

**REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE  
VADNAIS HEIGHTS PLANNING COMMISSION  
APRIL 27, 2021**

**OPEN MEETING**

Chairperson Jokinen called the Regular Meeting of the Vadnais Heights Planning Commission to order at 7:02 p.m. on April 27, 2021.

**ROLL CALL**

Evan Cordes	Present
Linda Bigelbach	Present
Edward Caillier	Present
Curt Cooper, Vice Chairperson	Present
Martin Jokinen, Chairperson	Present
Joseph Stumph	Present
Jerry Moynagh	Present
Terri Dresen, First Alternate	Present
Katherine Doll Kanne, Second Alternate	Present

Also present: Nolan Wall, Planning/Community Development Director; Jeff Melcoch, Cable Producer; Council Liaison Rogers.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Upon motion by Commissioner Cooper, seconded by Commissioner Cordes, it was

“RESOLVED, to approve the April 27, 2021, Regular Meeting Agenda as presented.”

Ayes – 7                      Nays – 0

The motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Upon motion by Commissioner Stumph, seconded by Commissioner Cooper, it was

“RESOLVED, to approve the minutes of the March 23, 2021, Regular Meeting as presented.”

Ayes – 6                      Nays – 0                      Abstain – 1 (Bigelbach)

The motion carried.

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Chairperson Jokinen opened the floor to the public at 7:03 p.m. for questions and comments on items not on the agenda.

As no one wished to address the Commission, Chairperson Jokinen closed the meeting to the public at 7:03 p.m.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

- A. Planning Case 21-008 – Variance at 3651 Edgerton Street, David and Barbara Barrow.

(Item A was heard after Item C as the applicants were not yet present.)

Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the applicants/property owners are requesting a variance from the applicable rear yard setback standards in order to construct a porch and deck at 3651 Edgerton Street which is located in the Residence One (R-1) District. He said the subject property is guided as Low Density Residential in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and is immediately adjacent to other single-family residential uses. The existing use is permitted in the R-1 District and the proposed improvements are consistent with the continued use of the subject property in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan.

Wall noted that the existing dwelling contains a deck constructed on top of a concrete foundation. The applicable R-1 District rear yard setback is 25' and, according to the survey, the dwelling and deck are both legally non-conforming structures. He outlined the existing and proposed conditions for the subject property and proposed improvements of a dwelling/porch and deck. Wall noted that the subject property is a corner lot with the existing dwelling located in the southwest corner. As a result, the dwelling is non-compliant with the rear/side yard setbacks and causes practical difficulties in making certain improvements to the existing condition. The proposed porch would be constructed over that same area and would encroach four feet further into the setback area to allow for the new stairs/landing. The requested variance is for a rear yard setback of eight feet. Wall said in general, the City should support investment in residential properties that do not detract from the character of the surrounding neighborhood, and, further, said that the homes that border the subject property are much newer and were constructed with the existing condition in place.

Commissioner Bigelbach asked if the current steps are no longer in place. Wall clarified the steps are in place within the 12 feet set back but would be relocated to 8 feet, if approved.

Commissioner Stumph said the proposal is a great improvement, especially with the proposed sun room, and that it should add value to the neighborhood.

Commissioner Doll Kanne said she supported the proposal as well and understands why the deck needs to be in the proposed location and said that she has no concerns with the requested variances.

Chairperson Jokinen confirmed no substantive comments were received as part of the public hearing process and that there was no one present who wished to speak. Chairperson Jokinen closed the meeting to the public at 7:59 p.m.

Upon motion by Commissioner Bigelbach, seconded by Commissioner Cooper, it was

“RESOLVED to recommend approval of the variance request based on the following findings of fact:

1. The proposed improvements are a reasonable use of the subject property and compliant with the Comprehensive Plan.
2. The proposed addition is replacing the existing deck and the only portion of the proposed deck encroaching further toward the rear property line are the steps/landing.
3. The location and orientation of the existing dwelling on the subject property presents unique circumstances that create practical difficulties in making certain improvements/investments to the existing condition.
4. The proposed improvements will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood.

Subject to the following conditions as presented:

1. A building permit shall be submitted for administrative review/approval, prior to commencement of any construction activities on the subject property.
2. Construction activities shall commence within one (1) year from the date the variance is granted by the City Council, and the approval granted shall be null and voided unless an extension is granted by the City Council in compliance with the applicable Code requirements and procedures.

