

**UNAPPROVED  
CITY OF BLAINE  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
November 9, 2022**

The Blaine planning commission met in the City Hall Chambers on Wednesday, November 9, 2022. Chair Goracke called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

Members Present: Commission Members: Deonauth, Gorzycki, Halpern, Olson, Swanson, and Chair Goracke.

Members Absent: Commission Member Homan.

Staff Present: Shawn Kaye, Planner  
Elizabeth Showalter, Community Development Specialist  
Shelia Sellman, City Planner  
Teresa Barnes, Project Engineer

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**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion by Commissioner Halpern to approve the minutes of October 11, 2022, as presented. Motion seconded by Commissioner Deonauth. The motion passed 6-0.**

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Item 3.1 – Case File No. 22-0068 – Public Hearing – The applicant is requesting a preliminary plat to create two outlots and right-of-way dedication for the Zest Street extension. No development is proposed at this time.  
KEMPF PROPERTY (SAMBATEK), SOUTHWEST CORNER OF LEXINGTON AVENUE AND 125<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE NE.

The report to the planning commission was presented by Sheila Sellman, City Planner.

Homer Tompkins, 17790 St. Croix Trail at Marine on St. Croix, thanked the commission for considering his request. He noted he was working closely with Chris Moe in order to purchase this property from the Kempfs.

Commissioner Halpern asked what was being proposed for this site. Mr. Thompson explained his partner was working to secure an anchor tenant for the corner property. He reported he attended a worksession with the city council and noted this project would be put on hold until spring given the volatility of the market at this time.

The public hearing for Case File 22-0068 was opened at 7:06PM. As no one wished to appear, the public hearing was closed at 7:07PM.

**Motion by Commissioner Olson to recommend approval of Planning Case 22-0068 based on the following conditions:**

Case 22-0068:

1. The developer has responsibility to make all street connection improvements associated with this development per Anoka County plat review comments when street construction occurs.
2. An Anoka County right-of-way permit is required prior to start of any site work.
3. All development signage by separate review.
4. Within 180 days of approval, subdivider shall submit for final plat for review.

**Motion seconded by Commissioner Deonauth. The motion passed 6-0.**

Chair Goracke noted this would be on the agenda of the December 5, 2022 city council meeting.

Item 3.2 – Case File No. 22-0066 – Public Hearing – The applicant is requesting a conditional use permit to operate a home occupation in an FR (Farm Residential) zoning district.  
CHASE HENNESSEY, 11453 NATIONAL COURT NE.

The report to the planning commission was presented by Shawn Kaye, Planner and she suggested a third condition be added to the recommendation. The condition to include is: The property owner to provide an accurate site survey that shows all existing structures, easements, and proposed access drive locations.

Chase Hennessey, 11453 National Court NE, thanked staff for the thorough report and thanked the commission for considering his request.

The public hearing for Case File 22-0066 was opened at 7:13PM.

Glen McClusky, representative for Chase Hennessey, read a brief statement on behalf of his client. He explained the property was currently owned by Native Son Realty, which was owned by Chase's parents. He thanked staff for providing the commission with a report and recommendation for approval. He commented on the opposition Mr. Hennessey has

received from the neighbors and noted it was his understanding the neighbors use their property for business. He encouraged the commission to approve the conditional use permit per staff's recommendation.

Ron Alwin, 11450 National Court NE, requested the conditional use permit be denied. He explained he objected to the request because the property was zoned FR and the applicant was in violation of the FR zoning requirements. He discussed how the occupants of the surrounding lands would be impacted if this conditional use permit were approved. He expressed concern with the fact this property would have outdoor truck parking. In addition, he feared approval of the proposed conditional use permit would adversely impact the value of his property. He stated he and his wife have lived on their cul-de-sac for the past 27 years and had hoped to retire on this quiet piece of land. However, after having a neighbor move in with loud trucks and beeping equipment, the peace of his neighborhood has been lost. He then read the language in city code regarding home occupations and recommended the council deny the requested conditional use permit.

