

**UNAPPROVED  
CITY OF BLAINE  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
February 9, 2021**

The Blaine Planning Commission met in the City Hall Chambers on Tuesday, February 9, 2021. Chair Ouellette called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this hybrid meeting was held both virtually and in person.

Members Present: Commission Members: Deonauth, Goracke, Halpern, Homan, Olson, Villella, and Chair Ouellette. Also present was Adjunct Member Drew Brown.

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Lori Johnson, City Planner  
Teresa Barnes, Project Engineer

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**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion by Commissioner Homan to approve the minutes of January 12, 2021, as presented. Motion seconded by Commissioner Olson. A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed 6-0-1 (Chair Ouellette abstained).**

**OLD BUSINESS**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Item 4.1 – Case File No. 21-0005 – Public Hearing – The applicant is requesting a conditional use permit for a shared access between two lots in a B-3 (Regional Commercial) zoning district.

CHASE BANK (THE ARCHITECT’S PARTNERSHIP, LTD., 221 COUNTY ROAD 10 NE.

The report to the Planning Commission was presented by Lori Johnson, City Planner. The public hearing for Case File 21-0005 was opened at 7:08PM. As no one wished to appear, the public hearing was closed at 7:08PM.

**Motion by Commissioner Olson to recommend approval of Planning Case 21-0005 based on the following conditions:**

Case 21-0005:

1. A shared access agreement must be submitted prior to a building permit or site plan approval being granted for the site. If the applicant is unable to provide this information, staff will work with the applicant on a timetable for providing this document.
2. The following landscaping must be provided on site:
  - a) Overstory Trees: 17
  - b) Conifer Trees: 9
  - c) Ornamental Trees: 9

In addition, 25% of the trees must be oversized and located within the front yards of the site. 87<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Highway 10 are considered front yards. Oversized trees should include 3-inch caliper overstory trees, 8 feet in height conifer trees and 2 ½-inch ornamental trees.

3. Site plan approval is required prior to any work being performed on site. Site plan approval will be granted upon the receipt of plans meeting all ordinance and conditional use permit requirements, and the submission of a Site Improvement Performance Agreement and associated financial guarantee.
4. A Coon Creek Watershed District permit is required prior to issuance of Site Plan approval.
5. All lighting must be down lit and shielded. Freestanding lighting is limited to 20 feet in height.
6. All signage is issued under a separate permit. The building is allowed to have signage on three sides of the building due the fact that the site has frontage on a public road on three sides.
7. The site and buildings must be constructed consistent with the submittals for this conditional use permit and with the resolution of approval for this conditional use permit.

**Motion seconded by Commissioner Goracke. A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed 7-0.**

Chair Ouellette noted this would be on the agenda of the March 1, 2021 city council meeting.

Item 4.2 – Case File No. 21-0002 – Public Hearing – The applicant is requesting the following:

- 1.) Comprehensive plan amendment to change the land use of the property from PI/PC (Planned Industrial/Planned Commercial) to HDR (High Density Residential).
- 2.) Conditional use permit to allow for the construction of a 178 unit, four floor apartment building and a shared access in a DF (Development Flex) zoning district.

NORTH MEADOWS APARTMENTS (ROERS COMPANIES), AUSTIN STREET  
AND 109<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE NE.

The report to the Planning Commission was presented by Lori Johnson, City Planner. The public hearing for Case File 21-0002 was opened at 7:17PM.

Lois Bouchard, 11213 Zest Court NE, explained she lived in the Sanctuary Preserve. She discussed her traffic concerns and was pleased that a new traffic signal would be installed. She commented on how this area of Blaine was developing and how this was increasing the level of traffic along Lexington Avenue. She questioned if the proposed signal was too close to the adjacent traffic signal.

Chair Ouellette asked if the City would have to contact Anoka County about the timing of the lights along Lexington Avenue.

Project Engineer, Teresa Barnes reported a traffic study was completed in 2018 that accounted for the south side apartment complex, along with the proposed complex. She indicated one of the requirements of a traffic study was to have the traffic signal spacing and timing analyzed. She stated roughly 700 feet was ideal for traffic signals, however, they can be closer in order to properly manage traffic. She indicated the traffic study did approve the full use of a traffic signal to meet the level of services required for the traffic impacts from this development.

Ms. Bouchard stated the traffic study was completed pre-COVID. She asked if Anoka County would be addressing the traffic timings for Lexington Avenue and 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue. She reported the timings of the traffic signals along Lexington Avenue was off right now and was creating backups during the PM rush hour.

