

City of Duluth  
Planning Commission  
January 8, 2019 Meeting Minutes  
Council Chambers - Duluth City Hall

Call to Order

President Michael Schraepfer called to order the meeting of the city planning commission at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 8, 2019, in city hall council chambers.

Roll Call

Attending: Jason Crawford, Gary Eckenberg, Janet Kennedy, Tim Meyer, Margie Nelson, Michael Schraepfer, Luke Sydow, Sarah Wisdorf, and Zandra Zwiebel

Absent: N/A

Staff Present: Adam Fulton, Robert Asleson, John Kelley, Kyle Deming, Mollie Hinderaker, and Cindy Stafford

Approval of Planning Commission Minutes

November 13, 2018

**MOTION/Second:** Zwiebel/Meyer approve the minutes

**VOTE: (9-0)**

December 11, 2018

**MOTION/Second:** Nelson/Wisdorf approve the minutes

**VOTE: (9-0)**

Public Hearings

1. PL 18-158 Mixed Use Institutional (MU-I) Planning Review to replace the existing parking deck east of Building A with a new structure containing an ambulance garage, heliport, and Emergency Department drop-off/parking at 1012 East Second Street and improvements to the parking lot on the north side of East Second Street by St. Luke's Hospital  
**Staff:** Kyle Deming introduced the applicant's request for a MU-I plan review. St. Luke's proposals include: relocation of the Emergency Department to Building A; replacement of the existing parking deck east of Building A; development of a new structure containing an ambulance garage and Emergency Department drop-off/parking accessed from E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St.; and the creation of a heliport on the roof of the new ambulance garage/parking structure. The project will include installation of pavement, storm water treatment, perimeter landscaping, and improved lighting in the parking lot on the north side of E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. across from Building A. A parking lane will be removed on Second Street to provide better pedestrian crossing at 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. E. and to improve visibility for vehicles (including ambulances) leaving the new facility. Their landscaping plan is sufficient, but staff is recommending a condition that additional landscaping be provided along E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. A noise screening analysis and an analysis of rotor wash (wind generated by the helicopter) is included in the staff report. Staff recommends approval with the conditions listed in the staff report. Chair Schraepfer asks how close the proposed helipad is to the existing helipad. Per Deming, it's approximately 1/2 a block away. Tim Meyer asks if any comments were received from the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) regarding their review of the site. Per Deming, the applicant will provide written documentation stating FAA approval. Zandra Zwiebel likes the bump-outs on E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St. for pedestrians. She questions if there will be a cross walk over 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue. If not, it should be considered. Per Deming, one of the conditions states the applicant must provide pedestrian access from the parking facility to the public sidewalk. Luke Sydow notes the lack of landscaping in the parking lot on the north side of E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St.

Why isn't it required? Deming states the gravel parking lot was permitted as temporary and the applicant may want to build something there in the future. They don't want to install improvements which will need to be removed later if they add a building. Staff feels this level of improvement will take care of environmental concerns related to sediment runoff. Sydow would like to see more landscaping.

**Applicant:** Mike Boeselager of St. Luke's Hospital, addressed the commission. They have worked with the City and are sensitive to their neighbors' concerns. They intend to address the parking lot concerns once the overall campus layout has been determined. Margie Nelson asks if they expect more helicopter traffic. Boeselager states they have seen a slight increase, but nothing significant. Chair Schraepfer asks about the location of the helipad. Per Boeselager, moving it closer to the new Emergency Department is more efficient. Chair Schraepfer notes the noise level of 100 decibels, and the fact it will now effect 100 neighbors, as opposed to 36 neighbors effected by the current helipad. Per Boeselager, they provided a noise analysis, which shows it within noise limits.

**Public:** Thomas Door, 1208 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., addressed the commission. He is a tenant and is concerned about noise levels and the elevation of the helipad and the nearness it is to grade. He thinks it would be better if it was located higher. Alexis Elder, 1208 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., addressed the commission. She has lived there since 2016, and is also a renter. She wants to know why tenants/renters aren't notified. She wants to know if helicopters will be landing at night, and feels it might be disruptive, even at only 15-minute intervals. She thinks it may effect her general quality of life. She also thinks a higher elevated location of the pad would be better. Penelope Gooch, 1210 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., addressed the commission. She is a 30-year resident, and notes the upper side of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street is all residential. She thinks many residents are renters who did not receive notification. She is concerned about the impact of a helicopter pad so near. She spoke with an expert who thinks the noise will be amplified at lower elevation levels. She is also concerned about property values. Over 100 decibels at random times could pose negative physical and psychological effects. Bob Gibbons, 1002-1006 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., addressed the commission. He owns an apartment building nearby, and is concerned with noise levels from ambulances and helicopters. He is also concerned about the parking lot, will it effect where his tenants park and access their units. Sydow welcomes the applicant to address the elevation. Can the helipad be closer located inside the campus? Boeselager will let his technical experts explain. He explained there was notice sent to neighbors along with a companion letter. He estimates there are 100 helicopter landings annually. Noise study found impact level was equivalent to a lawn mower. The helistop will have markings identifying two landing spots so that one would be used as a back-up in an emergency situation. Dan Hinzman of SEH addressed the commission. The height of the helipad above 2<sup>nd</sup> St. is less than the current helipad's height above 1<sup>st</sup> St., but the overall elevation is very similar. The data is intended to be conservative. The noise levels from a helicopter become progressively louder. It is not an immediate shocking noise. Zwiebel asks if moving the helipad location is feasible. Hinzman stated safety and regulations dictate the location. They are not able to be shift the location towards 1<sup>st</sup> St. due to the angle of the flight path. They will be receiving formal approval from FAA shortly. He confirms the elevation will not change. Janet Kennedy noted the two helipads. Hinzman stated the helicopters will land on the red area and slowly move toward the circle area. Kennedy asked if that is standard. Hinzman stated helicopter operators approve of this set up, which allows for a back-up space for safety. Gary Eckenberg noted the helipad location. Is the flight pattern up from the lake, and will it continue the same flight path? Hinzman affirmed both and referred to the flight pattern found in the staff report packet. Chair Schraepfer is concerned about the plan. They are moving a nuisance to the edge of their property, which effects surrounding housing. Long-range plan of