Cristine Alwin, 11450 National Court NE, stated her home was her safe haven and she appreciated the peaceful nature of her neighborhood. She explained she has had neighbors the entire time she has lived in her home and there have been no problems. However, since the Hennessey's have moved in, there has been nothing but chaos and noise. She commented on the high level of noise and disruption that occurs on the Hennessey property each and every day. She stated she was appalled that this was allowed to occur in a residential neighborhood and urged the commission to deny the conditional use permit request.

Mr. Alwin reported he was a land surveyor and he had surveyed this entire area. He explained the driveway Mr. Hennessey was installing was into the utility easements. He questioned if Mr. Hennessey had talked to the city regarding this matter. He feared this had not occurred. He encouraged Mr. Hennessey to run his business properly and not out of a residential home at the end of a cul-de-sac.

The public hearing was closed at 7:29PM.

Chair Goracke asked if the applicant spoke to staff regarding the driveway.

Planner Shawn Kaye reported the applicant has stated he did speak to someone regarding the driveway and explained Project Engineer Teresa Barnes was working with him on this now.

Chair Goracke questioned if there were any other recent home occupations that required a conditional use permit.

Planner Shawn Kaye stated she did not recall any other home occupation cases. However, she noted the FR (farm residential) zoning district does allow for the parking of vehicles.

Community Development Specialist Elizabeth Showalter reported the commission had reviewed a home occupation conditional use permit request near 111<sup>th</sup> and Lexington Avenue earlier this year. She indicated the commission denied this request because the applicant was requesting to store dumpsters of garage doors outdoors, which is not allowed.

Commissioner Olson inquired if work was performed on the applicant's property, or did the property serve as a home base for business equipment.

Mr. Hennessey reported he has been working on a drive lane to reach the garage in order to not drive over the septic system. After speaking with city staff, he was told to create a drive lane to the east, which required the installation of a boulder wall and he has been working on this project. He explained he would also be installing a patio that overlooks the wetland.

Commissioner Deonauth asked when the drive lane project would be completed.

Mr. Hennessey stated he hoped to have this project wrapped up late this fall or early next spring.

Commissioner Halpern questioned how much home business activity was occurring on the property each day.

Mr. Hennessey explained all business operations were conducted offsite. He stated the beeping onsite occurs when skid loaders or other equipment are loaded from the shop to the trailers.

**Motion by Commissioner Olson to recommend approval of Planning Case 22-0066 based on the following conditions:**

Case 22-0066:

1. No outdoor storage is permitted with the exception of the permitted truck, trailers, and van parking.
2. Any access drive off the existing driveway will need to be constructed at least 35 feet from the front property line. The access drive will need to be constructed at a minimum of a Class V material.

3. The property owner to provide an accurate site survey that shows all existing structures, easements, and proposed access drive locations.

**Motion seconded by Commissioner Halpern. The motion passed 6-0.**

Chair Goracke noted this would be on the agenda of the December 5, 2022 city council meeting.

Item 3.3 – Case File No. 22-0069 – Public Hearing – The applicant is requesting the following:

1. Rezoning 6.2 acres from B-3 (Regional Commercial) to DF (Development Flex).
2. Comprehensive plan amendment from CC (Community Commercial) to HDR-2 (High Density Residential 2).
3. Preliminary plat to create two lots to be known as Blaine Lakes Apartments.
4. Conditional use permit for a 196-unit apartment in a DF (Development Flex) zoning district.

BLAINE LAKES APARTMENTS (SAMBATEK), 551 87<sup>TH</sup> LANE NE.

The report to the planning commission was presented by Sheila Sellman, City Planner and Teresa Barnes, Project Engineer.

Jonathan Adams, representative for the Rainbow Village, thanked the commission for considering his request. He discussed how this project came about noting he purchased the Rainbow Village in its vacant state in December of 2020. Since that time, he has been working to fill the vacancies due to the changing retail market. He reported this led him to pursue a multi-family development on this site. He commented on the workshop meetings he attended with the city council and noted how the project had been adjusted to address the concerns of the neighbors.

Chair Goracke asked if the market studies were showing millennials were more interested in renting than owning homes.

Mr. Adams explained the market studies show that Blaine was in need of more multi-family housing. He suggested his partner address this further.