Project Engineer, Teresa Barnes commented major intersections were analyzed in the traffic study and the timing of the light would be adjusted. She indicated there was 1200 feet between Lexington Avenue and Austin Street.

Ms. Bouchard asked if another traffic study was conducted after the project was complete.

Project Engineer, Teresa Barnes reported this would only be required if another development were to occur in the area.

Clement Vicaro, 3645 112<sup>th</sup> Circle NE, explained he lived in the Sanctuary Preserve neighborhood. He questioned if the traffic study took into consideration all of the new businesses that occurred around the senior development.

Chair Ouellette reported this was the case.

Mr. Vicaro stated he was afraid that Lexington Avenue was going to become like Highway 65 and asked that the City carefully consider the traffic flow along Lexington Avenue.

Project Engineer, Teresa Barnes commented further on the traffic study that was completed in 2017 and 2018 for the senior living and proposed development. She stated she was not aware of a way for the City to require a traffic study to be completed by the developer after a development was completed.

City Planner, Lori Johnson concurred and reported Lexington Avenue was a County road and she understood Anoka County would be conducting further studies for this roadway.

Mr. Vicaro encouraged staff to speak with the developer to ensure all construction traffic was following the City recommended routes.

Greg Strefachia, 3925 112<sup>th</sup> Circle, explained he lived in the Sanctuary Preserve. He stated it was his understanding that 112<sup>th</sup> to Austin Street would remain closed until construction was completed.

City Planner, Lori Johnson reported the road would remain closed until the road construction was completed, not completion of the development itself. She indicated the Planning Commission could make a recommendation to the City Council on this matter.

Mr. Strefachia commented this was news to the Sanctuary Preserve neighborhood. He understood that the roadway would be closed through the construction of all of the townhomes. He requested the City keep the roadway closed.

City Planner, Lori Johnson stated she would take a closer look at this prior to the City Council meeting.

Mr. Strefachia questioned if the zoning change was for one specific parcel.

City Planner, Lori Johnson indicated the land use change was for one specific parcel.

Mr. Strefachia commented 112<sup>th</sup> was the only way in and out of his development. He explained the residents within the Sanctuary Preserve were concerned about how this access would be impacted by the new development. He feared that this was not closely considered within the traffic study.

The public hearing was closed at 7:35PM.

Commissioner Halpern asked if 114<sup>th</sup>, just north of this neighborhood, was closed off.

City Planner, Lori Johnson explained the Council elected to keep this road closed until such time as commercial development happened at the corner of 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Lexington Avenue, or until a median was installed on Lexington Avenue. She stated a discussion would be held with the Council on this topic sometime in the future.

Commissioner Halpern requested further information on what would be put into that corner.

City Planner, Lori Johnson reviewed a project map and explained the parcel to the north could not be developed because it was all wetlands. She indicated there was one commercial lot left in the North Meadows development that could be developed. That lot is south of the apartment proposal.

Commissioner Deonauth inquired if any studies were done on how these developments impact the wetlands.

Project Engineer, Teresa Barnes reported the North Meadows development was required to work closely with the Rice Creek Watershed District and as construction occurs, they have been inspecting the area. She explained the area has been well studied to ensure the wetlands remain a priority.

Commissioner Villella questioned why a traffic signal was required at 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Austin Street but not at 112<sup>th</sup> and Lexington Avenue.

Project Engineer, Teresa Barnes stated an intersection has to meet “warrants” to determine how it is controlled. She reported an intersection has to have a certain level of traffic in order to get to a traffic signal. She commented 150 residents going in and out of a neighborhood at 112<sup>th</sup> was not enough traffic to warrant a light. She anticipated residents would be going south along Austin Street to the intersection of 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Austin Street versus trying to go north on Lexington Avenue at 112<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Villella asked how the construction of this project would be impacted with the reconstruction of 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Project Engineer, Teresa Barnes explained she has had conversations with Anoka County. She reported the County would be holding a meeting tomorrow with the City and the developer to have all groups working together to properly coordinate the reconstruction of 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue, along with the necessary turn lanes.

Commissioner Olson inquired if a sign was posted along 112<sup>th</sup> that states “No Construction Traffic Allowed”.

City Planner, Lori Johnson reported Project Engineer Teresa Barnes could work with her staff to investigate this further and could look into installing signs.

Chair Ouellette requested the developer come forward at this time.

