

**WILLMAR PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF WILLMAR, MN
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2015**

MINUTES

1. The Willmar Planning Commission met on Wednesday, January 14, 2015, at 7:00 p.m. at the Willmar City Offices Conference Room #2.

Members Present: Scott Thaden, Bob Poe, Gary Geiger, Andrew Engan, Aaron Larson, and Randy Czarnetzki

Members Absent: Margaret Fleck, (two vacancies on the Commission)

Others Present: Steve & Heidi Ahmann, Joanna Schrupp, Joshua Stern, and Bruce Peterson – Director of Planning and Development Services

2. REORGANIZATION: The following officers were elected for 2015:
Andrew Engan – Chair, Gary Geiger – Vice Chair, Randy Czarnetzki – Secretary.
3. MINUTES: The minutes of the November 12, 2014 meeting were approved as submitted.
4. GENESIS THIRD ADDITION PRELIMINARY PLAT – FILE NO. 15-01: The public hearing convened at 7:05 p.m. Staff provided background information on the plat. It is a re-plat of a portion of the Genesis Addition and is proposed to have 13 lots, plus an outlot for storm water. The 13 lots are planned to contain five single family homes, and eight units of twin homes. The developer was requesting a 30' street with a 50' r/w, as well as a 90' radius cul-de-sac.

Staff comments were presented (see attachment).

Steve Ahmann, developer, explained what he wanted to do on the site along with his proposed schedule. Mr. Ahmann said the narrow street was needed due to the width of the parcel and its unusual configuration. Affordability was another issue, both for the developer and the home buyers. Mr. Ahmann presented information about the desirability of narrower streets and the need for revised City policy. He expressed concern over the maintenance costs of a private street and the lack of real estate tax savings for owners along private streets. Several potential buyers have indicated that they don't want a private street due to the long term cost of maintenance. Mr. Ahmann presented examples of several City streets currently constructed at widths less than the 42' street/70' right-of-way standard. He offered the opinion that those streets functioned well and were adequate for public safety.

The Planning Commission expressed concern about the proposed street width and cul-de-sac radius, especially due to the request for it being a public street. Mr. Ahmann was encouraged to pursue a planned unit development which would allow flexibility in addressing reduced setbacks, thereby accommodating the proposed street width and the shallow depth of the proposed lots.

The public hearing closed at 7:40 p.m. The Planning Commission discussed at length the street width and lot depth issues. Support was offered for the narrower street as a good planning practice and as a way to reduce storm water runoff. Because of the development concerns due to lot depth, the Planning Commission was not comfortable moving forward with the plat in its current format.

A motion was made by Randy Czarnetzki, seconded by Mr. Geiger to table the plat and to recommend that Mr. Ahmann apply for a PUD to allow the Planning Commission flexibility to deal with the street width issue and vary setbacks within the plat.

The motion carried.

5. MINN WEST TECHNOLOGY CAMPUS PLAN REVIEW – FILE NO. 15-01 (TOWER REAL ESTATE): Joanna Schrupp presented a proposal by Minn West Technology Campus to lease space in CIC Unit Number five to Tower Real Estate. Tower Real Estate would be employing three to four persons at the site and would provide services to campus tenants as well as the general public.

It was a consensus of the Committee that the proposed use was consistent with existing uses and met the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

A motion was made by Scott Thaden, seconded by Aaron Larson to approve the plan review for Tower Real Estate at the Minn West Technology Campus.

The motion carried.

6. PARTIAL VACATION OF 3RD STREET SOUTHWEST – FILE NO. 15-01: Staff presented a petition by Rice Memorial Hospital and Shared Health Resources, LLC. to vacate that block of 3rd Street Southwest between Trott Avenue and Minnesota Avenue. The vacation was being requested to allow for the expansion of parking and to facilitate future development. It was noted that the street had been closed to through traffic for some time.

Resolution 15-01 recommending approval of the vacation was introduced by Gary Geiger, seconded by Scott Thaden. The resolution was adopted on a unanimous roll call vote.

7. RICE HOSPITAL SALE OF PROPERTY: In keeping with Charter requirements, staff presented the proposed sale by Rice Hospital of the Rice Rehab Building to CDS

Investments LLC. The Charter requires that any sale or acquisition of municipal property come before the Planning Commission for their review.

The Planning Commission briefly discussed the request and recognized the potential benefits to the downtown from the proposed sale.

A motion was made by Scott Thaden, seconded by Randy Czarnetzki to recommend approval of the property sale.