Ayes – 7                      Nays – 0

The motion carried.

B. Planning Case 21-006 – Variances and Site Plan Review at 3921 Labore Road.

Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the applicant has submitted an application requesting two variances and site plan review approval for construction of a new office-warehouse building on the subject property located at 3921 Labore Road. The subject property formerly contained a non-conforming single-family residential dwelling that was previously demolished and included an outdoor storage yard. The subject property is zoned and guided industrial in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, as are all of the adjacent properties. The proposed use is permitted within the applicable zoning district and is consistent with the goals and objectives in the Comprehensive Plan. Wall noted that the surrounding area contains industrial and office/warehouse uses and the development will not negatively affect any of the existing conditions.

Wall noted that Labore Road is under Ramsey County’s jurisdiction and is classified as a B-Minor Arterial, so driveway and right-of-way permits will be processed through the County. There are no anticipated adverse impacts to the existing traffic patterns in the

surrounding area. No connections are proposed or warranted for any pedestrian or vehicular ingress/egress on Labore Road.

Wall noted that the applicant is proposing two driveways along Labore Road that will be 108' apart from each other and would require a variance from the 150 foot standards. There are no intersections within 40' of the proposed driveways. The proposed driveways are 24.9' and 28.4' wide, respectively, at the right-of-way and are acceptable and the driveways are greater than 40' from the existing driveways on the abutting properties to the north and south. The proposed building is located generally in the middle of the site and off-street parking lots/circulation drives are located on the north and south sides.

Wall said that the height of the flat roof proposed is approximately 23', which is compliant with the 45' maximum height standard. The building's exterior will be pre-fabricated metal materials grey and black in color and will be consistent and compliant with the applicable Code requirements. Wall noted that due to the high cost of construction materials, alternative materials that are less costly are being utilized for these types of buildings.

Wall showed the proposed Landscape Plan which includes planting of 30 major/over-story trees, and said that an additional planting is required to attain compliance with the minimum quantity and size standards. The Code also requires that at least 25% of the trees provided meet the minimum quantity of deciduous species. The landscape plan only includes 3 deciduous trees but needs to provide at least 7 to attain compliance. Staff recommends a revised, compliant landscape plan be included in a subsequent development agreement and then spoke more about the proposed elements including lighting, utilities, drainage and lot coverage/open space. Wall reviewed the utility plan which includes private connections to private water and sanitary sewer. He talked about the drainage on the property and said that most of the property is flat and doesn't drain anywhere. Permit review and approval is needed by Ramsey/Washington Watershed District in compliance with their applicable standards and special provisions.

Wall noted that the setbacks on the site plan the applicant is proposing are a zero parking lot setback on a portion of the parking lot. The proposed development is consistent with other surrounding properties. Staff recommend approval of the variances with conditions.

Commissioner Moynagh asked about the proposed zero setback location and the area for truck turnarounds. Wall outlined the area for the zero setback and said it meets the drive lane and parking stall requirements and that due to circulation on the site appropriate truck turning could not be completed in the two bays so they are requesting the setbacks. He said since the area is towards the rear of site and it will be well landscaped and also due to lot configuration and in order to accommodate a new building the tenants were requesting this setback for only the two identified stalls and not the full length of the site.

Commissioner Dresen referred to the high cost of construction materials and the proposed alternative materials for this project. Wall said the proposed materials do meet the standards and would be constructed with pre-fabricated materials.

Shawn Berry, NAI Architects, explained the proposed pre-fab metal building and explained the materials to be used.

As no one else wished to address the Commission, Chairperson Jokinen closed the public hearing at 7:16 p.m.

Upon motion by Commissioner Bigelbach, seconded by Commissioner Cooper, it was

“RESOLVED to recommend approval of the proposed variances and site plan review at 3291 Labore Road based on the following findings of fact:

1. The proposed use is permitted within the Industrial District, consistent with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, and brings the subject property into conformance with both.
2. The subject property’s configuration and adherence to development standards reduce the buildable area and truck movements that create practical difficulties for the proposed development to meet the needs of the building tenants.
3. The proposed development is compliant, or conditioned to be, with all other applicable City Code standards not contained the variance requests. Staff Report: Planning Case 21-006.
4. The proposed development is consistent with most surrounding developments and will not alter the essential character of the area or negatively affect traffic flow on Labore Road.

