

REGULAR NORWALK PLANNING AND ZONING MEETING 12-14-15

Call to order

The Regular Meeting of the Norwalk Planning and Zoning Commission was held at the Norwalk City Hall, 705 North Avenue, Monday, December 14, 2015. The meeting was called to order at 5:45 P.M. by Chairperson Stephanie Riva. Those present at roll call were Dan Schulz, John Fraser, Chad Ross, Robin Wagner, Judy McConnell, Stephanie Riva. Absent: Jim Huse.

Staff present included: Luke Parris, City Planner; Wade Wagoner, Planning and Economic Development Director; and Shelley Stravers, Development Services Assistant.

Approval of Agenda – 15-96

Motion by McConnell and seconded by Fraser to approve the agenda as presented. Approved 6-0.

Approval of Minutes – 15-97

Motion by McConnell and seconded by Wagner to approve the minutes from the November 23, 2015 meeting. Approved as submitted 6-0.

Welcome of Guests

Chairperson Riva welcomed guests present. With no one wishing to speak the business portion of the meeting was opened.

New Business

Recommendation on the proposed vacation of the right-of-way easement of Masteller Road – 15-98

Parris informed Commission that this is for the consideration and recommendation on the proposed vacation of the right-of-way easement of Masteller Road. Chapter 138 of the Norwalk City Code provides regulations for the "Vacation and Disposal of Streets." Section 138.02 specifically states that the Planning and Zoning Commission must review and provide a recommendation to the City Council regarding any proposed vacation of a City street. The City Council cannot vacate a street unless they find the following:

1. Public Use. The street, portion thereof, or any public ground proposed to be vacated is not needed for the use of the public, and therefore, its maintenance at public expense is no longer justified.
2. Abutting Property. The proposed vacation will not deny owners of property abutting on the street reasonable access to their property.

At their December 3, 2015 meeting, the City Council referred the matter of the vacation of Masteller Road to the Planning and Zoning Commission for review and recommendation. The Commission's review should be focused on the two previous points.

The current alignment of Masteller Road is proposed to be vacated and a new alignment of Masteller Road will be developed by United properties LLC as part of their commercial development within the Echo Valley PUD. The new alignment of Masteller Road would maintain the intersection at Iowa Highway 28. The intersection of Masteller and Beardsley Street would be relocated to the east along Beardsley Street. Current landowners adjacent to and with access to Masteller Road are United Properties Invest Co. LLC and James Oil. The James Oil property has a secondary access to Beardsley Street. The United Properties Invest Co. LLC does not have a second access, however, they are redeveloping Masteller Road, which will maintain access to their property.

While a majority of the Masteller Road is now under construction, this ordinance contemplates vacating all of the north/south portion of the road. The City intends to keep the northern east/west portion, as it has been identified as the future access and likely signalization off of Iowa Highway 28.

The City can choose to vacate all or a portion of the street or place conditions on the vacation such as a deal being reached by the two private property owners regarding the James Oil property.

Scott James asked Parris to relay his comments he made via email to the Commission. He stated the two parties are trying to come to an agreement and asks that the remaining piece of Masteller remain open until that agreement is met due to traffic safety issues with his oil trucks.

Huse arrived at 5:50 P.M.

Scott McMurray, 4521 Fleur Drive, United Properties, spoke to the Commission. He said the vacation of Masteller is not a surprise to anyone who has been involved in the project throughout. Originally a plan was provided to the City and was reviewed by all necessary parties and a grading permit was issued. United Properties owns the land under Masteller but the City has an easement over it for a City street. A new street will be built by United Properties and the City will again have that easement.

McMurray said they have been working with James Oil to purchase their sight for 5-10 years now. They have given them a nice offer for their property, but James Oil has not agreed and United Properties isn't sure what the hold-up is. Mr. James states it is a safety issue, but McMurray said that James brings a fuel truck in once a month to fill up the tanks, and McAninch fills their trucks up from time to time there.

McMurray wanted to make it clear to the Commission that United Properties would love to own the site currently owned by James Oil, but their development is not contingent upon owning this sit, although it is necessary to get the road out

of there to complete the grading project. The road currently has over eight feet of fill on it that needs to be removed.

McMurray proposed that James Oil did their deliveries at night or during a less busy time of the day and that would resolve any safety issues that James Oil felt they would have. The City, with the blessing of United Properties, has been waiting for James Oil to make a decision on this agreement. United Properties has reached the point they just want to move on and cannot proceed until the City vacates this right-of-way easement and asks for the Commission to recommend this vacation of right-of-way easement of Masteller Road to the City Council.

After discussion the Commission agreed that there are rarely any trucks filling at the site and the safety issue could be avoided.

Motion by Ross and seconded by Schulz to approve recommendation on the right-of-way easement of Masteller Road with the exception of the north section currently named Wakonda Drive. Approved 7-0.

Discussion regarding the start of the SubArea 1 Master Plan

Parris informed Commission that the City is finalizing the steps to begin the SubArea 1 Master Plan project, working with a diverse consultant team that includes:

Chris Shires, with Confluence;
Bob Olson, with Proximity; and
Bishop Engineering

The City also has a diverse group of staff and interested parties to act as the Advisory Committee for the project which includes:

Marketa Oliver, City Manager
Tim Hoskins, Public Works Director;
Wade Wagoner, Planning & Economic Development Director;
Luke Parris, City Planner;
Stephanie Riva, City Council;
Hollie Askey, Warren County Economic Development Corp.; and
Zach Young, Des Moines Area MPO

This committee will have their first meeting 12/21/15.

