WILLMAR

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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MEMO

TO: Willmar Planning Commission

Chair:
Members: Mark Klema, Charles Oakes, Andrew Engan, Scott Thaden, Gary Geiger, Randy Czarnetzki, Nick Davis, Virgilio Aquirre, Jr, and Bob Poe.

FROM: Megan M. Sauer, Planner MMS

DATE: January 4, 2012

SUBJECT: JANUARY 11, 2012 MEETING

The Willmar Planning Commission will meet at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 11, 2012, in Conference Room #2 (upper level) of the City Office Building. Please call me at 214-5195 if you cannot attend.

1. Reorganization.
2. Call the meeting to order.
3. Welcome to new Commission Members.
4. Minutes of the December 14, 2011 meeting *
5. Stingers trailer discussion continued.
6. GreenSteps Cities Program TABLED ITEM.
7. Miscellany.
8. Adjourn.

* included
** to be presented

Willmar
All-America City
2005

WILLMAR PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF WILLMAR, MN
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2011

MINUTES

1. The Willmar Planning Commission met on Wednesday, December 14, 2011, at 7:00 p.m. at the Willmar City Offices Conference Room #2.

   ** Members Present: Mark Klema, Charles Oakes, Bob Mathiasen, Brian Bollig, Scott Thaden, Andrew Engan, Randy Czarnetski, and Gary Geiger.

   ** Members Absent: Nick Davis.

   ** Others Present: Connie Niemeyer, Travis Haefner, Jeff Vetsch, Andrew Bjur, Bruce Peterson- Director of Planning and Development Services, Megan Sauer- Planner.

2. MINUTES: The minutes of the November 9, 2011 meeting were approved as presented.

3. CITY INITIATED REZONE R-4 TO R-3 BLOCKS SOUTH OF CBD- FILE NO. 11-06: The public hearing opened at 7:01 p.m. Staff presented the initiated rezone of several blocks south of the CBD from R-4 Medium Density Multi-Family Residential to R-3 Low Density Multi-Family Residential on property legally described as: the west half of Block 67, Block 68, Block 69, Block 71, the west half of Block 62, Block 61, and the SE ¼ of 60, First Addition to the Town of Willmar. The reason the Planning Commission initiated the rezone was due to some financing and resale issues with the current zoning for the single family homes. The blocks surrounding the Central Business District are denser and many of the homes have been converted into multi-family housing apartments. But some single family homes remain, and due to current economic times and the increasing strict underwriting for loans the pre-existing legal non-conforming uses (the single family homes) were not able to get loans because only duplex through four-plex are permitted uses outright in the R-4. The Planning Commission felt a way to allow the existing single family homes to exist and keep the existing densities and encourage them in the future, would be to change to an R-3 which allows single family up to four-plexes.

   Travis Haefner and Connie Niemeyer both commented that they were just curious about the matter, but had no issues with it.

   With no further comments from the public the hearing was closed at 7:06 p.m.

   Staff comments were reviewed and discussed (see Attachment A).

   Mr. Mathiasen made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bollig, to approve the rezone and forward it to the City Council for a public hearing and adoption.

   The motion carried.

4. GREENSTEP CITIES PROGRAM PRESENTATION: Andrew Bjur and Jeff Vetsch presented the Minnesota GreenStep Cities summary for the City of Willmar and what/how the City could become a GreenStep Cities. They formed a sub-committee and went through all the best management practices that the City would have to do to obtain the designation. Of the 28 required, the City of Willmar has already completed 7 of them. With the City's support through a resolution, the designation would help keep Willmar competitive and possibly even help when working to obtain grants.

The Planning Commission talked about this being a grass roots effort and that the Planning Commission sees no fault in the program and that it would be a good thing for the City. Their concern was staff time and limited funds for major projects. But they would support an hour or two of staff time a month to devote to working through each best management practice with Mr. Bjur and the committee.

Mr. Bjur asked the Planning Commission to endorse the program and adopt a resolution to move forward and send it on to the City Council. The Planning Commission discussed their comfort level with the program, and that they'd like some more time to review the website.

Mr. Oakes made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thaden, to encourage the City Council to adopt a resolution to participate in the program after having Mr. Bjur and Mr. Vestch present the GreenSteps Program and sub-committee findings to the City Council.

Mr. Czarnetski made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thaden to table the matter till the next meeting, the motion carried with all voting yes, save Mr. Oakes.

5. CECIL MEYER PROPERTY SPLIT DISCUSSION: Staff presented a possible land split request on behalf of Cecil Meyer regarding his properties at 615 and 611 Becker Ave. SW. Currently he owns two structures that are on one parcel as they were all part of a bed and breakfast venture. The uses have changed now and he wishes to separate them and possibly acquire another property to the East. All the parcels are legal, pre-existing non-conforming parcels in regards to lot area. The Planning Commission discussed at length the three parcels and concerns about parking, access, creating new non-conforming setbacks, etc. The Planning Commission reached the following conclusion: Mr. Meyer can move forward with the plan as long as he is aware the parcels will require replatting, a record a parking/access agreement for the center parcel and no new non-conforming setbacks may be created.

6. STINGERS TRAILER DISCUSSION: Staff presented the request from the Stingers to remove the existing trailer at the Bill Taunton Stadium that they use for office space and replace it with a larger trailer. The Planning Commission discussed the approved temporary use of the current trailer. They said that it is unobtrusive and just a starting point for the club. Ultimately the Planning Commission would like to see a permanent structure on the site that would match the stadium architecture and materials etc. They also talked about requiring the trailer to be hooked up to City Services and put on a foundation.

Mr. Gieger made a motion, seconded by Mr. Czarnetski, to allow the new structure but to require a permanent foundation.

Mr. Gieger withdrew his motion.

The Commission asked staff to invite the Stinger representatives to the next meeting to discuss the matter in detail.

7. MISCELLANY: The Commission thanked Bob Mathiasen and Brian Bollig for their time and talents serving on the Commission for the last three years for the City.

8. There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Megan M. Sauer

Megan M. Sauer, AICP
Planner/Airport Manager

Attachment A

PLANNING COMMISSION-DECEMBER 14, 2011

STAFF COMMENTS

1. CITY INTIATED REZONE R-4 TO R-3 BLOCKS SOUTH OF CBD- FILE NO. 11-06:
   - The Planning Commission initiated the rezoning of several blocks south of the CBD from R-4 to R-3 to allow single family homes, duplexes, tri-plexes, and four-plexes on property described as: the west half of Block 67, Block 68, Block 69, Block 71, the west half of Block 62, the west half of Block 61, First Addition to the Town of Willmar.
   - The reasoning behind the initiation is that due to the home mortgage and economic changes that have occurred nationwide, underwriters for mortgages have become strict. In the past properties that were single family uses, but legal non-conforming structures due to a more dense zoning designation wouldn't be considered a risk as they were currently existing and would continue to exist as they were built. However, that legal nonconforming (grandfathered) designation is too risky now for underwriters. The Planning Commission decided to initiate the rezone to allow homes from single family up to four-plexes to co-exist as they currently do and be saleable. In the future if someone wishes to develop more dense residential uses they may apply for the conditional use permit to do so as would be required in both R-3 and R-4 districts. A future rezone to a higher density is another possibility.
     RECOMMENDATION: Approve the rezone and forward it onto the City Council for a public hearing and ordinance adoption.