Subject to the following conditions:

1. A development agreement between the property owner, and all others with interests in the subject property, shall be entered into with the City, to be recorded at the applicant’s cost with the offices of the Ramsey County Recorder and/or Register of Titles, prior to issuance of a building permit.
2. Driveway, right-of-way, and utility connection permits shall be submitted for review and approval by Ramsey County and provided to the City as part of the building permit review process.
3. Building and grading permits shall be submitted for administrative review/approval, prior to commencement of any construction activities on the subject property.
4. A zoning and/or building permit for fencing shall be submitted for administrative review/approval, prior to any fencing being installed on the property.
5. A sign and/or building permit shall be submitted for administrative review/approval, prior to any sign(s) being installed on the subject property.
6. The landscape plan shall be revised to comply with the required standards, to be included in a subsequent development agreement.
7. Outdoor storage of materials, supplies, products, or equipment shall be in compliance with the applicable City Code standards, to be administratively reviewed/approved as part of the building permit.
8. Roof-top mechanical units shall be of a low-profile variety and ground-mounted units shall be adequately screened, to be administratively reviewed/approved as part of the building permit.
9. Building utility areas shall be adequately screened by plant material and/or fencing and shall not obstruct fire department connections or hydrants, to be administratively reviewed/approved as part of the building permit.

10. Any subsequent office space construction within the proposed building shall be in conformance with the applicable City Code standards.
11. Existing vegetation proposed to be preserved shall be done so in compliance with the applicable requirements of Chapter 38, Article IV, Section 601(11) of the City Code.
12. Trash/recycling containers shall be screened on all four sides with the same materials and the doors must remain closed except when items are being placed into or taken out of the enclosure.
13. The off-street parking lot and driveways shall be constructed and operated in compliance with the applicable code standards, to be reviewed/approved administratively as part of the building permit.
14. Driveway aprons within city right-of-way shall be constructed of concrete, including curb and gutter.
15. Any bituminous removal shall be at least two-feet-wide, using proper saw-cutting.
16. A Fire Certificate of Occupancy shall be obtained annually from the Fire Department by the responsible party, in compliance with the City Code.
17. Compliance with the conditions included in the Fire Chief’s memorandum, dated 03/30/21.
18. Compliance with the conditions included in the SEH memorandum, dated 04/21/21.
19. Compliance with all conditions required by Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District as part of their permitting and construction inspection processes.

Commissioner Stumph noted this was formerly a residential property and that the applicant has done a great job on engineering the site to maximize the site and he thinks the proposed project fits well.

Chairperson Jokinen asked if this was the last industrial site on Labore Road. Wall responded that there are still several sites remaining on Berwood Avenue and said that this location had a fire at one time and that the SOS office complex site near this site also had a single family home on it, so the properties in this area are slowly being brought into conformance with the zoning code.

Commissioner Cooper said the project would maximize the area because it was a thinner parcel and that the variances needed are reasonable.

Ayes – 7                      Nays – 0

The motion carried.

C. Planning Case 21-007 – MSP Vadnais, LLC – Rezoning, Final Planned Unit Development, Site Plan Review, 3580 Arcade Street (MSP Commercial).

Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the applicant has submitted an application for construction of a medical-office building at 3580 Arcade Street that includes: a rezoning from City Center to Planned Unit Development, final Planned Unit Development Plan, and site plan review. The subject property is 7.5 acres and proposed use is permitted and meets PUD thresholds. MSP Vadnais, LLC is proposing to construct an approximately 22,300 SF, one-story medical-office building. The subject property contains the existing Summit Orthopedics building/parking lot and is bound by I-35E to

the east and Arcade Street to the west. The Walmart and Midwest ENT developments are to the north and undeveloped land abuts the subject property to the south. The proposed development plan is “concept” in nature and subject to change as a result of the review process, staff recommendations, public comments, and Planning Commission/City Council discussion. The proposed use is allowed within the applicable underlying zoning district and is consistent with the goals and objectives in the Plan. Flexibility under the PUD provisions is required from the applicable underlying City Center parking lot/circulation drive standards along Arcade Street and the northern property boundary line. According to the applicant, consideration of the proposed setback flexibilities is based on several considerations and the proposed Concept Plan contains two buildings on the existing parcel; no lot split is proposed.

