

Meeting Minutes
New Prague Planning Commission
Wednesday, June 22, 2022

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Dan Meyer with the following members present: Shawn Ryan, and Ann Gengel.

City Staff Present: Ken Ondich – Planning / Community Development Director and Kyra Chapman – City Planner

2. Elect Chair and Vice Chair

It was motioned by Ryan, and seconded by Gengel, to elect the chair and vice chair at the July meeting. Motion carried (3-0).

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- a. April 27, 2022 Regular Meeting**
- b. June 15, 2022 Special Meeting**

It was moved by Meyer, seconded by Ryan, to approve the April 27th regular and June 15th special meeting minutes as submitted. Motion carried (3-0).

4. Old Business

- A. None.**

5. New Business

- A. Introduction of Kyra Chapman to the Planning Commission – City Planner Kyra Chapman introduced herself to the Planning Commission.**
- B. Request for Variance #V3-2022 – Variance for Electronic Variable Message Sign Size and to be Allowed Two Monument Signs at 221 12th Street NE New Prague Area Schools – applicant**

Planner Chapman presented the staff report. She explained that New Prague Area Schools is requesting a variance for a 69 sq. ft. electronic variable message sign rather than the required 32 sq. ft. sign and to keep the existing monument sign at New Prague High School at 221 12th Street NE. The High School comprises of 51 acres of land; therefore, New Prague Area Schools

believes that the larger sign size would help accommodate to the large property. The proposed sign would be installed 16.5 feet from the sidewalk near the main road entrance along 12th Street (which is exactly 10' from the property line). The proposed sign would display district news, and community happenings. The images on the sign will remain static for a minimum of 5 seconds before changing. New Prague Area intends to keep the existing "Home of the Trojans" monument sign since it has become a part of its campus. The school property is zoned as RL-90 Single Family Residential Zoning District. Areas north, south, and west of the property are also zoned as such. Chapman explained that staff recommends approval of the variance request with the findings listed in the staff report.

Commissioner Gengel inquired about the direction the sign would be facing.

Craig Most, representative for New Prague Area Schools as the applicant, indicated that the sign would be installed so that it would face to the east and west. Most explained that New Prague Area Schools determined the placement in a way in which it would not impede traffic or become a distraction.

Commissioner Ryan asked if the sign became a distraction if there could be a way to put the sign on a timer. For instance, the timer could run from 10am to 5pm.

Most explained that the sign could be set on a timer if need be. He mentioned that it would be unlikely that it would become a nuisance in the neighborhood since the sign is barely visible from the residential homes.

Commissioner Gengel inquired about the date the electronic variable message sign would be installed.

Most said that the sign would be installed in about 10 to 12 weeks. The project would be complete sometime in September.

A motion was made by Ryan, seconded by Meyer, to recommend approval of Variance #V3-2022 from the required 32 square foot sign for a 69 square foot electronic variable message sign and for the existing monument site to remain at 221 12th Street NE for the following reasons:

- A. The requested variance is in harmony with the general proposes and intent of this Ordinance because educational buildings and signs are a conditional use in the RL-90 Single Family Residential Zoning District.
- B. The requested variance is consistent with the comprehensive plan because educational buildings and signs are a conditional use in the RL-90 Single Family Residential Zoning District.
- C. The applicant will use the property in a reasonable manner by installing an electronic sign that parents, students, and others in the community can easily see so the community is aware of school and district activities.

- D. Unique circumstances apply to this property over which the applicant had no control, and which do not generally apply to other properties nearby because the site is significantly large, spanning 51 acres. The bigger sign would help accommodate and advertise for such a large lot size.
- E. The variance does not change the character of the neighborhood considering that the land north and south of the property are used for educational or nonresidential purposes.
- F. The variance requested is the minimum variance which would alleviate the practical difficulties because it would be legible for those who are walking or driving by. The sign will be large enough for parents, students, and others in the community to read the school events but not too large in that it would be overpowering.

Motion carried (3-0).

C. Request for Variance #V4-2022 – Variances for Front Yard Setback and Building Coverage for Building Additions at 201 7th Street NW MVE Biological Solutions US, LLC – applicant

Planning Director Ondich presented the staff report. He stated that the property owner is seeking a variance from the 40' front setback to 27' to build additional building storage and increase the maximum building coverage to 42.1% compared to the ordinance requirement of 40% at MVE Biological Solutions at 201 7th Street NW. He explained that the building was originally constructed in 1986, amassing 15,137 sq. ft. until it was later added on in 2005, additional 17,050 sq. ft. However, in 2021 the building was purchased from Chart Industries by MVE Biological Solutions and sustained fire damage in 2022. The proposed expansion would include warehousing and pallet storage, totaling 26,308 sq. ft to the existing 32,050 sq. ft. building. The additions would be made to the east, west and southeast of the building, which would improve the view of the building along 7th Street NW and 1st Ave NW. The building expansion would allow the current outdoor storage to be stored within the building. From these additions, it's projected that it will increase their fulltime workforce by 25%. The property is zoned I-1 Light Industrial Zoning District and land north, south, and west are used for industrial purposes while land to the east of 1st Ave. NW is zoned RL-90 single family residential. Ondich stated that staff recommends approval of the variance request with the findings and conditions listed in the staff report.

Commissioner Ryan inquired on whether the shipping containers would be removed.

Michael Duich, representative for the applicant MVE Biological Solutions, explained that the proposed project would get rid of the shipping containers and outdoor storage.

A motion was made by Ryan seconded by Meyer, to recommend approval of Variance #V4-2022 from the required 40' front yard setback to 27' and a variance in the overall lot coverage to be allowed at 42.1% compared to the required 40% at 201 7th Street NW for the following reasons:

- A. The requested variance is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of this Ordinance because light manufacturing is a permitted use in the I-1 Light Industrial Zoning District.
- B. The requested variance is consistent with the comprehensive plan because light manufacturing is a permitted use in the I-1 Light Industrial Zoning District.
- C. The applicant will continue to use the property in a reasonable manner by constructing the building additions which will clean up the current exterior storage on the southeast side of the site which is where the building setback variance is sought.
- D. Unique circumstances apply to this property over which the applicant had no control and which do not generally apply to other properties in the vicinity because the site is a corner lot, is unusually shaped, and is surrounded by another property owner with whom the applicant has attempted to acquire property from to avoid the building coverage variance being needed.
- E. The variance does not alter the essential character of the neighborhood because surrounding land to the north, south and west are industrially used while noting the City's Utility building was granted a similar setback variance to 7th Street NW for a building addition in 2021.
- F. The variance requested is the minimum variance which would alleviate the practical difficulties because it would allow the site to move exterior storage inside the building and continue to grow the business by adding to their full time workforce by 25%.

And with the following conditions:

- 1. A total of 58 parking spaces must be provided for on the site, including required ADA spaces.
- 2. Truck movements must be provided to ensure trucks can enter and exit the site as necessary with the proposed additions.

Motion carried (3-0).

6. 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. Planning Director Ondich explained that most building permits in the past month are roofing and siding permits. Additionally, three new home permits were issued in May, accumulating to a total of six residential home permits in 2022 thus far. Patty's Place was recently purchased and turned into Cedar Press Coffee Shop and Bookstore. Lastly, it was noted that the new McDonald's is still being built and that once

construction is complete, the old McDonald's will close, which is anticipated around August 4th, 2022.

7. Adjournment

A motion was made by Ryan, seconded by Gengel, to adjourn the meeting at 7:04. Motion carried (3-0).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kyra J. Chapman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Kyra J. Chapman
City Planner