

Meeting Minutes
New Prague Planning Commission
Wednesday, March 24, 2010

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, Ryan Peltier and Jay Nuhring.

City Staff Present: Ken Ondich – Planning Director

2. Approval of February 24, 2010 Regular Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Gilman, seconded by Peltier to approve the February 24, 2010 regular meeting minutes as submitted. Motion carried (5-0).

3. Old Business - None

4. New Business

**A. Zoning Ordinance Amendments – Concept Review #5-
Central Business District Design Guidelines
City of New Prague - applicant**

Planning Director Ondich presented the staff report. He summarized the purpose of a Comprehensive Plan and the recurring themes in the 2000 and 2005 Comprehensive Plans which support the preservation of the small time atmosphere and identity. He noted that the current zoning ordinance does have a few requirements for building design in the B-1 Central Business District including brick as a predominant building material, 40% of the first floor façade must be windows and awnings must be made of cloth. He stated that at last month's meeting some additional provision were suggested to be added to Section 726 of the Zoning Ordinance for the building design requirements. He stated the changes suggested were adding a purpose, require preservation of original/existing features, repairing original features rather than replacing when possible, prohibit brick from being covered by stucco or other finishes, prohibit filing in of original window sizes, require additional review prior to demolition of a building in the B-1 District and finally to continue the existing design requirements in the zoning ordinance. He stated that the design guidelines were originally drafted in 2003 thanks in large part to Grant Gengel. He stated that staff updated the guidelines and reiterated that they are simply suggestions at this time and not mandates as part of an ordinance. He stated that staff would see the document as an "idea book". He stated that if financial programs become available from the City that the intent of staff would be to make the provisions of the guidelines required, but only if assistance is provided for renovation of a building. He reviewed the guidelines for renovation of historic storefronts and also guidelines for new construction and non-historic structures in the B-1 District. He finally covered guidelines for signs and site design. He stated that staff would only need input at this time and that

in the future the Planning Commission would need to make a recommendation to the City Council for approval.

Commissioner Wilcox asked Planning Director Ondich to again summarize the previously suggested changes to the zoning ordinance for B-1 design requirements versus what would simply be guidelines and not part of the ordinance.

Planning Director Ondich summarized the changes presented at the February meeting and reiterated that the Design Guidelines are just that – guidelines and not requirements.

Commissioner Wilcox provided a background and overview on how and why he came to draft the original downtown design guidelines. He stated that he remembers the original backlash that was received during the first time the guidelines were drafted and is only advocating at this time for small and modest advances of guidelines into the zoning ordinance.

Commissioner Peltier asked how this would affect buildings that do not comply with the ordinance or the guidelines.

Planning Director Ondich stated that existing buildings would not have to make any changes to their buildings and would only have to comply with the ordinance if making renovations to any of the areas addressed by the ordinance. He added that staff would make the guidelines available as a resource for ideas only at this point.

Commissioner Nuhring stated that he thought Cranky Alice and Mosaic Alley were good examples of projects that were completed without requirements being mandated and said that they could be pointed out to other buildings owners in the downtown area. He also stated that the B-1 Design Guidelines seem to be geared towards turn of the century designs and did not see that to be appropriate for all buildings. He asked if there was a way for staff to map the locations and ages of the buildings.

Commissioner Gengel stated that he realizes that general guidelines may not perfectly address all buildings in all locations of downtown but noted that he would rather not be so specific that individual building owners feel like they are being singled out.

Commissioner Gilman stated that he also does not like the idea to single out buildings either.

Commissioner Gengel asked if a public hearing would be required for the ordinance amendments.

Planning Director Ondich stated that a public hearing would be required in the future before any of the zoning ordinance amendments are adopted.

Commissioner Nuhring stated that he would rather see a date range for defining “historic” buildings rather than saying buildings 50 years old or older.

Commissioner Gilman asked if staff could add a section for just historic pictures of downtown buildings or even more comparison pictures.

Commissioner Nuhring stated that he did not think outright banning of signage on the face of the awning was the best idea. He stated that he would rather see a percentage limit. He stated that only allowing signage on the valances could provide a bland appearance if all the buildings were limited to that. He stated that he thought the signage on the face of the awning at the Corner Bar was a good example of signage on the face of an awning. He also asked if the guidelines could be clarified on page 12 regarding corner buildings and what design features specifically should be added to the sidewall. He finally asked if provisions should be made for sandwich boards.

Commissioner Wilcox stated that Diane Hrabe might have a timeline of buildings in the downtown area that she compiled for the 150th celebration that might be useful for the guidelines.

The Planning Commission thanked staff for their hard work on the guidelines.

5. Miscellaneous

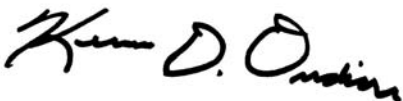
The following miscellaneous items were reviewed:

- A. Carver-Scott Statewide Health Improvement Program – Planning Director Ondich reviewed information regarding the program and indicated that a potential walking assessment of the City could be a funded component of the program. He stated that the Park Board would be discussing the program further at their next meeting but thought the Planning Commission should also be aware of the program.
- B. Planning Commissioner Training Sample Brochure – Planning Director Ondich stated that the Minnesota Valley Council of Governments occasionally holds training sessions in the area and asked if there was any interest from any of the Planning Commissioners in attending a future session. Jay Nuhring and Ryan Peltier indicated that they would be interested. It was also suggested that New Prague could host a session. Planning Director Ondich stated that he would provide information on the next available session when it becomes available.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM by order of Chairman Gengel.

Respectfully submitted,



Kenneth D. Ondich
Planning Director