

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ST. CLOUD PLANNING COMMISSION

A meeting of the St. Cloud Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, August 13, 2013, at 6 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. Members present were Anderson, Andzenge, Ballantine, DeVine, Holtberg, Larson and Radaich. City Council representative Goerger was present.

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

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

Acceptance of staff reports for August 13, 2013 as part of the official record

Approval of minutes from the July 9, 2013 Planning Commission meeting

The motion was seconded by DeVine and carried unanimously.

Paradise Park South PUD Amendment / Outsource Architecture on behalf of Islamic

Center of St. Cloud: Holtberg addressed public hearing protocol and noted that numerous letters along with three petitions were received by the Planning Commission. Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, explained a request for an amendment of the Paradise Park South Planned Unit Development (PUD) at 1850 Clearwater Rd. The applicant is proposing to replace nine duplexes and 19 single family homes with two four-unit townhomes, a place of worship, a religious center, a gymnasium, a community room, and possible office, retail and restaurant space. The last zoning action rezoned the applicant's property from R1, Single Family Residential, to PUD in 2007.

Abdulrashid Salad, President of Islamic Center of St. Cloud, stated that the property was purchased in 2011 in order to meet the needs of the community. The current building, located at 375 5th Ave S, has two halls which are used for prayer, religious education and as a community center. The new location will allow for separation of the uses, like many other places of worship. On May 28, 2013, a neighborhood meeting was held at the Southside Boys and Girls Club to solicit comments and potential concerns. The group that attended the meeting offered suggestions of importance to them. As a result, several changes were made including leaving the trees on the south side of the property, lowering the height of the gymnasium, adding trees to create a buffer, and adding townhomes to the

plan. In the gymnasium/community room building, a coffee shop, bookstore and office space were proposed in the hopes to create a sense of community and a place to share experiences. He stated that if the neighbors are not okay with those uses, they will be removed from the proposal. Almost all places of worship are located in residential neighborhoods. The current building is a good example of the Islamic Center. The Islamic Center of St. Cloud is 16-17 years old, and there has never been a single complaint about noise pollution. Another challenged faced with the current building is parking. There are only five or six parking spaces available, and to mitigate the shortage an agreement has been made with the First Presbyterian Church during peak hours of operation. The current building will remain a place of worship.

Dean Wick of Outsource Architecture stated that during the neighborhood meeting in May 2013, he received 18 names of people requesting continued information on the project. Since that time, five more names have been added to the list. Schmidt Park will not be rezoned as a part of this project. The buildings are not proposed for the use of 7,000 to 10,000 people but approximately 600 people during peak times. Alteration of the cul-de-sac at 7th Ave S and Park Pl N is not proposed. The St. Cloud Times gave the impression that the project would be short 50 parking spaces; however, the uses will share parking space since they will not be utilized at the same time.

Holtberg opened the public hearing and invited testimony. The following persons testified:

- | | |
|---|---|
| Abubakar Haji
3710 W St. Germain St | He is a graduate of St. Cloud State University, has lived in the community for the last 8 years and owns his own business. He stated he is a proud American and is speaking in support because he is Muslim, Somali and because he is an American. He stated that the mosque will open the doors to communication, understanding and tolerance. |
| Mahamoud Mahamed
1021 7 th St S, Waite Park | He is the Executive Director of the St. Cloud Area Somali Salvation Organization. He stated that the community and discussion is growing. There were only a handful of Somalis in the St. Cloud area 12-13 years ago. The Muslim community needs a place to worship. He believes that the project will raise property values in the area. He asked the Commissioners to move the project forward. |
| Mohamed Yassin, MD
1511 Northway Ct | He moved to St. Cloud in 1992. He stated that when he proposed to build an office building in 1994, people did not want him to because they thought it was being paid for by Saudi Arabia. He was able to build his |

office building and has gained the trust of the City. He has been here for over 20 years, pays taxes and has served the community by taking care of people who are ill. He urged everyone to think open-mindedly.

Jeanne Knier
611 22nd St S

The property is too small for a gymnasium, church and school. The population of Somalis will only be growing, and the property will not be able to handle a building of that magnitude and the extra activity that comes with them. Adding more noise to the neighborhood causes concern about quality of life. Large buildings seem to be more fitting on the outskirts of town where there is room to grow. She stated it is important to make sure the law was followed with the sale of the property to begin with.

Mark Thieroff
100 Washington Ave S
Minneapolis, MN

He represents Gregory Jarrett and Deborah Behrends and submitted a letter on the behalf of his clients. He stated he believes the request should be addressed as a rezoning instead of an amendment. The proposal is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan because the townhomes exceed the density allowed for low-density housing. The applicant used faulty and outdated information to determine trip generation information, and a full traffic study is warranted. The property needs to be platted due to changing street configurations and combining the lots into a single lot. He asked if the townhomes will be owned and operated by the applicant. He suggested the application be denied but urged Commissioners to table the request to gather more information.

