

Special Meeting Minutes
New Prague Planning Commission
Wednesday, March 24, 2021

*Conducted Via GoToMeeting due to the COVID-19 Pandemic which prevented attendance at the regular meeting location.

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. by Shawn Ryan with the following members present on the virtual meeting conference call: Mike Uttenhove and Paul Tupy. Absent was Vice Chair Dan Meyer (arrived at 6:42 p.m.) and Chair Bob Gilman.

City Staff Present: Ken Ondich – Planning / Community Development Director

2. Approval February 24, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Ryan, seconded by Uttenhove, to approve the February 24, 2021 regular meeting minutes as submitted. Motion carried (3-0, Meyer had not yet arrived).

3. Old Business

A. None.

4. New Business

**A. Request for Variance #V2-2021 – Reduced Access Spacing from 500’ to 80’ to Utilize an Existing Curb Cut on 12th Street NW
Ivy Brook Parking, LLC - applicant**

Planning Director Ondich presented the staff report. He stated that Ivy Brook parking was previously approved for a conditional use permit in 2021 to utilize the site for exterior storage, but that the northern portion of the site needed access before it could be utilized. He stated that a variance is requested to reduce the access spacing from 500’ to 80’ in order to utilize an existing curb cut on 12th Street NW for the exterior storage use of the northern portion of the site. He stated that MnDOT previously commented that they would not allow access to the north portion of the site from TH21. He stated that the property is zoned I-1 Light Industrial and that any commercial driveway must be a minimum of 500’ from an arterial roadway such as TH21. He stated that the existing curb cut to the site is about 80’ east of the TH21 right of way and was installed in 2001 which predates the current zoning ordinance spacing requirement which used to only require 20’ of spacing. He stated that City Engineer Chris Cavett and Public Works Director Matt Rynda both reviewed the

request and are okay with the variance as proposed due to the low volume of vehicles per day expected which is between 5 and 10. He stated that the applicant noted in their statement of practical difficulties that the site will be underutilized if not able to use the north portion of the site for exterior storage while noting that due to the lack of utilities on the site the storage is the best use of the site at this time. The applicant's letter also noted that the vehicle volume will be about 5 to 10 vehicles per day and that the curb cut they want to utilize already exists. He stated that staff recommends approval of the variance with the findings listed in the staff report while noting that finding "G" in the report should be moved to a new category of conditions as condition #1 and he also suggested that a second condition be considered which would state that traffic impacts must not exceed 20 vehicles per day on average nor cause excessive traffic concerns on both 12th Street NW and TH21.

Commissioner Ryan stated that it had only been eight weeks since the conditional use permit was reviewed where it was discussed that access to the north end of the site was not to be assumed and that a condition was added that the area could not be used until access was figured out. He stated that he is concerned about the traffic in the area, specifically from high school traffic and other event traffic further to the east and with a lot of young drivers it caused concerns. He questioned if the applicant even needed the north side of the site at this time as it was unknown if the south site would even fill up once it's ready to be used. He stated that he wants to make the right decision because once the variance is approved there was no going back.

Trevor Poonai, applicant with Ivy Brook Parking, LLC, stated that the original intent was not to start on the north end of the site but in speaking with his contractor it would make sense to grade and prepare the south site and north site at the same time particularly because the middle area was going to take more work to prepare for exterior storage due to grades. He stated that they could also design and install the stormwater improvements all at the same time as well. He stated that his lot in Savage is 100% filled with a waiting list. He stated that he had recently been in discussions with Chart and they may be renting land in the southern site and that he believes it can fill it up almost immediately. He stated that the north portion of the site is limited to smaller items such as boats and travel trailers.

Commissioner Ryan asked how the applicant could guarantee that only 5 to 10 vehicles per day would enter and exit the site per day.

Mr. Poonai stated that he can't be there to monitor the site each day, but noted once again that it is a smaller site and is only approved to have smaller items such as boats and trailers and that maybe 40 items could fit there in total.

Commissioner Ryan stated that events also flood traffic onto 12th Street SW and that he has seen many accidents at 12th and TH21. He stated that he simply has concerns about the traffic in the area.

Mr. Poonai stated that he paid nearly one million dollars for the site and that if he cannot use the north portion of the site for storage that it will be a financial burden and it will set them back.

Commissioner Tupy stated that when the conditional use permit was reviewed at the Planning Commission meeting it was noted that they had to use the main access and that it may be difficult to utilize the north portion due to the access limitations.

Commissioner Uttenhove stated that he also recalls discussion from the applicant that they did not plan to use the north section right away. He stated that he lives in the area and it can be a nightmare for traffic and that he has seen several accidents. He stated that with kids driving to and from the high school it makes it even more of a concern. He stated that there is simply a lot of activity in the area on 12th Street NW.

Commissioner Ryan stated that vehicles also sometimes park on 12th Street NW and he is concerned that vehicles leaving the storage site may have difficulty seeing or even making the turn out of the site.

Mr. Poonai stated that he would be agreeable to paying to put up additional signs about parking if it would help and additionally said he was not sure how he could specifically limit use of the site to certain hours if it was not being monitored continually.

Commissioner Meyer asked if screening would be put around the north area.

Mr. Poonai stated that as a part of the conditional use permit there was screening required along the roads and railroad. He stated that he felt the site would hold around 40 items. He added that for security at his site in Savage he recently had finished installing security cameras. He noted that he is working on the engineering for the site currently, including a drainage permit for MnDOT and review by the City Engineer and that he expects to be done with that work in about 4 to 6 weeks.

Commissioner Ryan stated that he's glad to hear that Mr. Poonai is amenable to tightening up the restrictions but believes the item should be tabled in order to firm up the recommendation and conditions. He said he doesn't want a situation where it gets denied and that would prevent a new application for a variance from being made for six months per the zoning ordinance.

Mr. Poonai stated that he is spending upwards of \$40,000 for the engineering which includes the north area.

Commissioner Tupy asked if a time limit could be put on the use of the access such as restricting use during school start and end times.

Commissioner Meyer believed such time restrictions would be difficult to monitor.

Planning Director Ondich stated that the matter could be tabled and that with the 60 Day review time he would likely need to extend the review time out another 60 days and also noted that a special meeting could be a possibility to avoid waiting an entire month but that would come with an additional cost and save approximately 2 to 3 weeks of review time.

A motion was made by Ryan, seconded by Tupy, to table the matter to the next Planning Commission Meeting in order to tighten up the restrictions on the recommendation. Motion carried (4-0).

5. Miscellaneous

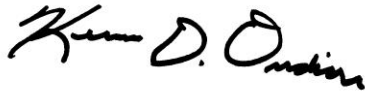
The following miscellaneous items were reviewed as information only:

- A. Monthly Business Update – Planning Director Ondich provided the Monthly Business update to the Planning Commission that had been provided to the EDA earlier in the month.
- B. 2021 Lot Inventory: Commercial, Industrial, Residential
- C. Annual Commercial Building Audit 2021
- D. Summary of 2020 Growth Statistics
- E. Member Terms Ending 5/31/21: Bob Gilman and Dan Meyer

6. Adjournment

A motion was made by Ryan, seconded by Meyer, to adjourn the meeting at 7:52PM. Motion carried (4-0).

Respectfully submitted,



Kenneth D. Ondich
Planning / Community Development Director