Shane Lefave, Roers Company, thanked the commission for their consideration. He explained Roers had two other projects under construction in Blaine. He reported the proposed project would be similar to the Axle property in Fridley, which was 95% pre-leased before opening. He indicated there was a strong demand for rental units in this market. He went on to describe the amenities that would be included within the units and stated he hoped this development would serve as a catalyst for the renovation of the entire Northtown Mall area. He commented further on how he worked to minimize the impact of

this building on the adjacent neighbors by altering the side of the building and by adding new fencing and landscaping.

The public hearing for Case File 22-0069 was opened at 8:02PM.

Janet Zawadski, 8813 Jefferson Street NE, explained she attended the neighborhood meeting with the developers. She expressed concern with the fact the proposed four-story building would tower over this adjacent neighborhood. She suggested the developer pursue a three-story building. She noted she was also concerned about the berm on the north end of the property being impacted. She recommended a berm be constructed along Jefferson Street to give the neighborhood more privacy.

Scott Jordan, 638 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, stated he was worried about increased crime and the number of police calls that would be directed at this multi-family apartment building. He expressed concern with the fact the developer would be requesting TIF. He also feared the proposed rental rates were too high for Blaine renters.

Kris Hoberg, owner of Salon 10 in Rainbow Village, explained she has had the salon for 20 years now. She reported when she first leased the space it was beautiful but the property changed ownership and the new owner let the space go. She stated since Mr. Adams purchased the site, improvements have been made, but the Rainbow parcel remains vacant. She was of the opinion the property had more crime now than it would with have with renters. She commented this area of Blaine was dead and would remain dead without reinvestment. She understood the new building would be large, but she wanted to see this area promoted and improved.

Joe Mutzberg, 626 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, stated he did not believe the neighbors deserved apartments right next door to their homes. He explained his neighborhood has been in place since the 1950's and he has lived in his home for the past 10 years. He commented his back yard would now be seen by 200+ people. It was his understanding the Northtown Mall area had the highest crime rate in the city and he anticipated adding 1000 more people would only compound this concern.

Sue Jordan, 630 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, explained Scott Jordan was her brother. She noted her family has three homes along 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue. She questioned who would be paying for this complex to be built and inquired if her taxes would be going up to pay for the project. She suggested an urgent care facility be considered for this area instead of an apartment complex.

Scott Haggemiller, 8722 Van Buren Street NE, stated he works on these types of building all day, everyday for the last 20 years. He understood these types of buildings rent quickly and noted he supported the proposed development. He thanked the developer for hearing

the comments and concerns of the neighbors. He commented he also appreciated the amenities that would be included in this building.

Sherry Hartman, 785 87<sup>th</sup> Lane, explained she supported the proposed development because it would be clean and tidy. She commented on how the area was currently very run down and lacked businesses. She supported the project moving forward.

Mr. Motzberg questioned what type of jobs in the area could support the proposed rental rates. He indicated he was also concerned with the fact this project was requesting TIF.

Steve Jordan, resident, discussed how the alignment of the building would push noise into the adjacent neighborhood. He suggested the developer reconsider the design and height of the building. He noted he was also concerned about crime spilling into his neighborhood from the apartment complex.

Mary Ann Jordan, 630 88<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, stated she has lived in her home for the last 70 years. She expressed concern about having a four-story building adjacent to her home and noted she would have no privacy. She anticipated the property value of the homes along Jefferson Street would be greatly decreased.

Lori Saroya, 782 101<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE, reported she was a newly elected member of the city council. She explained she has knocked on nearly 5,000 doors over the past six months and she has visited almost every single house in this neighborhood. She indicated these residents are tired of what was happening in the Northtown area. She stated they also did not want apartments. She encouraged the commission to hear the voices of the neighbors. She questioned why commercial businesses did not want to move into this space and asked where the neighbors would shop for their groceries. She inquired if people would want to live in these apartments, given the fact the property owner couldn't fill the space with commercial tenants. She stated she did not want to see the proposed building turning into a Section 8 apartment complex. She understood the commission had a job to do, but she believed there were many unanswered questions and suggested this project be put on hold until a proper compromise could be reached for the residents living in Ward 1. She reiterated that this property was zoned commercial, and she recommended a commercial development be pursued for this site.