The City and consultants are currently reaching out to community members, land owners, and other key stakeholders to be part of the Steering Committee for the project. The scope of the work proposed is divided into three phases as follows:

Phase 1: Public and Stakeholder Input

- Project Kick-Off Meeting with Steering Committee
- Joint City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission Review and Visioning Workshop
- Key Stakeholder Interviews
- Public Workshop
- Public Input Review Meeting with Steering Committee

Phase 2: Draft Plan

- Consultant prepares draft Master Plan including:
 1. Land Uses
 2. Building Form
 3. Transportation
 4. Utilities
 5. Implementation
- Draft submitted to staff for review, comment, and further revision
- Draft Plan Presentation and meeting with Steering Committee
- Joint City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission Draft Review Workshop

Phase 3: Final Draft Plan

- Consultant prepares final draft Master Plan
- Planning and Zoning Commission Public Hearing
- City Council Public Hearing

Parris noted that Phase 1 will take longer than Phase 2 and 3.

Riva asked Parris to include Park and Rec, Fire and Police in this process because their input on the Comp Plan will be important.

Scott McMurray, 4521 Fleur Drive, United Properties, asked the Commission to also include stakeholders, especially those that are currently developing some of the area and have a PUD already in place. Including them would help the planning that is done to match up with the developers' plans and any existing PUD's.

Informational presentation regarding best practices for parking management and design

Parris informed Commission that a key aspect of community planning, zoning administration, and site plan review is balancing the needs of the public with the needs of a private developer. The city uses our Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Ordinance to balance these various needs. The way in which the City develops our plans and codes has a direct impact on how the community develops. Therefore, we should be continually evaluating our plans and codes to ensure they are helping us achieve the goals of the community.

The Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has recently started developing various "Best Practices" report that look across the state and country towards best practices in a variety of planning topics. The most recent report is related to parking design and management. A copy of the report was handed out.

Parking standards have an interesting history through the development of modern planning and zoning. The first zoning ordinances were concerned strictly with regulations of use types and did not often include parking requirements (partly because of the era in which they were developed, IE pre WW2). Parking did not become a bigger concern until the post WW2 development era. At that time, and still today, it was treated more as an engineering problem than a city planning problem. Therefore, most of the guidance developed today has taken a strict engineering approach to ensure that every vehicle has a place to park, while ignoring the potential unintended consequences of parking, such as large swaths of concrete that dominate the landscape are often times left vacant for large portions of the year. Because of the lack of historic connection with planning, and the strict engineering solution of the past, there are a wide variety of solutions to parking standards throughout the country. The MPO report provides a review of best practices in parking management that attempt to ensure that the right volume of parking is provided.

Parris explained that in order to have a more walkable community there is a thought process that we don't provide as much parking so that people have to walk more to get to their destinations. There are also tax benefits from land that has buildings on it instead of parking lots. The developers would save money by using some of the practices in the report. Parris used Valley Junction as an example of how parking is provided in the back area for the area shopping, but each store is not required to provide individual parking spaces like we currently require. Parris would just like Commissioners to review this report and to consider some of the ideas they suggest for some of our future planning.

Discuss upcoming election of Commission Chair and Vice-Chair

Parris noted that Riva is the current chair of Planning and Zoning and was recently elected to the City Council, which she will begin that position on January 1, 2016. This will leave the chair position for Planning and Zoning vacant. Schulz has also announced his position as Vice-Chair will also be vacant, as his new employment will cause him to travel on meeting days. At the next meeting, the Commission will hold an election for a new Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary. Shelley Stravers is currently serving as the Secretary, designated by the Commission. Anyone interested in being considered for any of these seats, please let staff know prior to the next meeting scheduled for January 11, 2016.

Staff Development Update

Wagoner gave the update to the Commission. Wagoner presented the November department report. He also informed Commission that there is a

meeting scheduled for 12-15-15 to talk about economic development tools with the Economic Development Subcommittee.

Future Business Items

Staff reported that the North Shore PUD went to City Council on December 3, 2015 and the first reading was approved.

Ross asked for an update on the welcome sign progress. Wagoner explained that they have gone over all the hurdles and it has been budgeted for. It is at City Council level at this time. Since this is the gateway to our city, staff felt it important to start moving it through City Council. Wagoner received an email from Jonathon that he will forward to the Commission. February is the timeframe we are projecting. Huse suggested including the parks and have a true gateway into the City that extends across the road with a park like appearance.

Parris noted that an item that was not on the future business items, but has come up is the an area included in the Orchard View area. This area is currently zoned R3 and we have received a submittal for 88 townhome units in this area. A meeting was held today with police, fire, and public works to review the submittal. Commission asked if the park was ever figured out by the detention pond in that area? Parris said it was identified as parkland but because it is a detention area, City Attorney Dougherty raised some questions about the City accepting this as park land. We have asked Dougherty for comments on this, and we will hold off on the deed until we have his comments on this.

Ross asked if we could work on planning future park areas and put that into the Future Land Use Plan. That way parks can be identified in undeveloped areas now and can be put together with developers plans when they present developments. Commission would like park staff to attend the planned joint meeting to discuss the Comp Plan.

Next meeting is scheduled for January 11, 2016.

Adjournment – 15-99

*Motion by Fraser and seconded by Schulz to adjourn the meeting at 6:44 P.M.
Approved 7-0.*

Stephanie Riva, Chairperson

Luke Parris, City Planner