Karen Ament
2686 Woodside Ln

She stated that the neighbors are not opposed to the project but believe the location is unsuitable. She asked the Commissioners to take their time in making a decision. She referred to an Islamic center in Bloomington and said she was alarmed to read that residents are upset with lack of parking, traffic and the use of the center sometimes 24 hours a day. She asked the Planning Commission to see the neighbors' side.

Anne Weitz
1407 11th Ave S

She was born and raised on the South side and bought a house in the neighborhood a few houses down from her childhood home. She stated that when someone came to her home asking her to sign a petition opposing the amendment, the concerns were not of traffic and noise. The focus was on not letting Muslims into the neighborhood. She stated she was told that Muslims ruin every community that they come into and are terrible neighbors. She said it reminded her of when her parents moved into the neighborhood in 1969 and that her mother is of middle-eastern descent. She said she has come to know many Muslims and they have been kind and protective neighbors. She works at the Children's Home, and there was no controversy regarding their new building in the area which has a gymnasium, a community center and apartments. She asked that the mosque be allowed.

Mary Smith
840 Marquette Dr

She stated she is a long-time resident of St. Cloud and the South side neighborhood. She is a member of the Refugee and Immigrant Equity Coalition. She spoke in support of the amendment and stated she

believes the Planning Commission can find the right balance to allow the project to work.

Mark Jaede
1815 Clearwater Rd

He lives across the street from the proposed project, and his kitchen window looks out to where the mosque would be built. He stated he was approached about signing the petition opposing the amendment and given literature describing a 'behemoth project', a mosque that would tower over the entire south side, and a variety of statements that would suggest that there was something illegitimate or secretive about what the Islamic Center was attempting to do. He stated he has also heard that the only reason someone could raise an objection is because of religious bigotry. He suggested that the project be evaluated on whether it is an appropriate and legal use of the property and ask if we are behaving the same as if any other religious group were making a request. He spoke about some of the objections and their validity and stated the facts are needed to make the decision. He stated he would ideally like to see the property used as a park; however, that is not the choice at hand.

Hussain Jabal
1535 7th Ave S, Sartell

He is a branch manager of Wells Fargo and has lived in the community for the past 8 years. He is in support of the Islamic Center of St. Cloud, and the proposal will bring the community together. It is not only about the Somali community. He stated he is an American and his ethnicity is from Pakistan. There are a lot of people who are Muslim that belong to hundreds of different countries. The main goal is to bring the whole community together and learn more each day about what each other's religion is about.

Ahmed Ali
3201 14th St N

He spoke in support of the proposal. He works for Lutheran Social Services as a Refugee Program Specialist. He stated that he lives across the street from a large church which has never affected his life. He has a son that was born in the St. Cloud Hospital and four family members that have graduated from St. Cloud State University. He stated that he once lived in one of the most diverse cities, Chicago. In Chicago, everyone works together. He stated we are all Americans and want to coexist.

Father Nathan Kroll
708 6th St S

He is the priest of Holy Myrrh-bearers Orthodox Church, which is a Greek Orthodox church. When the church moved to St. Cloud in 2001, it was an anomaly and people were suspicious. He stated they have made a determined effort to open their doors to the community. He believes that religious communities are never a detriment to the neighborhood they are in. The mosque on 5th Ave S has been an excellent neighbor. He stated that it would be doing the south side a favor to move the project forward.

Tohow Siyad
3700 W St. Germain St

He spoke in support of the proposal. There is a need for education and also for a building to pray in. The project is funded by donations from the Muslim community. He asked for the support of the Planning Commission.

