He spoke in reference to the Cooper Ave. improvements between Traverse Rd. and Roosevelt Rd. (CR75). It is important that Cooper Ave. residents be involved in the concept plan and that the City look at ways to reduce traffic on Cooper Ave. rather than just widening the road to accommodate more traffic. Alternate routes should be considered to go from Co. Rd. 75 to Cooper Ave. Speed and noise control and some form of cost benefit analysis should also be considered. Property devaluation is a concern.

Nancy Stigaard  
1633 13<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE

The University Dr. corridor projects only include certain sections of the roadway. She believes it is only logical that the portions in between will also be done. For almost 4 years, 22 homes have been "held hostage" because a street has been planned to go between 12th and 13th Ave. but the location has not been determined. She believes it is only right that those property owners be made aware of the specific plans for that roadway.

Pat Morin  
917 13<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE

She suggested that the City use some imagination in future designs for roadways, buildings, bridges, etc.

There being no one else wishing to testify, the public hearing was closed. Chirhart said he appreciates the public input and asked Glaesman to speak to 33<sup>rd</sup> Ave. and Cooper Ave. improvement projects and how neighbors and business owners can be part of that planning process. Glaesman stated that two of the four projects were UPP (Unprogrammed Priority Project) projects which means they will probably not commence within the next five years. The other two projects are scheduled for 2014 and 2016 allowing staff to follow its typical process of neighborhood meetings prior to project approval, while individual meetings with interested parties are also welcomed. Holtberg thanked those who testified and encouraged them to stay in touch with the City. Glaesman commented that a number of the CIP projects relate to County improvements. Holtberg asked how the public can stay in touch with the County, and Glaesman pointed out that Jodi Teich was appointed today as the new County Engineer. He encouraged the public to follow the CIP as it is updated on an annual basis. DeVine noted that the CIP process has improved greatly over the past years. The City has attempted to involve the community as much as possible, and she assured that every voice is heard and considered by the Planning Commission. Andzenge stated that he is excited about the desire of

property owners/citizens to be involved in the process. He pointed out that the University Dr. changes are inevitable with the City's growth. Rather than resisting any change, he asked that citizens express to the City what improvements they would like to see. Anderson asked staff to address a concern that was raised relative to expenditures for new/expanded roadways vs. revitalization of existing streets. Steve Foss, City Engineer, responded that he heard a question raised as to why so much money is being spent on the two ends of 33<sup>rd</sup> St. He explained that the City is trying to leverage local dollars. A large amount of money for the 33<sup>rd</sup> St. projects is coming from federal aid. He agrees that many of the older streets need to be upgraded; however, the funding comes from two different sources. Holtberg asked staff for an explanation of project PB1604. Glaesman answered that project would replace some computer equipment and bring others up to speed. That is a City Council goal for this year. The need for that expenditure of \$2 million is based on a three to four-year old assessment. He believes the IT expenditure is likely in 2016, but will hold off with the study and monetary amount until 2014.

Holtberg moved to approve the 2013-2018 CIP, and the motion was seconded by Andzenge. Council representative Goerger noted that the widening of Co. Rd. 75 south of 33<sup>rd</sup> St. So. and the reconstruction of 16<sup>th</sup> St. So. are both scheduled for 2013. Those two projects could tie closely with projects in the more distant future. Goerger asked staff if the 16th St. project includes closing of Traverse Rd. Foss answered that the two projects would not have to occur at the same time. Goerger said he wants people who testified re. the Cooper Ave. project to be aware that Traverse Rd. may close completely next year or in the not too distant future. Goerger then inquired if the Co. Rd. 75 widening project south of 33<sup>rd</sup> St. So. scheduled for next year will affect future plans for and preclude citizen/business owner involvement in the plans for the intersection of 33<sup>rd</sup> St. So. and Co. Rd. 75 and widening of 33<sup>rd</sup> St. So. to Southway Dr. Foss answered that their input will still be timely and relevant. The improvements on Co. Rd. 75 are to take the section south of 33<sup>rd</sup> St. So. and make it into a four-lane divided roadway. It will not preclude discussions on the intersection with 33<sup>rd</sup> St. or the widening of 33<sup>rd</sup> St. to the west. Goerger asked how the Transportation Committee that is

currently being formed will fit into the CIP process. Glaesman explained that the input of the Transportation Committee will inform the Planning Commission's decision in the CIP, although theirs could be a separate project recommendation. The motion carried unanimously.

