

Minutes for the Planning Commission Meeting of Thursday, May 9, 2024

Chair Kleissler called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

PRESENT: Andress, Arcand, Derr, Kelly, Kleissler, Petty

ABSENT: Granger, Lessard

STAFF: Rachel Juba, Community Development Director
Max Gort, Associate Planner

Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes for the Planning Commission Meeting of April 11, 2024

Commissioner Derr made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Andress, to approve the minutes for the Planning Commission meeting of April 11, 2024.

All ayes.

Motion carried.

Public Hearing: M/I Homes of Minneapolis/St. Paul, LLC. – Request for an amendment to the PUD for “The Shores of Oneka Lake 4th Addition” to create 25 single-family detached lots, from the previously approved 24 twin home lots.

Associate Planner Gort presented background on the request to amend the Planned Unit Development (PUD) General Plan for the Shores of Oneka Lake development. The PUD General Plan was approved with the Preliminary Plat in 2022, allowing for 218 lots with a net density of 2.2 units per acre. The development received flexibility on lot size, lot width, setbacks, impervious surface coverage, and shoreland overlay district rules. In exchange for the flexibility, the developer designed a more sensitive proposal with extensive trails, landscaping, and stormwater reuse for irrigation. The proposed amendment to the PUD would change the 24 twin home lots in the 4th phase into 25 detached single-family lots, that are built on narrower lots with narrower homes than typical single-family lots. The applicant is marketing these products with the name “carriage homes.” Staff reviewed the request and concluded that the proposed amendment was consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan and the Shores of Oneka Lake PUD. Staff recommended approval of the PUD Amendment to the Planning Commission, subject to the conditions in the resolution.

Commissioner Petty asked if there were any carriage homes in the original PUD. Community Development Director Juba said that there were not.

Emily Becker of M/I Homes of Minneapolis/St. Paul, LLC. addressed the Planning Commission. Becker stated that the requested amendment was due to market conditions, and that twin homes have not been popular in any of the company’s developments in the Twin Cities area. Becker stated that the

carriage homes will be slightly taller than the villa products seen elsewhere in the development, and that they've had market success with the product type in their other developments within the metro area.

Commissioner Arcand asked about the difference between carriage homes and other products. Becker stated that carriage homes are slightly more expensive than twin homes, but that customers tend to prefer the detached product. Commissioner Petty asked if they've received any complaints from residents in the carriage home product, Becker said that they haven't.

Chair Kleissler opened the Public Hearing at 7:09 PM.

No one spoke.

Chair Kleissler closed the Public Hearing at 7:10 PM.

Commissioner Derr said that the proposed amendment does not change the overall feel of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Petty made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Andress, to approve the PUD Amendment for M/I Homes of Minneapolis/St. Paul, LLC. subject to the conditions in the resolution.

All ayes.
Motion carried.

The request will be reviewed by the City Council on May 20th, 2024.

Public Hearing: Liberty Classical Academy – Requests for a Site Plan and Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to construct a 33,590 square foot addition to the existing school building and associated parking lots.

Community Development Director Juba presented background on the requests for a site plan and CUP to construct an addition to the existing school building and associated parking lots at 10158 122nd Street North. Liberty Classical Academy owns approximately 82 acres of property that is split between the City of Hugo and May Township. The Hugo property is zoned Agricultural (AG) and guided Public/Quasi-Public (PQ) in the 2040 Land Use Plan. The school building on site was previously used by the Stillwater Area School District as Withrow Elementary School, which was closed in 2018 and purchased by Liberty Classical Academy within the past few years. Currently, Liberty uses the school to teach Pre-K through 2nd grade. The proposal at this meeting included a site plan and CUP for an addition to the existing school building and associated parking lots. The applicant is proposing a new access point on Keller Avenue, also known as County Road 57, and the two existing access points on 122nd Street would be closed and relocated. The proposal includes a stormwater pond and septic system to be constructed on the portion of property in May Township. Staff has reviewed the requests and determined they meet all building, parking, and impervious surface requirements. Staff has been working closely with Washington County on the proposed access points and requirements for