Ms. Hoberg reported the property owner has been trying to find tenants for the Rainbow property for the past 20+ years. She explained Trader Joe's would not come into this area until the entire area was renovated. She discussed how property values would actually increase as the area was revitalized.

Mr. Jordan questioned if the city had enough natural gas capacity to serve this apartment building.

Kristin Mattson, resident, stated she supported the proposed development. She reported there was a big demand for apartments in Blaine and she appreciated the fact the city was considering a different type of housing for future residents.

Ms. Jordan asked if the schools in the area would be able to handle a large influx of additional children. She proposed apartments be considered closer to the existing mall versus adjacent to residential homes.

The public hearing was closed at 8:38PM.

Chair Goracke clarified for the record the developer was proposing to build a market rate apartment complex and not Section 8 housing.

City Planner Sheila Sellman reported this was the case noting the development would not have Section 8 housing. She indicated the TIF request would be decided by the city council and EDA.

Chair Goracke questioned if the schools in the area could accommodate more students.

City Planner Sheila Sellman explained the city meets with the school on a yearly basis and noted they were aware of the plan, along with the plans for the entire Northtown area.

Mr. Lefave commented this property was previously an operating grocery store, which required water, sewer and gas supply. He stated he was proposing to construct a market rate rental project. He discussed the landscaping plan and noted he tried to create as much greenspace as possible.

Mark Anderson, Civil Engineer with Sambatek, discussed the fencing and berm that would be located along Jefferson Street. He commented on how he would work to provide good screening along this property line, which may include increasing the height of the existing berm.

Mr. Lefave reported all renters living in this building would have a background check and noted the site would have security cameras.

Commissioner Olson asked if the new building was only nine feet higher than the existing Rainbow Village building.

Mr. Lefave reported the existing building was 25 feet tall and the proposed building would be 42 feet tall.

Chair Goracke questioned how many four-story buildings were located in Blaine.



City Planner Sheila Sellman reported the city currently had eight apartment buildings that were four stories.

Commissioner Halpern asked how many of these structures were located adjacent to an existing residential neighborhood.

Community Development Specialist Elizabeth Showalter explained all were adjacent to a lower density residential use except for two.

Commissioner Halpern commented on the Northtown vision plan noting there would continue to be concerns regarding building height next to this neighborhood. He asked if the developer had considered lowering the building height to two or three stories.

Mr. Lefave stated this project began at 240 units and this number was reduced based on the feedback received from the neighbors. He explained townhomes could fit on this site, but he was not certain that this would be a better solution, given the fact he was proposing to construct a Class A building with onsite management. He commented further on how his project would be a catalyst for further development in the Northtown area.

Chair Goracke asked how many workshops the developer has attended with the city council.

Mr. Lefave reported he attended three workshops with the council and Mr. Adams had attended four.

**Motion by Commissioner Deonauth to recommend approval of Planning Case 22-0069A a comprehensive plan amendment to High Density Residential 2 (HDR-2) with the following the following rationale:**

Case 22-0069A:

1. The proposed land use is consistent with the apartment type use proposed for the site.
2. The proposed land use and associated development is in an appropriate location for high a density project as it is close to major intersections and roadway systems.
3. The proposal achieves goal 3 of Chapter 5 of the comprehensive plan *the city recognizes varied housing densities as a means of accommodating community growth. The city will encourage increased density through appropriately designed and located townhomes and apartments, a variety of single family detached-style homes with clustering and varying lot sizes, and open space.*

4. The proposal is consistent with the Northtown District Vision plan identifying high density residential for the subject site.

**Motion by Commissioner Deonauth to recommend approval of Planning Case 22-0069B a rezoning to DF (Development Flex) with the following rationale:**

Case 22-0069B:

1. The DF zoning has been used in the majority of residential development over the past several years within the City of Blaine as it provides the city with the greatest flexibility and control over the aesthetic and livability elements within the development.

**Motion by Commissioner Deonauth to recommend approval of Planning Case 22-0069C a preliminary plat to create two lots with the following conditions:**

Case 22-0069C:

1. Park dedication is required for the 196 new residential units being constructed at the rate of \$4449 per unit, for a total park dedication fee of \$872,004 if paid and recorded in 2022. This amount must be paid prior to releasing the plat mylars for recording at Anoka County.
2. All development signage by separate review.
3. All existing structure removals require demolition permits.
4. The developer is responsible for recording the plat mylars with Anoka County. Proof of recording must be provided to the city prior to issuance of building permits.
5. A Site Improvement Performance Agreement and associated financial guarantee is required as part of the building permit application.
6. Final plat approval is required prior to issuance of a building permit.