Jeff Koch, Roers Companies, introduced himself and thanked the Commission for their consideration. He explained he intends to be a long time neighbor within the community. He stated he was excited to bring this apartment complex to Blaine. He indicated he would be more than willing to post signs in order to keep construction traffic from using 112<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Halpern asked what other projects the developer had completed in the metro area.

Mr. Cook reported he has multi-family buildings in Burnsville, Chanhassen, Minnetonka, and Woodbury.

Commissioner Goracke asked when this development would be completed.

Mr. Cook stated typical construction was 20 to 24 months for this type of building. He anticipated he would begin construction in June or July of 2021.

Commissioner Goracke questioned when the improvements along 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue would be completed.

Project Engineer, Teresa Barnes stated it was her understanding all of these improvements would be completed in 2021.

Chair Ouellette commented he appreciated the fact that the intersection improvements would be installed as part of this project.

Commissioner Olson inquired if the plan for this parcel has always been commercial/multi-family.

City Planner, Lori Johnson stated at the time the public hearing was held for North Meadows it was the City's understanding the developer might be looking at multi-family on this lot. She commented the land use was Planned Commercial and needed to be changed to HDR (High Density Residential). She indicated the Met Council would review this matter after receiving City Council approval.

Commissioner Olson recommended a condition for approval on the CUP be added to require the developer to post signs along 112<sup>th</sup> to keep construction traffic out of the neighborhood.

**Motion by Commissioner Goracke to recommend approval of Planning Case 21-0002A a comprehensive plan amendment to change the land use of the property from PI/PC (Planned Industrial/Planned Commercial) to HDR (High Density Residential) based on the following rationale:**

Case 21-0002A:

1. The proposed amendment meets the goals of the land use chapter of the comprehensive plan by maintaining flexibility in land use districts to respond to market conditions regarding the mix of industrial, commercial, and high density residential uses in key locations and encouraging density through appropriately designed and located apartments.
2. The proposed amendment meets the goals of the housing chapter of the comprehensive plan by providing housing opportunities which meet the needs of all generations and income levels, and supporting the development of well-designed and appropriately located multifamily housing projects that meet the needs of the population today.

**Motion by Commissioner Goracke to recommend approval of Planning Case 21-0002B a conditional use permit to allow for the construction of a 178 unit, four-floor apartment building and a shared access in a DF (Development Flex) zoning district based on the following conditions:**

Case 21-0002B:

1. This site needs to meet the Highway 65 Overlay District requirements for exterior materials and the plans submitted for this proposal meet this requirement.
2. The landscaping on site needs to meet the Highway 65 Overlay District requirements and the plan provided meets those requirements. The plan includes 36 overstory trees, 36 conifer trees and 36 ornamental trees as well as oversizing.
3. All lighting needs to be downlit and shielded to prevent glare or spill. Pole mounted lighting is limited to 20-feet in height.
4. SAC and WAC payments will also become due prior to the issuance of building permits.
5. The applicant will need to obtain a Rice Creek Watershed District permit prior to City approval of construction plans and specifications.
6. Developer to install traffic signal at the intersection of Austin Street and 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
7. This building will need to be licensed under the City's annual Rental License Program.
8. All signage is issued under a separate permit.
9. The applicant will need to obtain administrative site plan approval that will include the submittal of a Site Improvement Performance Agreement and the associated financial guarantee.
10. Final plat approval will be required prior to issuance of a building permit.
11. A shared access agreement must be provided due to the shared access with the commercial site to the south of the apartment site. This agreement must be submitted prior to issuance of site plan approval.
12. The development of this site must be consistent with the plans submitted for the conditional use permit and with the resolution of approval of the conditional use permit.
13. This conditional use permit approval is contingent upon the approval of a comprehensive plan amendment by the Metropolitan Council from PI/PC (Planned Industrial/Planned Commercial) to HDR (High Density Residential).
14. All construction traffic shall utilize the intersection of 109<sup>th</sup> and Austin St. as the primary ingress and egress to the site during construction.

15. The applicant shall be required to post signage along 112<sup>th</sup> that states “No Construction Traffic”.

**Motion seconded by Commissioner Olson. A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed 7-0.**

Chair Ouellette noted this would be on the agenda of the March 1, 2021 city council meeting.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Commissioner Villella to adjourn the Regular Planning Commission meeting. Motion seconded by Commissioner Deonauth. A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed 7-0. Adjournment time was 7:59PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Guenther  
*Minute Maker Secretarial*