continual growth. Is this the best fit? Kennedy expressed there should be more thought given to this plan. Meyer stated new aircraft production is moving towards being more quiet. Moving the pad 1/2 a block doesn't seem out of line, and the neighbors are somewhat already use to it. Moving forward they are including residential areas in their expansion. This is a phased development. This location is a good fit, but they will continue to evaluate. Kennedy asked about community involvement. The applicant mentioned previously that the mayor and council have been included in the planning, but she feels it is also important to include the community. Chair Schraepfer noted he owns property in the notice area. He received his letter from St. Luke's on Friday before the Planning Commission, and he didn't let his tenants know. He is concerned that most renters probably weren't informed.

**Commissioners:** Sydow would like them to meet all UDC landscaping requirements in the parking lot on the north side of E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St.

**MOTION/Second:** Meyer/Crawford approved as per staff's recommendations with added condition that the applicant meet all UDC landscaping requirement in the parking lot on the north side of E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St.

**VOTE: (7-2, Kennedy and Schraepfer Opposed)**

2. PL 18-161 Minor Subdivision to consolidate five platted lots into two parcels at 237 Fairmont St. by Jon A. Helstrom

**Staff:** Kyle Deming introduced the applicant's proposal for a minor subdivision to reconfigure Lots 1-5 and vacated Elon Ave. into two parcels with Tracts A and B being one parcel and Tract C the other parcel. This is in preparation for sale of Tract C (which contains a dwelling). Staff recommended approval with the conditions listed in the staff report. Zwiebel asked why this is not considered a flag lot. Deming refers to item 3 in the staff report, which explains the 50 foot wide frontage is more than 25% of the lot width at the back of the lot (150 feet).

**Applicant:** Jon Helstrom addressed the commission, and invited questions. There are none.

**Public:** No speakers.

**Commissioners:** N/A

**MOTION/Second:** Zwiebel/Eckenberg approved as per staff's recommendations.

**VOTE: (9-0)**

3. PL 18-157 Variance from Front and Side Yard Setbacks in a Residential-Traditional (R-1) District at 1003 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street by Molly Wick

**Staff:** Mollie Hinderaker introduces the applicant's proposal for a variance from the front yard and side setbacks on the lot to construct a replacement porch. Approximately 152 square feet of the structure will be in the front yard setback from the East 5<sup>th</sup> Street easement. This porch will reduce the front yard setback from 25 feet to 17 feet and the side yard setback from 6 feet on either side to 4 feet on the west side and 3.5 feet on the east side. The unique size of the lot poses a practical difficulty when replacing the existing, water-damaged porch with any new structure. Staff recommends approval with the conditions listed in the staff report. Kennedy comments on the neighbor letter in their packet which states he is not against the variance as long as it doesn't extend into this property. Hinderaker confirms the neighbor who commented lives to the east of the property. Zwiebel thinks the addition of the porch fits the neighborhood.

**Applicant:** N/A

**Public:** No speakers.

**Commissioners:** N/A

**MOTION/Second:** Nelson/Crawford approved as per staff's recommendations.

**VOTE: (9-0)**

4. PL 18-159 Vacation of Public Right of Way and Retention of Utility Easement For a Portion of Ramsey Street Near 4920 Recycle Way by the City of Duluth  
**Staff:** John Kelley introduces the city's proposal for a vacation of a portion of the platted right-of-way of Recycle Way. The portion of street subject to this application is used as an entrance to private property and will improve operation and security of the property. Staff recommends approval without conditions.

**Applicant:** N/A

**Public:** Mike Casey (friends of Duluth's park and trails) addresses the commission. They are in support, and this vacation of right of way will allow for the cross city trail to be constructed and will get trail users into Irving Park, which is a huge connection. This is segment 2.

**Commissioners:** Kennedy thanks Casey and the neighbors for their hard work on the cross city trail and this will make west Duluth more sustainable.

**MOTION/Second:** Kennedy/Wisdorf recommend approval as per staff's recommendations.

**VOTE: (9-0)**

#### Communications

5. Manager's Report – Adam Fulton gives an overview. There is a lot going on the medical district. The public hearing for the Essentia EAW will be forthcoming in February. St. Lukes is in a phased approach, where Essentia is all at once. Cold Front event is going forward this winter on February 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Duluth flag project is under way. It will be rolled out officially in January. Super meeting of planning commission, parks and HPC to discuss the Mississippi Lake Superior railroad project is in the works. The discussion will include what the game plan is to put it back into productive use. There will be an EPA report on mud lake, which they don't expect until after February. There will be a text amendment for accessory uses in business parks. This will allow daycare use. Future brown bag discussions will include talks with St. Lukes and the MU-I district.
6. Reports of Officers and Committees  
-Heritage Preservation Commission – Zwiebel states they are looking at their work plan going forward. There is one seat open on the commission, which they hope will be filled in March.

#### Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

Respectfully,



Adam Fulton - Manager  
Community Planning