**Motion by Commissioner Deonauth to recommend approval of Planning Case 22-0069D a conditional use permit to allow a 196-unit apartment building with a zero-line setback for parking on the west side of the lot in a DF (Development Flex) zoning district with the following conditions:**

Case 22-0069D:

1. Floor plans, elevations, and civil plans shall be generally consistent with the plans dated October 31, 2022.
2. The following building setbacks shall be met:
  - a. Front (87<sup>th</sup>) - 40 feet
  - b. Front (89<sup>th</sup>) - 65 feet
  - c. Side (west) - 20 feet
  - d. Side (east) - 191 feet
3. The parking lot setback shall be at least 15 feet but can be up to a zero-lot line for the west side.
4. At least three premium materials shall be present on each elevation comprising at least 50% of the wall area of each façade and the building and elevations shall be treated similarly. Premium materials include any materials listed in 30.54(e)(1) of the zoning code.
5. All disturbed areas, except those within stormwater basins or associated buffers shall be sodded.
6. The following quantities of plantings are required:
  - a. Overstory: 25
  - b. Conifer: 25
  - c. Ornamental: 25
  - d. Shrub: 168
7. This conditional use permit approval is contingent upon the approval of a comprehensive plan amendment by the Metropolitan Council from CC (Community Commercial) to HDR-2 (High Density Residential).

**Motion seconded by Commissioner Gorzycki. The motion passed 6-0.**

Chair Goracke noted this would be on the agenda of the November 21, 2022 city council meeting.

Item 3.4 – Case File No. 22-0067 – Public Hearing – The City is proposing annual revisions to the Blaine Zoning Ordinance.

CITY OF BLAINE.

The report to the planning commission was presented by Elizabeth Showalter, Community Development Specialist. The public hearing for Case File 22-0067 was opened at 9:01PM. As no one wished to appear, the public hearing was closed at 9:02PM.

Commissioner Olson thanked staff for working on this every year to keep the city's code updated.

**Motion by Commissioner Olson to recommend approval of Planning Case 22-0067 amendments to the Blaine Zoning Ordinance with the following rationale:**

Case 22-0067:

1. Routine updates to the zoning code facilitate the code remaining current.
2. The changes being proposed will improve the clarity of the code, address situations the code does not cover, and ensure that current interpretations are reflected in the code.
3. The changes continue to promote the health, safety and welfare of the residents, property owners and businesses within the City of Blaine.

**Motion seconded by Commissioner Swanson. The motion passed 6-0.**

Chair Goracke noted this would be on the agenda of the December 5, 2022 city council meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Item 4.1 – Case File No. 22-0071 – Public Hearing – The City is proposing adoption of a new subdivision ordinance.  
CITY OF BLAINE.

The report to the planning commission was presented by Elizabeth Showalter, Community Development Specialist. Staff requested feedback from the commission regarding the new subdivision ordinance.

The commissioners supported the proposed subdivision ordinance as proposed by staff.

Item 4.2 – Planning Commission Review of Proposed Redevelopment Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District I-24.

The report to the planning commission was presented by Sheila Sellman, City Planner. Staff requested feedback from the commission regarding the proposed TIF district.

Commissioner Halpern stated because the city was working so diligently to redevelop the Northtown area, he believed the proposed TIF district was keeping in line with the city's comp plan. He appreciated how this TIF district would assist with redeveloping this area of the city.

Motion by Commissioner Swanson to adopt the resolution, supporting the proposed Redevelopment Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District I-24, as the proposed district was in alignment with the City of Blaine Comprehensive Plan. Motion seconded by Commissioner Deonauth. The motion passed 6-0.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Commissioner Olson to adjourn the regular planning commission meeting. Motion seconded by Commissioner Deonauth. The motion passed 6-0. Adjournment time was 9:13PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Guenther  
*Minute Maker Secretarial*