**Recommendation on the Proposed Beaver Island III Trail Design:** Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, stated that this project has been in the CIP for a number of years and is now coming forward for implementation. The proposed alignment is the one that the Planning Commission has seen before in the CIP. It extends from the back of the River's Edge Convention Center, underneath the road bridge and the railroad bridge and back to 5th Ave. There have been recent discussions about whether the initial trail connection should come up to 5th Ave. or go along the water's edge to 5<sup>th</sup>. The City Council has decided on the design that has been in the CIP. Originally, the project cost was \$3 to \$3.5 million; however, the budget has been increased to \$4 to \$5 million for a design with the aesthetics that the Mississippi River deserves. Glaesman asked that the Planning Commission indicate whether the proposed design concept is what they would expect to be built. The four main features of the trail concept are: 1) A 75' covered bridge underneath the railroad bridge; 2) a 150' covered bridge underneath the road bridge; 3) significant treatments such as a grand stair, green feature, and places to enjoy active and passive recreation; and 4) The switchback that comes up from the railroad bridge that is within 2 to 3' of the water up to the roadway which is a change in elevation of 40'. Chirhart asked about the highest grade with respect to bikers. Glaesman answered that the entire stretch is ADA compliant at 5% at the greatest slopes. Chirhart asked how bikers would get to the trailhead coming from the north. Glaesman answered that ultimately the trail is planned to go from Hester Park to the Convention Center. Discussion has occurred about the possibility of closing 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. with a cul-de-sac or at least narrow it to incorporate green space and separate pedestrian and bicycle movement from the roadway surface. Holtberg inquired if Mississippi Partners has seen this concept. Glaesman stated that this concept was shown to their active recreation group two weeks ago, and it will be discussed at the Partners' quarterly meeting tomorrow. Anderson asked the source of the \$4 - \$5 million funding. Glaesman answered that there

is \$1 million in transportation funding, local sales tax (unknown amount), and possibly some funding from the River's Edge Convention Center for features that directly about the Convention Center. There may or may not be a funding gap depending on the features that are included in the trail extension. Holtberg said he favors the design. DeVine commented that the Commission has been supportive of utilizing the river as an asset, and it would tie into the Complete Streets concept. Anderson said he supports the project but is surprised by the project cost.

Devine moved to approve the concept plan as recommended by staff with input from other community organizations. The motion was seconded by Andzenge and carried unanimously.

**Recommendation on Transfer of the Optimists Park Property (351 31st Avenue North) to the Boys and Girls Club:** Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, stated that the Boys & Girls Club has applied for funding through the CDBG application process to expand their facility at the Roosevelt School location at 345 30<sup>th</sup> Ave. No. The expansion results in the need for more property surrounding the facility in order to meet setback requirements on the west. The Boys & Girls Club has asked if City owned Optimist Park property at 301 and 351 31<sup>st</sup> Ave. No. is available. Glaesman stated that the Boys & Girls Club use is consistent with the public purpose for which the property was originally acquired. Chirhart stated that the City has donated property in other Boys and Girls Club locations. He would support the transfer as it is a benefit to the community. Holtberg inquired if the City is recommending transfer of only the part of the park needed for the setback or if the recommendation is to transfer the entire park. Scott Zlotnik, Park & Rec Director, explained that the intent would be to transfer the entire park property (two parcels). The Optimist Club approves the transfer of all of the land, but the intent is to have the property continue to be an open space for use by the neighborhood. If in the future the Boys & Girls Club elected to vacate the property, Zlotnik assumed the property would revert back to the City. DeVine said she supports the request but asked if maintenance becomes a burden. Zlotnik commented that the property will continue to be open to the public but will be maintained by the Boys & Girls Club. Tom Wicks, Director of Operations for the Boys & Girls Club, stated that the Club is willing to accept maintenance responsibilities for that property. He added that

the expansion will not be on the park property. Transfer of the park property just allows the Boys & Girls Club to meet the 50' setback requirement.

Chirhart moved to approve conveyance of the Optimist Park property to the Boys & Girls Club. The motion was seconded by Holtberg and carried unanimously.

**Update of Phase 4 of the Healthy Neighborhoods Partnership Program (HNPP):** Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, stated that the Planning Commission has allocated \$20,000 for HNPP Round 4. The process began with two training sessions followed by visioning sessions in each neighborhood. All seven neighborhoods come back in May, compare notes, and talk about how to address the issues. Glaesman invited Commission members to take part in these visioning sessions. Holtberg commented that the Initiative Foundation is an excellent facilitator at these sessions. Chirhart stated that he assumed the bike trail would be part of the Hester Park neighborhood discussions.

**Update on the Study of St. Cloud's Licensing and Permitting Processes:** Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, reminded the Commission that it authorized an expenditure of Development Fund monies to hire a consultant to evaluate the City's process relating to development, e.g. permits, licenses, etc. in hopes of improving services. The consultant, Zucker Systems, will assess the operation and suggest things that are being done in other communities that the City of St. Cloud may be interested in incorporating. Glaesman encouraged the Commission members to attend the meetings set up for them with the consultant.

Goerger pointed out that the large historic photos of St. Cloud that were paid for with Development fund monies were unveiled today at the Mayor's State of the City address.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

---

Emil Radaich, Secretary