improvements, such as the construction of a northbound right turn lane and southbound left turn lane on Keller Avenue. The applicant is proposed a gravel driveway to access the septic system which has been reviewed and approved by Washington County. The applicant will need to obtain necessary permits for future access points and hold a financial security to construct the improvements. The applicant is proposing less than the required amount of parking, and staff is requiring the applicant to show proof of parking in the event that additional parking becomes necessary. The applicant is proposing landscaping on the northern end of the property and around the parking area, and staff is requiring that the applicant revise their landscape plan to propose additional landscaping around the parking area and driveways. The lighting plan generally met the ordinance standards, but staff is recommending that some pole lighting be removed and dimmers be installed to mitigate impact on surrounding properties. The proposed building materials generally match those of the existing building. The majority of the building will be 18 feet tall, with the gymnasium reaching a height of 31.5 feet, which will still be below the maximum allowed height of 35 feet in the AG zoning district. The Browns Creek Watershed District (BCWD) reviews and approves grading and drainage plans for the project, and have outlined some technical restrictions in the engineer's memo. The existing school and addition will be served by well water, and the size of the proposed septic system requires review from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) which will likely be completed in October of 2024.

Staff is of the opinion that the requests meet the criteria of approval for a site plan and a conditional use permit. Staff recommended approval of the requests to the Planning Commission, subject to conditions in the resolution.

Commissioner Andress asked if staff has received plans for the additional landscaping on the south end of the parking lot. Juba said no but that revised plans are a condition in the resolution that must be met prior to the issuance of a building permit.

Rebekah Hagstrom, headmaster of Liberty Classical Academy, addressed the Planning Commission and displayed their own presentation. Hagstrom stated that the property was chosen because they wanted the school to be in a rural setting giving students access to nature. Melanie Zahler, of the family who previously owned and farmed the property, discussed the sale of the 80 acres to Liberty and stated that the family is happy to see a school on the property. Hagstrom described two neighborhood meetings that were held in late 2022 and early 2023 at which roughly 50 neighbors had attended. Hagstrom listed some community amenities that the school would provide and stated that they wanted to be good neighbors and welcomed by the community.

Elise Kelly, architect with Pope Design Group, spoke about the design changes that were implemented in their plans following feedback from the neighbors and City staff, including additional green space and using building materials that would be complimentary to the existing school building. Kelly displayed some concepts for future expansion of the school, comparing its projected size to the entire Mahtomedi School District and Stillwater Area High School, both of which have higher student populations than Liberty projects for their full future campus.

Commissioner Petty asked how many students would be attending the school with the first phase expansion, and which grade levels will be included. Hagstrom stated that there are currently 150

students, and that the addition will add another 100 to 150 students. Hagstrom stated that the school currently serves Pre-K through second grade, and that the addition will create space for the upper school students, with grades 3-8 remaining at the existing White Bear Lake campus.

Chair Kleissler opened the Public Hearing at 7:46 PM

Bill Wright, 12388 Keller Ave N, stated that his house is adjacent to the property, and felt that the community input wasn't received during the planning process. Wright stated that he enjoys the existing school as a neighbor, but is concerned with the proposed access and associated traffic onto Keller Avenue, and requests that the access be relocated to 122nd Street. Wright stated that he's concerned about the additional lighting proposed with the first addition and with a potential future expansion.

David Truax, 10123 Kerry Court N, stated that he objects to the CUP request and prefers that the existing building remain in use exclusively as an elementary school. Truax stated that he had a petition objecting to the request with 120 signatures and expecting more, although no signatures were presented.

Court Jerome, 12444 Keller Ave N, stated that he was concerned about the stormwater pond being built anticipating runoff from the entire future campus while the first phase is being proposed, and asked that the pond's size be reduced to accommodate only the proposed phase of development. Jerome asked that the pond be fenced to keep kids and snowmobiles out, and that the pond be relocated to the Hugo portion of the property. Jerome said that the student population of 850 was too large.

Vickie Fuhr, 12539 Manning Trl N, stated concerns with the size of the septic system and if there are long-term impacts that have not been discussed. Fuhr requested that the septic system be located on the Hugo portion of the property and not in May Township. Fuhr stated that she is also concerned about potential traffic.

David Latham, 12575 Keller Ave N, stated that he is concerned about traffic and possible impacts to Goggins Lake due to the septic system's proposed location.

Greg Kramer, 13744 Keystone Ave N, stated that he was in support of the school and that he has grandchildren enrolled at Liberty. Kramer stated that he is confident in regulations and procedures that government agencies use to address unknown concerns.

