



City of Northfield

City Hall
801 Washington Street
Northfield, MN 55057
ci.northfield.mn.us

Meeting Minutes - Final Planning Commission

Thursday, January 17, 2019

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

Rollcall

Present 7 - Joe Gasior, William Schroeer, Betsey Buckheit, Tracy Heisler, Terri Jensen, Greg Siems, and Aaron Swoboda

Note

Also in attendance: Alyssa Herzog Melby - Arts & Culture Commission Chair, Alex Miller - Climate Action Advisory Board Co-chair, Scott Tempel - City Planner, Mikayla Schmidt - Community Dev. Specialist, John Fink, Nate Bell & Daniel Rogers - representatives from Nokomis Partners, Richard Sorem, Dan Bergeson, Darcy White, Suzie Nakasian - City Councilmember, Brad Ness - City Councilmember, and Vern Koester.

I. Call to Order and Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Heisler, seconded by Vice Chair Schroeer, to amend the agenda to include the election of officers as the first item of new business. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Gasior, Schroeer, Buckheit, Heisler, Jensen, Siems, and Swoboda

II. Approval of Minutes

1. [19-657](#) Draft Zoning Board of Appeals & Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [1 - 11-15-2018 ZBA Meeting Minutes](#)
[2 - 11-15-2018 PC Meeting Minutes](#)

A motion was made by Buckheit, seconded by Vice Chair Schroeer, to approve the 11-15-2018 ZBA meeting minutes. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Gasior, Schroeer, Buckheit, Heisler, Jensen, Siems, and Swoboda

A motion was made by Swoboda, seconded by Heisler, to approve the 11-15-2018 PC meeting minutes as amended to state Buckheit is on the Transportation Advisory Committee not the Riverfront Enhancement Advisory Committee. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Gasior, Schroeer, Buckheit, Heisler, Jensen, Siems, and Swoboda

III. Unfinished Business

2. [19-658](#) Presentation on Cultural Plan from ACC

Attachments: [1 - Nfld Cultural Plan-email version](#)

Alyssa Herzog Melby presented the 2019-2024 Northfield Cultural Plan that the Arts & Culture Committee (ACC) completed. The ACC will present the plan to Council for approval. The group is seeking input from the Planning Commission (PC) and asking them to make a motion of support of the Cultural Plan.

The commissioners appreciated the ACCs work and felt the plan was well done and very beneficial.

3. [19-659](#) Update on Climate Action Plan

Attachments: [1 - 19-01-03 CAPAB Update](#)

Alex Miller, co-chair of the Climate Action Plan Advisory Board, presented the Climate Action Plan updates the committee has completed.

IV. New Business

Chair Gasior asked the new commissioners to introduce themselves.

Terri Jensen introduced herself noting she is the Managing Broker in MN for National Land Realty. She works with agricultural, hunting, recreational, development and many other types of land. Jensen looks forward to serving on the commission.

Greg Siems move to Northfield from Austin in April. He works as the Assistant Director for the Institute for Freedom and Community for St. Olaf College. He was previously the Director of Vision 2020 in Austin and served on the City of Austin's planning commission.

Chair Gasior thanked Jay Jasnoch and Kate Stuart for their time serving on the planning commission.

4a. [19-660](#) New commissioner orientation

Attachments: [1 - Bylaws - Reviewed in 2018](#)
[2 - Planning Commission Guide](#)
[3 - Meeting Schedule 2019](#)
[4 - 2019 LDC Items January](#)

Chair Gasior noted the commissioner orientation materials.

4b. Election of Officers

A motion was made by Heisler, seconded by Buckheit, to approve the Joe Gasior as Chair and Will Schroeer as Vice Chair. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Gasior, Schroeer, Buckheit, Heisler, Jensen, Siems, and Swoboda

5. [PC M2019-001](#) Public Hearing on Conditional Use Permit for 1MW Community Solar Garden

Attachments: [1 - Area Map](#)
[2 - CCR - CUP for Chub Garden solar](#)

Chair Gasior read the public hearing opening statement and opened the public hearing at

7:32pm.

Tempel presented his PowerPoint presentation on the conditional use permit (CUP) request for the 1MW solar garden. He noted from a staff perspective the city would approve the site plan.

Rogers presented his PowerPoint presentation on Nokomis and the site layout / design of John Fink's land for the solar garden.

Chair Gasior invited the public to speak.

Darcy White - 7811 320th St. W. - stated her and her family have lived in Greenvale Township for 15 years. She stated there have been two other instances where solar gardens have been proposed and both times the proposals were turned down because the residents did not want them in the area. She noted the incremental approach on developing the northwest area starting with the first 50 acres north and northwest of the hospital. She felt this was not in good standing with the township and that the City would rather prospure financially than improve the quality of it's citizens lives.

Tom Wirtzfeld - 7505 320th St. W. - stated he lives next door to the location of the proposed solar garden and felt not all Greenvale Township disagrees with solar farms. He is in support of this site, looks forward to reduced energy costs, and believes in good energy use.

Dan Bergeson - 7409 320th St. W. - stated he and his wife, Tripp Ryder, feel this is not in the spirit of the northwest area land use plan - stating that it diviates from the incremental development approach. He feels this solar garden does not fit into the profile and that it will compromise the Mud Creek.