Wall noted that the exterior building materials the developer is proposing to use are compatible with other surrounding uses and include clay brick (limestone buff and grey-brown), cast stone sills, canopies, sun shades, equipment screening, and cornices. The proposed development will include connections to existing public/private utilities and roadways and does not include any land dedicated to the public, so the applicant will most likely opt to pay the applicable park dedication fee in lieu of land dedication as allowed by Code.

Wall stated that VLAWMO and SEH have reviewed the applicant’s stormwater management and civil engineering plans and their comments are included in the conditions that are part of the recommendation for the Commission’s approval.

Wall then reviewed the landscape plan. He said that the City Center zoning district requires 1/3 of plantings be conifers and 2/3 deciduous. The applicant’s plan does not meet those standards but the applicant is proposing to bring them closer to meeting the standards. They are proposing 692 plantings around the building and the site. The development includes 23.3 percent impervious surface.

Wall reviewed proposed signage including wall signage, monument signage and freestanding sign which was consistent with others in the immediate area then spoke more about the proposed signage and suggestions. The applicant is proposing one (small) sign on three out of the four elevations. The monument sign would be located on Arcade Street, and would not comply with the setback. Wall recommends that that variance be granted with flexibility for another monument sign on the property, because there is one there now for Summit and that both tenants need or warrant their own sign, and said that it is staff’s recommendation that the combine two monument signs be merged into one.

Wall noted that the proposed off-street parking lot would contain 362 spaces and reviewed the traffic, access, and lot coverage and said that employment is projected to grow by 67% in the next 20 years and this development may bring approximately 40 to 50 jobs to the community.

Commissioner Moynagh asked about signage and said with the orientation of other buildings in that area and the two proposed street curb cuts and distances between the entrances, he asked if the builder is willing to take suggestions and what has changed since the last time we talked about it. Moynagh also said he would prefer to see one sign instead

of two. Wall said the two signs proposed on the front elevation were originally without tenant identification but has now the tenant has been identified as only four letters and a logo and much smaller than originally thought. He said staff was recommending flexibility for all required signage and asked that the developer consider pursuing combining the monument signs. Chairperson Jokinen asked about the height of the proposed pylon sign. Wall responded the height is estimated to be about 30-35 feet which is significantly less than what is permitted.

Wall noted that staff does recommend approval based on findings of fact with conditions.

Commissioner Dresen referred to the Woodbury office with a high volume of patients and asked if the clinic in Little Canada would combine with the new location in Vadnais Heights or compete against it. Steve Miller, MSP Commercial, said this would be a relocation from Maplewood as they are closing that location.

Commissioner Doll Kanne commented that the Maplewood facility is very busy and she is excited to learn this business would be brought to Vadnais Heights.

Steve Miller explained the additional signage was being requested by the tenant so that they have separate branding opportunities for their own project because they are smaller and off the freeway and less visible. He said they hoped the Commission would consider the two separate identities with two drive lanes, one to MNGI and one to the Summit building, to provide separate branding opportunities.

As no one wished to address the Commission, Chairperson Jokinen closed the public hearing at 7:41 p.m.

Upon motion by Commissioner Cooper, seconded by Commissioner Caillier, it was

“RESOLVED to recommend approval of the Rezoning, Final PUD Plan, and site plan review requests as amended to include denial of flexibility of cul-de-sac length based on the following findings of fact:

1. The proposed use is permitted within the underlying City Center District and is consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Flexibility from certain applicable City Code standards, as part of the Planned Unit Development process, is justified based on the existing conditions and allows for reasonable development of the subject property.
3. The proposed development is well-designed and will complement the existing uses in City Center while bringing employment opportunities to the City.

Subject to the following conditions as presented:

1. A development agreement between the property owner, and all others with interests in the subject property, shall be entered into with the City, to be recorded at the applicant’s cost with the offices of the Ramsey County Recorder and/or Register of Titles.
2. Appropriate permits shall be submitted for administrative review/approval, prior to commencement of any construction activities on the subject properties.