Mark Aschenbrener, 13520 Keystone Ave N, stated that he was concerned about increased traffic, teenage drivers being unsafe, and the long response time for emergency services due to the rural location.

David Truax spoke again asking if there had been any soil testing for pesticides, herbicides, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and asked if there would be an increase in phosphorous in the soil from the septic system.

Sheryl Ferguson, 10244 122nd Street N, stated that she lives at the house closest to the existing school, and that she is concerned about the lighting, heat, and noise that would be generated from a parking lot immediately to the rear of her property.

Steve Corteau, 12545 Keller Ave N, stated that he was concerned about the groundwater use of the school and whether it'll affect neighboring wells.

Taryn Sirianni, 10152 119th Street N, stated that she has children attending Liberty and supports the school's long-term vision, that there would only be about 20 students of driving age at the school, and that she's happy that the property wasn't sold to a developer proposing a use with greater impact.

Beth Jerome, 12444 Keller Ave N, stated that she is concerned about the potential campus development, that she doesn't like the sizing of the pond and septic system, and that the proposal does not fit the character of the neighborhood.

Abigail Johnson, 12115 Heather Ave N, stated that she has children attending Liberty and supports the project, and stated that the families who live in Hugo would appreciate a school location closer to where they live.

Terry Poirier, 10284 122nd Street N, stated that his property backs up to the location of the proposed parking lot, and is concerned about the potential lighting and traffic. Poirier described an accident that occurred in the past involving a parent leaving the current school and a truck on 122nd Street.

Chris O'Connell, 11115 122nd Street, stated that he was concerned about noise impact from sporting events, taxes and property values, and the impact on adjacent wells.

Karen Ukura, 12969 Keller Ave N, stated that she is concerned about the size of the pond and septic system, noise, and all other items that other neighbors have brought up.

Matt Fritze, 10909 Joliet Ave N, stated that he has children at Liberty and supports the project. Fritze stated that he is the chair of the City of Grant Planning Commission, and encouraged the Hugo Planning Commission to use tools at their disposal to make appropriate recommendations and reasonable conditions.

Mary Rice, 12743 Keller Ave N, stated that she thought there was a minimum lot size of 10 acres, and that she is concerned about the potential future buildout, traffic, and the number of parents who will be dropping off and picking up students.

Chair Kleissler paused the comments for staff to answer questions. Juba, referencing the traffic concerns, stated that the applicant has completed a traffic study which has been reviewed and approved by Washington County, who are requiring improvements including the addition of turn lanes to mitigate traffic. Juba stated that a recommended condition in the draft resolution and CUP is to require a revised lighting plan, but that the Planning Commission can recommend additional conditions related to lighting. Juba stated that the pond is sized for site balance purposes, and that the septic

system is only being constructed to serve the proposed addition. Juba stated that the MPCA is currently reviewing the septic design which includes the projected phosphorus discharge into neighboring water bodies. Juba stated that the parking lot will be located approximately 17 feet from property lines, and that the Planning Commission can make additional recommendations related to the location of the parking lot. Juba stated that it is unknown whether property values will be affected, but Washington County does not assess property owners for projects on county highways.

Elise Kelly stated that the development team had originally considered incorporating the full capacity of the eventual campus into one building, but that the large building would exceed City zoning standards and felt that the campus layout would better fit the rural character of the area.

Mike Brandt of Kimley Horn and civil engineer for the project, stated that a number of soil tests were conducted on site, and there are currently three wells being monitored which have thus far been found to have no contaminants. Brandt stated that groundwater has been determined to flow away from Goggins Lake, with a layer of clay directing water away from the lake. Brandt stated that the review from the MPCA for septic systems of this size gives it extra scrutiny, and that the system is designed to treat runoff to remove nitrogen before it enters the groundwater. Brandt stated that the stormwater pond is sized for site balance and located based on existing drainage patterns.

Kelly stated that they will work with staff on the lighting plan, and said they were open to reducing the number of light poles or adding dimmers. Kelly stated that there is room to shift the parking lot further north, and that they would prefer to have kept the existing access points but Washington County encouraged the move off of 122nd Street.

Rebekah Hagstrom stated that there wouldn't be a football team having night games at the stadium, and that soccer, track and field, and baseball were the only athletic events to be taking place, all of which are unlikely to have night games and produce associated lighting.