Judy Wyne 733 N Park Pl	She stated she is concerned with the density of the area. A new building is already being constructed for the Children's Home. The proposed project will be serving a large community. She supports the project but is not sure if it is in the right location. She stated that she is glad that the cul-de-sac and Schmidt Park will remain. She commented on assessments for improvements and stated that she does not want to pay for services for the new development.
Loren Weinberg 1720 8 th Ave S	He stated that he does not oppose the Islamic Center but is concerned about the location. There are three churches on Clearwater Rd, and their access is on Clearwater Rd and not into the neighborhoods. There is not enough space to expand in this location. He stated he is not opposed on a religious basis.
Nimo Warfa 330 2 nd Ave S, Waite Park	She stated that communities are bound in different ways, and what brings us together is a sense of common ground. The purpose of the building is to educate Muslims and non-Muslims to remove misconceptions in order to become one community. The Islamic Center will serve the community and is entitled to the same rights as Christian and non-Christian neighbors. She stated that all are welcome to ask questions, worship, etc.
Brian Crabtree 1515 Clearwater Rd	He stated that the problem with the proposal is the location. He asked that proper tests be done on traffic.
Marvin Sauers 1502 13 th Ave S	He referred to a situation when the Good News Assembly of God Church was attempting to sell the former Garfield Elementary School. The property was zoned R1 so it could not be sold to anyone but a school or a church. There was an offer for it to be made into a low-income housing unit, but the neighborhood was not receptive and it was not approved. Another offer came forward to turn the building into senior low-income housing, and the project was looked at with a new perspective. He stated that the problem with this proposal is the location. He stated that a PUD is for a specific purpose and he asked that the Commission follow the law.
Jonathan Roche 2104 Clearwater Rd	He expressed concern with traffic and stated he does not feel it has been addressed properly. He asked about the cost associated with upgrading utilities in the case of the Islamic Center requiring a sprinkler system. He stated that details are missing from the application.
Emily Crabtree 1515 Clearwater Rd	She stated that traffic on Clearwater Rd is dangerous, especially during peak hours. There is not an alleyway to a side road to safely access Clearwater Rd from her home.
Semya Hakim 1925 Quarry Rd	She is a resident of St. Cloud, Muslim, and teaches at St. Cloud State University. She asked the Planning Commission to take into consideration that the Islamic Center has made a lot of accommodations from the original plan. Some of the comments being made have nothing to do with zoning, traffic and location even though those are the words being used.

Craig Dobbertin 1533 8 th Ave S	He stated that the property is the wrong location for the proposed project. He stated that the Islamic Center should purchase land that is zoned for their needs.
Mohayadin Mohamed 605 8 th Ave N	He stated he supports the project because he believes it is good for the neighborhood. There is a need for a place to worship and a place for children to learn and play. He stated that he is frequently asked why the Somali community does not assimilate. He asked if they are requesting to build a mosque in their neighborhood and are asked to go somewhere else, how can they assimilate. A community room is needed to do outreach and educate the larger community so kids can play together and learn from each other.
Elizabeth Dahl 1518 10 th Ave S	She commented that the Islamic community is willing to make adjustments based on the requests of the community members, and all should be looking forward to the meeting being positive. She expressed concern for traffic and inquired how Clearwater Rd will support an increase in traffic when it cannot support the current needs. She suggested omitting the additional uses if the main goal is a place of worship so everyone can get what they want.
Clarrisa Stuart 1724 9 th Ave S	She commented that her road would be hugely impacted by the proposal. She asked about the effect on traffic and the long term costs of improving streets and utilities.
Florence Mowan 2249 Viking Dr	She commented that opposition to this proposal is not based on prejudice. The project is adding something that is totally different in a small neighborhood. She stated that during the sale of the property, the buyers are obligated to find out what the zoning is. The neighborhood should not have to change to accommodate these plans. The Islamic Center should find a bigger place to grow. There is a lot of potential for the proposed land to be a part of future growth or an ideal spot for affordable independent living.
Ismail Ali 423 20 th Ave N	He encouraged Muslims to attend council, commission and board meetings. He stated that this project is a test for the St. Cloud community and that it is better to understand each other. Learn about the Islamic Center before making determinations about parking and traffic.
Diana Elhard 1770 7 th St S	She spoke in support of the project. It may take a long time to look over the details, but saying 'no' is a huge mistake. She commented on concerns regarding a religious building in the middle of a neighborhood and said she is a member of the Church of St. Paul, which is in the middle of several neighborhoods. Traffic in the area is of concern but should be discussed separately or in addition to this project.
Roseann Wolak 2119 7 th Ave S	She expressed concern that corners have been cut. The area was zoned for residential. She stated she would like to have confidence that corners have not been cut and all laws have been considered.

Abdull
503 15th Ave SE

He has been living in the community for 9 years and is a student at St. Cloud State University. He spoke in support of the project. He reminded the Commission of a rezoning project that took place 2-3 years ago with the Coborn's apartments where there were concerns about traffic. He stated that this project is no different than the Coborn's apartments in terms of zoning.

Jaylani Hussein
4555 Taylor St
Columbia Heights, MN

He is a graduate of St. Cloud State University with a degree in Urban Planning. He is from Somalia and has lived in Minnesota for most of his life. The current zoning map does not look like previous zoning maps because cities are often changing. This is a change for the community, and it is important to find common things that we all believe in. This proposal is not different than any other proposal. He commented that this project is a step forward for St. Cloud, and the Islamic Center of St. Cloud is willing to work with the community.