The motion carried.

8. DOWNTOWN DESIGN STANDARDS: Staff requested volunteers from the Commission to serve on a group to draft and recommend design standards for downtown development and redevelopment. Gary Geiger, Andrew Engan, and Aaron Larson volunteered to serve on that group.
9. There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce D. Peterson", written over a horizontal line.

Bruce D. Peterson, AICP
Director of Planning and Development Services

Attachment A
1-14-2015

PLANNING COMMISSION – JANUARY 14, 2015

STAFF COMMENTS

1. Genesis Third Addition Preliminary Plat – File No. 15-01

- The applicant is Steven Ahmann, of Willmar Minnesota.
- Being platted is being part of lots 2, 3, and 4 of Block 1 – Genesis Addition.
- The property is located in Southeast Willmar.
- The plat includes 13 lots along a proposed public street with a 50' right-of-way and 30' street width.
- The property is zoned R-3– low density multi- family residential
- Being proposed are lots for 5 single family and 8 units of twin homes.
- The twin home lots do not meet minimum lot sizes for a lot in an R-3 District. That is primarily related to the limited lot depth available for building construction.

OTHER COMMENTS:

City Assessor - Questions were raised about the use, purpose, and ownership of the Outlot. There are restrictions on the plat regarding public ownership. If the street is dedicated as a public street, the Assessor's Office would call for party wall declarations to be filed for side by side units. There are no existing, deferred, or pending assessments for the property.

MUC – Electric service is available. They would propose running the electricity in the front boulevard. Water main would be required to be looped from 18th Street SE out to Lakeland Drive.

Engineering – The location of the street is okay, but it doesn't meet the City's standards for right-of-way or street width. The water supply is available in 18th Street SE and should be looped to Lakeland Drive. Capacity should be determined by the Fire Marshal. 8" sanitary sewer is available in 18th Street Southeast. Storm sewer is required and available. The applicant will need to submit drainage calculations to determine storm water pond sizing.

Public Works – The street layout is okay, although the design doesn't meet City standards for right-of-way or street width. Sanitary and storm sewer is accessible.

Fire Chief/Fire Marshal – State Fire Code requires that when an access road includes a hydrant, a road with a minimum width of 26', exclusive of parking, shall be provided. A cul-de-sac in excess of 150' length shall be provided with a 96' diameter cul-de-sac. The current cul-de-sac as shown on the plat doesn't meet this requirement. If the street remains as shown on the preliminary plat, "no parking" signs shall be posted on both sides of the street indicating it is a fire lane. There will need to be a minimum of two fire hydrants on the proposed street, one at the south end of the access road, as well as one at the end of the cul-de-sac. To ensure adequate water supply, an 8" main looped to Lakeland Drive will be required.

A variety of issues exist with this plat as proposed, all due to the narrow width of the property being developed. The public street idea doesn't seem to serve the property very well, as it very much limits the lot depth and the development potential of the property. The street width and cul-de-sac diameter also pose problems for emergency vehicle access and snow plowing.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the preliminary plat in its current form be denied. If development of the site in a similar fashion is desired, a PUD should be applied for that would include a private road, thereby increasing options for lot depth, reduced setback, and overall plat developability. If the PUD is proposed, a conditional use permit will be required and the basic plat design will remain, negating the need for a new platting application.

2. Minn West Technology Campus Plan Review – File 15-01 (Tower Real Estate)

- The applicant is Minn West Technology Campus.
- Being proposed is an office lease to Tower Real Estate. Tower Real Estate is a Brainerd relator that hopes to expand in the Willmar area.
- They will be leasing one office on the campus in Unit 5.
- It is expected that they will employ 3-4 persons.
- No issues have been identified by Staff, relative to this proposal.

RECOMMENDATION: To approve the plan review as submitted.

3. Partial Vacation of 3rd Street Southwest – File 15-01

- An application has been filed by Rice Memorial Hospital and Shared Health Resources LLC for the vacation of one block of 3rd Street Southwest, lying immediately south of Trott Avenue.
- The reason for the vacation is to provide more flexibility and options for site development/redevelopment.
- This street has been blocked off for a period in excess of 10 years. A small gazebo and park area exists to serve the health care facilities that exist currently.
- The MUC has requested that, if the vacation is to occur, an easement be kept over the entire former right-of-way to provide for the public utilities.

RECOMMENDATION: To recommend to the City Council the vacation of that portion of 3rd Street Southwest, as proposed, and that a hearing be scheduled for the Council to consider the vacation.