3. Existing vegetation proposed to be preserved shall be done so in compliance with the applicable requirements of City Code Chapter 38, Article IV, Section 38-601(b)(11).
4. All small utilities shall be installed outside of city right-of-way and within drainage and utility easement(s).
5. A Fire Certificate of Occupancy shall be obtained annually from the Fire Department by the responsible party, in compliance with the City Code.
6. Sign and/or building permits shall be submitted for administrative review/approval, prior to any sign(s) being installed on the subject property.
7. Roof-top mechanical units shall be of a low-profile variety and ground-mounted units shall be adequately screened, to be administratively reviewed/approved as part of the building permit.
8. Building utility areas shall be adequately screened by plant material and/or fencing and shall not obstruct fire department connections or hydrants, to be administratively reviewed/approved as part of the building permit.
9. The off-street parking lot and driveways shall be constructed and operated in compliance with the applicable code standards, to be reviewed/approved administratively as part of the building permit.
10. Driveway aprons within city right-of-way shall be constructed of concrete, including curb and gutter.
11. Compliance with the conditions included in the Fire Chief's memorandum, dated 03/30/21.
12. Compliance with the conditions included in the VLAWMO memorandum, dated 04/15/21.
13. Compliance with the conditions included in the SEH memoranda, dated 04/15/21 and 04/21/21, respectively.

Upon motion by Commissioner Cordes, seconded by Commissioner Caillier, to amend the motion to deny flexibility from the pedestrian facility/bike storage onsite. He said it was important to make our City a more bike-friendly city and that while patients may not use the bike storage at the site, staff would likely appreciate the opportunity to bike to work. Commissioner Cooper said he would accept the friendly amendment.

Commissioner Dresen explained the two separate signage options for two different uses which would not be conducive to combine and said she supports the request for two separate signs. Commissioner Cooper said he agrees with the friendly amendment.

Commissioner Moynagh said he supports a friendly amendment but is cautious about having too many signs and urged the applicant to work so the signage did not appear jumbled and is neat and organized.

Commissioner Cordes clarified the monument sign locations and asked why the text for both couldn't be included on one sign, why have two signs occupying the area. Wall said the signs were located as far apart as possible and combining could confuse people more.

Commissioner Dresen said the monument sign would be used more as a wayfinding sign and that with the high volume of people coming to the area for procedures the additional signage would be helpful from a customer-service level.

Commissioner Caillier said the development itself looks fantastic with a high quality of materials and signage and agreed GPS does not always work and that the additional monument signs would be important.

Wall clarified the motion on the table is to deny some flexibility and require the addition of a bike storage rack and to allow two monument signs.

Steve Miller thanked the Commission for the discussion and noted that from experience, especially with the elderly population who don't use GPS, many are unable to find the destination and that the signage would help.

Ayes – 7

Nays – 0

The motion carried.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**OLD BUSINESS**

None.

**REPORTS**

A. Council Liaison

Council Liaison Rogers said he had nothing to report.

B. Planning Commissioners

None.

C. Staff

Planning/Community Development Director Wall said the Bluebird Grove PUD was before the Commission last month and tabled at the April 27<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting and will be before the City Council at a future meeting. He said there is a lot of construction occurring in the City including At Home Apartments, several building permits have been issued for Frattalone Mondelo Shores, Atomic Sheet Metal is starting construction, SOS Office facility construction continuing, road construction projects coming up, repainting the water tower on Commerce Court, still working on negotiating a purchase agreement for the Garceau corner property, and utilities are being installed on the former Staeheli. He said there is no update regarding the Luther Cadillac project and an office warehouse building on White Bear Parkway is on hold due to lack of tenants and the high cost of construction. He added the Holiday Stationstore has significant tank removal process to undertake and no activity has been occurring with the Bear Roofing project, and that there had been interest in the northeast quadrant.

Wall noted that the City's new online permitting software has proven to be a significant change in how the City provides permits to the public. He said the software moves the City from paper based to online and includes online payment options and streamlines workflows including inspection scheduling and results, correction letters, master address tables, and outlines the most efficient route for inspections during their daily inspections. He said the software has improved the City's ability to serve customers and thanked the Council for supporting this investment in the community. He gave a preview of the online system.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next Planning Commission meeting will be held on May 25, 2021.

**ADJOURN MEETING**

Upon motion by Commissioner Stumph, seconded by Commissioner Cooper, the meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cathy Sorensen  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*

Approved