Commissioner Petty asked for a comparison of the lighting that Liberty has at the school now versus what was at the old Withrow School. Kelly stated that one additional light pole was added with the Liberty conversion of the school.

Chair Kleissler closed the Public Hearing at 9:00 PM.

Commissioner Petty asked if Washington County is paying for the new turn lanes, Juba stated that Liberty will be paying for the improvements.

Commissioner Petty asked to clarify that the full campus buildout was not guaranteed, and that the Planning Commission was only to consider the building addition being proposed. Juba stated that the only guarantee would be what is being presented with this phase.

Commissioner Petty asked about the conditions for involving the surrounding community members in the planning process. Juba explained the development review that happens internally with staff before the public is notified. Juba stated that the notification process was larger than usual with this proposal

since residents in May Township were also notified. Juba stated that the Planning Commission doesn't see a staff report or full plans until the meeting packet is distributed the week before the public hearing.

Chair Kleissler asked about long-term traffic control plans and whether the intersection could have a signal, and stated that the direction of traffic on Keller Avenue is already busy. Juba stated that Washington County did not indicate that there would need to be a traffic signal. Chair Kleissler asked if school zone speed signs would be installed, and Juba stated that the school wants to place them but that Washington County had a reason not to include school zone signage. Chair Kleissler stated that she would prefer a school speed zone sign be placed.

Commissioner Arcand asked if there is an ordinance requirement for the height of the light poles, and that there have been examples throughout the city of downcast lighting with little reflectivity. Juba stated that the lighting plan currently meets the ordinance standards, but there are ways to recommend additional lighting requirements based on community feedback.

Commissioner Arcand asked if the architect could provide more context on her comment about having room to move the parking lot. Kelly stated that the parking lot could be moved 5-10 feet to the north, but that they prefer to keep it as close to the school as possible to minimize walking distance. Commissioner Arcand asked what kind of landscaping was being proposed for the parking lot. Kelly stated that the landscaping is designed to minimize glare from headlights. Juba stated that the Planning Commission can make appropriate recommendations if they have concerns about the parking lot.

Commissioner Derr asked how many students attended the former Withrow Elementary School. A resident said roughly 150 students.

Steve Croteau, 12545 Keller Ave N, expressed concerns about lighting for athletic fields and asked if properties to the north will drain to the proposed stormwater pond. Mike Brandt stated that drainage from properties to the north will drain to the stormwater pond, with the volume being reclaimed to irrigate the school property and will be treated through the pond. Commissioner asked to clarify that there are three uncapped wells on the property, Brandt replied that there are three monitoring wells, and three additional wells are proposed. Commissioner Arcand asked if the wells will eventually be capped, Brandt stated that they will be eventually capped and relocated. Elise Kelly stated that there are currently no plans for any athletic fields, but if they were to come in the future the development team will work with staff to ensure they meet ordinance standards.

Beth Jerome, 12444 Keller Ave N, stated she was concerned with traffic and drop off on Keller Avenue. Juba stated that drop-off is part of the reason that the plans have a long queuing driveway, and that traffic will circulate through the parking lot. Bill Wright, 12388 Keller Ave N, stated that the traffic design most affects the neighboring residents.

Vickie Fuhr, 12539 Manning Trl N, stated that there should be some form of controlled access with the intersection of Keller Ave N and Keystone Ave N. Juba stated that a 4-way stop would not be the best option.

Mary Jo Cody, 12567 Keller Ave N, expressed concerns about the septic system, and visibility with the proposed access, stating that there would be better visibility in the winter time. Bill Wright stated that visibility is worse in the winter. Juba stated that staff has discussed the access point at length with Washington County, but that the Planning Commission could recommend having another discussion about the access.

No further discussion.

Commissioner Petty made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Arcand, to recommend approval of the applications with additional recommended conditions of shifting the parking lot further north, revising landscaping and lighting plans, and have an additional discussion with Washington County staff about locating the access point on 122nd Street.

All ayes.

Motion carried.

The applications will be reviewed by the May Township Planning Commission on May 30, 2024, the Hugo City Council on June 3, 2024, and the May Town Board on June 6, 2024.

New Business

None.

Old Business

None.

Adjournment

Commissioner Derr made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Arcand, to adjourn at 9:31d PM.

All ayes.

Motion Carried.

Respectfully Submitted,
Max Gort, Associate Planner