

Paulson/Kraewood Project Resolution – Environmental Quality Commission – August 18, 2021

Whereas information from the Planning Commission consideration of the Paulson/Kraewood plat at its July meeting indicates that project developers are not taking into account several elements of the EQC resolution passed regarding the project at its February 17, 2021 meeting (attached); and

Whereas the EQC's February 17, 2021 resolution was passed in a good faith effort to ensure that project development would be in keeping with the City's Strategic Plan and Climate Action Plan goals and desired outcomes; and

Whereas no Northfield development in recent history has involved such significant removal of urban forest acreage and information from the tree inventory and proposed replacement are anticipated to result in a significant loss of stored carbon and future carbon sequestration; and

Whereas the proposed strategy in the Paulson/Kraewood plat documentation for replacing trees removed falls far short of offsetting the carbon sequestration losses represented by the trees proposed to be removed; and

Whereas the plat documentation makes no mention of assessing and mitigating the impact of the proposed project on the federally-protected and endangered rusty-patched bumblebee; and

Whereas the plat documentation makes no accommodation for rolling and biking beyond providing sidewalks where children would be expected to bike; and

Whereas the Planning Commission's August 19th, 2021 packet includes a detailed memo from a Planning Commission sub-group to City Council with specific recommendations regarding access and mobility needs, climate and environmental concerns, and parks that are largely in accordance with the EQC's February 17th, 2021 resolution; and

Whereas the project developers have indicated they will be seeking significant financial support from the City in the form of tax increment financing (TIF);

Therefore be it resolved that the EQC

- Urges the Planning Commission to adopt the recommendations of its sub-group as detailed in their August 19th, 2021 memo to the City Council, and
- Urges the City to adhere to all recommendations in the EQC's February 17th, 2021 resolution in negotiating development requirements as a condition of providing TIF or other public financing and should follow the requirements the City is considering as part of a Sustainable Building Policy.

February 17th EQC resolution, adopted unanimously

Paulson Property Development Resolution (February 17th, 2021)

Whereas the Northfield City Council adopted a Climate Action Plan (CAP) on November 5, 2019 which sets goals for the City of 100% carbon-free electricity by 2030 and being a 100% carbon-free community by 2040; and

Whereas the CAP identifies the following actions among those necessary to achieve these goals:

- Cleaning the generation of electricity in cooperation with the electric utility, Xcel Energy
- Switching energy sources from fossil fuel use to clean electricity in both buildings and travel
- Reducing the amount that people drive through mode shift opportunities like public transit, biking, and walking
- Eliminating waste that enters a landfill or resource recovery facility
- Sequestering carbon through accelerated tree plantings and sustainable land and agricultural practices; and

Whereas development of the 11.9-acre Paulson property presents a rare major infill and densification opportunity within the already-developed portion of the community, and an opportunity for the City and community partners to demonstrate commitment to implementing the actions listed above on a significant scale; and

Whereas it will be impossible for the City to meet its CAP goals unless it is able to secure cooperation from community partners, including developers of major projects such as the Paulson project; and

Whereas the way properties are developed in the 2020s will have consequences for the property owners, residents and broader community for many decades during a period in history where climate change effects will become more severe and mitigation and resilience increasingly critical; and

Whereas cost-effective technologies and strategies to achieve zero energy ready status are available for single-family homes and multifamily buildings, including methods of constructing tighter and better-insulated building shells, cold-climate air source heat pumps, ground source heat pumps, and heat pump water heaters; and

Whereas zero energy ready status can be achieved through minimal or no net increase in combined utility costs and rent or mortgage costs to homeowners and renters; and

Whereas the CAP has identified the goal of generating one megawatt of renewable energy within City limits within three years; and

Whereas cost-effective opportunities are currently available to provide 100% of the electricity required for a development of this scope with on-site solar, through participation in a community solar garden, and/or through purchase of renewable energy through one of Xcel Energy's renewable energy programs; and

Whereas the project developer has publicly stated its intention to retain an acre-plus of trees at the northeast corner of the project as natural land, and to achieve no net loss of trees on the property based on a pre-development tree inventory; and

Whereas the US Fish and Wildlife Service has documented the presence of an endangered species, the rusty-patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*) in the immediate vicinity of the Paulson property, and *Bombus affinis* habitat is present on the property; and

Whereas the project developers have publicly expressed their intention to request financial assistance from the City for this project in the form of tax increment financing (TIF);

Whereas Section 22-29 of the Northfield Municipal Code specifies that "The powers and duties of the environmental quality commission shall be to:

(1) Assist and advise the city council, planning commission and the designated city governmental staff in assessing the environmental impact of proposed undertakings that fall in part or in total under the city's jurisdiction and recommend changes that would lessen or eliminate the environmentally detrimental effects of such undertakings.

(2) Appraise activities of the city government and public and private organizations for the purpose of determining the extent to which such activities contribute to or detract from city governmental policies and goals."

Now therefore be it resolved that the Northfield Environmental Quality Commission urges the Northfield Planning Commission and Zoning Board, and Northfield City Council, to require the following from developers of the Paulson property in exchange for TIF support:

- That upon completion of a tree inventory of the property, as many existing trees as possible be saved throughout the development, with a minimum of 1.2 acres of contiguous older trees at the northeastern corner of the property being maintained, and that no net loss of trees with 2" or greater diameter at breast height take place;
- That there is full off-road pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure readily accessible to all units developed on the property, with uninterrupted connectivity to Greenvale Avenue and Lincoln Parkway;
- That any *Bombus affinis* habitat on the property identified by the US Fish and Wildlife Service be retained or replaced with habitat of comparable quality through native plantings; and
- That all property owners and renters in the development be provided with full information about the benefits and costs of reducing lawn area within their yards, and replacing that area with pollinator gardens, native plantings and/or additional trees.
- That stormwater runoff be minimized by use of rain gardens, pervious surfaces wherever possible, and other appropriate site design features;
- That all construction waste on the project be reused or recycled to the full extent possible;
- That all residences constructed on the property, both single-family and multifamily, be built to US DOE Zero Energy Ready standards, and will have garages wired adequately to provide future electric vehicle charging capability;

- That all property owners and renters in the development be provided with full information about the benefits and costs of procuring all of their energy through on-site solar, subscription to a local community solar garden, and/or purchase of renewable energy through one of Xcel Energy's renewable energy programs, and be encouraged to choose one of these options to provide their energy needs.

Adopted 2.17.2021 by unanimous vote of the Environmental Quality Commission