Greg Jarrett
714 Park Pl

He urged the Commission not to deny the proposal at this time. He stated that the issue is about land use. A complete land use study is deserved. A complete and accurate analysis needs to be done before any decision is made.

Greg Johnson
2019 15th St S

He stated that the issue is land use and zoning. A narrowly defined PUD is being amended although it is a completely different proposal. He asked if the amendment fits the codes and laws that are in place for the protection of the community.

Dawn Opheim
1707 17th Ave S

Bringing a commercial building into a residential area can bring extra fees, especially special assessments. She stated that she has a family that is looking for a place to grow into and takes those extra costs into consideration when looking for a new home. She asked the Commission to take into account the possibility of extra fees.

There being no one else wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed. Holtberg thanked all those who testified. Glaesman explained that the Planning Commission is in a position to either take action or table the item. Ballantine questioned whether the request should be an amendment or a complete rezoning. Glaesman explained that a PUD amendment matches the due process that is afforded to a change in zoning, and the same information is required for each. Glaesman referenced the Westwood Parkway PUD where there are hundreds of parcels, and oftentimes there is an amendment that affects one or two properties. Anderson inquired about parking and traffic. Glaesman stated that with the occupancy of 600 persons in the place of worship, 150 parking spaces are required. It is possible for the second and third buildings to have a shared parking agreement. There are two

options to address the gap in parking: 1) reduce the demand for parking by shrinking down occupancy/building sizes, and/or 2) increase the amount of parking that is available on the site by redesigning the site. Anderson asked about a 16th St S connection to Roosevelt. Steve Foss, City Engineer, stated that the connection was attempted in 2013 but was unsuccessful. The concerns raised by staff regarding traffic were aimed more towards the commercial and restaurant uses.

Radaich asked about the proposed townhomes. Glaesman stated that staff's conditions of approval suggested keeping the density the same but changing the structures to 2-units. Goerger asked if the residential area would be replatted into individual lots. Glaesman stated that the technical aspects that go along with a replatting have been reviewed; however, a plat is the second step in this process. Andzenge asked if the townhomes will be for rent. Glaesman stated that the applicant would need to respond to the intended housing market. Andzenge asked if the sizes of the buildings are appropriate for the size of the land and if there is a plan for growth. Glaesman stated the proposal meets the lot coverage requirements. Ballantine asked about the capacity of the mosque and typical time of service. Salad stated that the capacity is 600 people; however, the current mosque will remain in operation. Service is held on Fridays from approximately noon to 2:30 p.m. Haji commented that the mosque has volunteers to control traffic on the streets and the road has several outlets. Goerger asked about utility improvements. Foss stated it is premature to assume the development would cause a need for utility improvements.

Glaesman stated there is a potential to learn a lot more if the item were tabled, which would benefit City Council as well. Radaich stated that he agrees with tabling the item. Andzenge commented that an evaluation of the number of people that will be served is necessary. If more information is requested, it does not indicate denial. DeVine stated that she is looking for a much clearer understanding of how the project will be used now and in the future. DeVine made a motion to table the item. The motion was seconded by Anderson. Ballantine stated he supports tabling the item and hopes the two sides can come to a compromise. Larson commented that it is appropriate to request more information. Holtberg called for a vote, and the motion to table carried unanimously.

Glaesman stated that the item will return next month as old business. The Planning Commission has the right to reopen the public hearing. Any revised plans will be available, and a recommendation will be made to City Council.

The Planning Commission recessed for five minutes to allow time for those exiting the Chambers.

Vacation Request / Doug Bischoff: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, explained a request to vacate a 5' wide drainage and utility easement along the northwest and southwest lot lines of Lot 1, Block 1, Design Electric Addition, which will allow the applicant's property to be combined with the property to the west. Staff is recommending approval.

Anderson made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded by DeVine and carried unanimously.

Temporary Excavation Permit / Knife River Corporation on behalf of Ron and Nancy Schmidt: Matt Glaesman, Planning Director, explained a request to extend an existing Temporary Excavation Permit (TEP). The TEP is limited to one year by ordinance which requires the applicant to return to the Planning Commission for an extension.

Ballantine made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded by DeVine. Anderson stated that he will oppose the motion and believes the action should require a public hearing. DeVine commented that there have been no complaints to date, and the company is simply continuing their current operation. Goerger commented that there are no residential homes close to this project. Glaesman added that all abutting properties have been leased to the company. Anderson stated that he would be content without a public hearing and will support the motion. Holtberg called for a vote and the motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

Dick Andzenge, Secretary