

Meeting Minutes
New Prague Planning Commission
Wednesday, February 25, 2009

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Planning Commission Chair Grant Gengel with the following members present: Kay Wilcox, Bob Gilman, Pat Remfert and Anthony DeLuca.

City Staff Present: Ken Ondich –Planning Director, Renee Christianson – Planner.

2. Approval of January 28, 2009 Regular Meeting Minutes

It was moved by DeLuca, seconded by Gilman to approve the January 28, 2009 regular meeting minutes as submitted. Motion carried (5-0).

3. Public Hearing for Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Residential Erosion Control and Turf Establishment Regulations – Request by New Prague Planning Department

Planner Ondich presented the report, noting that this item had been presented at the September 24, 2008 Planning Commission meeting and again at the January 28, 2009 meeting. Planner Ondich reviewed, in detail, all components of the proposed ordinance including its purpose, the minimum requirements, allowable tree species and sizes, the proposed escrow that would be required in conjunction with the new regulations, and the required inspections. He noted that the former city council did not support the requirement that a tree be planted in the front yard, but that the current city council voiced support for this. The proposed ordinance requires a combination of side and/or seed to be completed on lots prior to final occupancy, along with the planting of a tree in the front yard. He explained the need for a residential landscaping ordinance came to staff's attention because of the numerous erosion and weed related nuisances that have developed because of new homes that were occupied or left vacant without sod/seed or other landscaping completed on them. One important item of this ordinance would be that a landscaping escrow/deposit would be required at the time a building permit is issued to ensure that either silt fence or turf establishment is maintained. Planner Ondich noted that builders had been notified of the public hearing regarding this proposed ordinance amendment.

The Commissioners discussed the proposed language. Commissioner Gengel asked if there would be a variance process for this requirement if someone could not get their sod/seed established due to weather conditions. Building Official Chad Lunder was also present and reviewed his experience with similar codes in other cities, and expressed his support for the proposed ordinance amendment.

The public hearing was opened at 7:02 p.m., and with no comments, was closed.

Commissioner DeLuca expressed concern about mandating a tree be planted in the front yard. He supported the turf establishment portion of this proposed amendment, stating that it deals with erosion issues, but did not fully support the tree requirement as it was purely aesthetic.

Commissioner Gengel stated that much of what the Planning Commission does ties to aesthetics, and that there is a connection between aesthetics and property values.

After discussion, it was moved by Gilman, seconded by Wilcox to recommend approval of the proposed zoning ordinance amendment which would add Section 736 pertaining to Residential Erosion Control, Turn Establishment and Tree Requirement, as written in the staff report dated February 20, 2009. Motion carried 5-0.

4. Miscellaneous

The following miscellaneous items were reviewed:

- A. Current vacant lot survey for residential, commercial, and industrial lots.
- B. Commissioner Wilcox directed staff to pursue a rezoning of the former AMPI / creamery property. The property is guided to B1 and RM in the Comprehensive Plan, but is currently zoned I-1. The Commission concurred with her recommendation to pursue the rezoning.
- C. Commissioner Wilcox suggested that staff make a presentation to the Planning Commission in regards to building permit reviews. An overview of what staff looks for during a review of a single family home permit was suggested.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 PM by order of Chairman Gengel.

Respectfully submitted,

Renee L. Christianson
City Planner