Richard Sorem - 32840 Garrett Ave. - stated he is speaking on behalf of his brother and dad, noting they are not be in favor of the solar garden. He had concerns of who to go to if there are issues or leaks from the holding pond, as well as glare off the panels.

Schroeer thanked everyone on both sides for coming out and that the commissioners try to listen closely to all concerns. He felt the CUP aligns with the City's goals and that Nokomis should be attentive to the concerns of the surrounding neighbors.

Buckheit noted that the commission does not have a great deal of disgression on the CUP if it meets the requirements of the permitted use.

Heisler asked if there was any latitude in budget for addition landscaping on the site. Rogers stated in regards to water, that they will meet all Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's impervious surface regulations, which they capture with a pond. He also noted that at peak maturity, the trees planted peak at about 10 ft tall.

Tempel stated the next potential meeting date for this to be heard at council would be on February 19th.

A motion was made by Heisler, seconded by Vice Chair Schroeer, to close the public hearing at 8:01pm. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Gasior, Schroeer, Buckheit, Heisler, Jensen, Siems, and Swoboda

A motion was made by Vice Chair Schroeer, seconded by Buckheit, to recommend approval of the 1MW solar garden to the City Council. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Gasior, Schroeer, Buckheit, Heisler, Jensen, Siems, and Swoboda

6. [19-661](#)

Clarification and Discussion of ADU ordinance

Chair Gasior asked Tempel to start the discussion on the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance. Tempel stated the ADU ordinance is coming back to the Planning Commission (PC) to provide additional background and clarification for the Council on several items. The first being footprint vs living area as the value used to approve the size of an ADU. Tempel stated the intent was to allow a 1000 sq. ft. footprint with a 24 ft. building height. Additionally, Tempel noted the language was intended to allow ADUs as rentals excluding them from the 20% rule in R1. Tempel stated a home with a current rental license could build an ADU and utilize it as a rental unit as well. He explained the thought behind this was that the majority of properties with an ADU would be owner occupied. Tempel stated Commissioner Buckheit created a document outlining the current and proposed ADU standards in a table format.

Chair Gasior explained that Council took action and approved the 1st reading of the ordinance in the form originally proposed by the PC. Buckheit noted the unanimously approval of the ordinance recommendation by the PC and stated it ratifies many strategic City Council initiatives. Buckheit stated the PC wanted to allow as much flexibility to build as possible. She also stated by allowing the 1000 sq. ft. footprint it would create a lean and easy to administer ordinance.

Heisler asked to clarify the language in regards to the rental ordinance. Tempel stated ADUs would be excluded from the 20% density rule and the 2 parking spot requirement for rentals, but they would be subject to everything else in the rental ordinance in terms of requiring a permit, inspections and being subject to ensure health, safety and welfare of the community. Heisler felt that it is not the PC's scope to exclude or include the ADU from the rental ordinance.

Chair Gasior invited City Councilmember Brad Ness to the podium for comment. Ness stated Council and the City Attorney Chris Hood discussed the proposed ordinance at the last City Council meeting.

Buckheit stated she listened to the Council's remarks and felt they were excited about the flexibility and affordability, but some councilmembers were fearful of potential unintended consequences. Buckheit felt there would be plenty of opportunity to change the ordinance language later, if the outcome wasn't favorable.

Chair Gasior noted the PC did not impose compatibility standards either because they wanted property owner's the flexibility to incorporate any style of tiny house, for example, they could have a modern style home and then add a cottage style tiny house.

Councilmember Suzie Nakasian asked for clarification on impervious surface rationale. Tempel answered, stating there is no impervious surface calculation, but a building area ratio, which dictates how much building footprint, can cover a lot.

Schroeer, noting Nakasian's concern about having a water standard, stated he would like to see more pervious amenities and total massing, but was willing to look past the impervious surface component because of the urgency/need for housing.

Councilmember Ness asked for clarification on the rental component, footprint/living area clarification and what would take precedence legally as it pertains to the rental of the ADUs.

Chair Gasior formed the subcommittee to review Buckheit's table, which includes Buckheit, Schroeer and Chair Gasior.

A motion was made by Heisler, seconded by Vice Chair Schroeer, to have the Chair appoint a subcommittee of two or three commissioners, to take Buckheit's document outlining the current and proposed ADU ordinance changes, to work with staff on the final product and send back to Council. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Gasior, Schroeer, Buckheit, Heisler, Jensen, Siems, and Swoboda

V. Reports and Discussion Items

Heisler brought up the idea of moving the PC meeting time to 6:00pm. She also noted that she is co-chair of the Riverfront Enhancement Advisory Committee. She noted they will meet monthly for approx. 18 months and there will be a report sent to council at the end.

Schroeer complemented the completion of the 3rd Street project and is looking forward to seeing the completed Parks & Trails plan from Toole Design.

Chair Gasior noted he is also serving on the Riverfront committee and the Climate Action Plan's Energy subcommittee.

VI. Adjournment

A motion was made by Vice Chair Schroeer, seconded by Buckheit, to adjourn the meeting at 9:23pm. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Gasior, Schroeer, Buckheit, Heisler, Jensen, Siems, and Swoboda