

City of Duluth Planning Commission

September 10th, 2024 – City Hall Council Chambers
Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

President Gary Eckenberg called to order the meeting of the city of Duluth Planning Commission at 5:02 p.m. on Tuesday, September 10th, 2024, in the Duluth city hall council chambers.

Roll Call

Attendance:

Members Present: Chris Adatte, Gary Eckenberg, Brian Hammond, Jason Hollinday, Margie Nelson, Dave Sarvela, and Andrea Wedul

Members Absent: Jason Crawford and Danielle Rhodes

Staff Present: Amanda Mangan, Chris Lee, Jason Mozol, Jenn Moses, Ariana Dahlen, Natalie Lavenstein, and Sam Smith

Approval of Planning Commission Minutes

Planning Commission Special Meeting – August 12th, 2024 –

MOTION/Second: Nelson/Hollinday approved

VOTE: (6-0)

Planning Commission Meeting – August 20th, 2024 –

MOTION/Second: Sarvela/Wedul approved

VOTE: (6-0)

Planning Commission Special Meeting – August 26th, 2024 –

President Eckenberg requested that a correction be made to the attendance section of the minutes. The minutes state the Brian Hammond was both present and absent for this meeting, but he was absent. Staff noted this correction and assured commissioners that the change would be made.

MOTION/Second: Hollinday/Nelson approved

VOTE: (6-0)

Public Comment on Items Not on Agenda

No comments.

(Item PLSUB-2407-0004 was removed from the consent agenda to be voted on separately.)

Consent Agenda

PLIUP-2406-0003 Interim Use Permit Renewal at 728 South Lake Avenue by Kay Baker

~~PLSUB-2407-0004 Minor Subdivision at 4918 Peabody Street by Daniel Howe~~

PLVAC-2407-0004 Drainage and Utility Easement Vacation in the Kayak Bay Plat by Spirit Valley Land Company

PLVAR-2406-0001 Variance from Front Yard Setback for Steps and Porch at 501 North 57th Avenue West by Jesus is Life Church

PLVAR-2408-0004 Variance from Front Yard Setback for Accessory Structure at 1225 West 1st Street by Andrew Matson

PLSUP-2408-0003 Special Use Permit for Fill in a Floodplain at 100 North Central Avenue by Sofidel America

PLVAR-2408-0005 Shoreland Variance for a Fence at 100 North Central Avenue by Sofidel America

Public: No speakers.

MOTION/Second: Sarvela/Wedul approve the consent agenda items as per staff recommendation.

VOTE: (6-0)
(Adatte arrived at 5:13 p.m.)

Public Hearings

PLSUB-2407-0004 Minor Subdivision at 4918 Peabody Street by Daniel Howe

Commissioners: Commissioner Wedul had asked staff for their interpretation of the side yard setbacks specifically relating to the garage on the project property's survey. She was concerned about the subdivision potentially creating any non-conformities.

Staff: Chris Lee addressed the commission. He explained that the side yard and rear yard setbacks relating to the garage on the survey conform with the zoning code regulations for accessory structures.

Commissioners: Wedul thanked staff and explained that she wanted to make sure it didn't qualify as a principal structure.

Public: No speakers

Motion/second: Nelson/Hammond approve as per staff recommendation

Vote: (7-0)

PLEAW-2408-0001 Public Hearing to Receive Public Comment for Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) Document for Sofidel America

Staff: Jason Mozol addressed the commission. The Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) is required for the proposed paper plant expansion. The applicant is proposing to expand roughly 580,000 sq ft. At the last regular planning commission meeting, the commissioners accepted the EAW document for distribution to any agencies as well as the public. The comment period runs until September 26th. The comments will be reviewed by staff and substantive comments will receive responses. It's expected that the document and comments

for planning commission review will be brought to the October 8th planning commission meeting, where a final determination will be made.

Tonight is an opportunity for the public to give any comments. Any verbal comments given will be transcribed. Anyone who has any comments or additional information in writing that they would like to share is invited to leave them with staff to be added to the record. Mozol also stated that he brought business cards with him for anyone who would like to submit comments via email.

Public: David Schimpf, 1125 Brainerd Ave – Schimpf addressed the commission. He expressed concerns with the estimated of off-site greenhouse gas emissions found on page 50 of the EAW, table 18-2. The document instructs readers to consult appendix G to understand how the estimate was calculated. Schimpf stated that the values of greenhouse gas estimates on these two pages are different, and he believes they need to be brought into agreement, so the information is consistent.

Schimpf also noted the information on table 20-5, which projects an increase of heavy-duty and medium-duty truck traffic of 73%. On page 54, the EAW states the proposed increase in traffic will not exceed MNDOT threshold that would trigger a traffic impact study. He said that according to the MNDOT manual, the threshold number for vehicle trips may be reduced if the vehicle composition consists of a high percentage of heavy vehicles.

The EAW projects an increase of 465 trucks per month, and Schimpf believes that MNDOT should be consulted as to whether that projected increase is enough to reduce the threshold number.

Schimpf expressed confusion regarding information he found on page 54, which states that almost all truck transits will be Monday through Friday. However, in appendix G, the language states that the daily truck averages are based on 7 days week. He hopes to see more consistency within this document going forward.

Other Business

No other business.

Communications

Land Use Supervisor (LUS) Report – Jenn Moses addressed the commission. She is stepping into the roles of the Lan Use Supervisor as well as acting manager for the planning department. She thanked Chris Lee and Jason Mozol for the extra work they've been doing on the land use and zoning side of things during the interim. Moses also introduced Natalie Lavenstein, who is a new planner on the staff team.

Moses informed the commissioners of another staff change. Tricia Hobbs is serving as a 2nd provisional manager for the department, and she will be overseeing the operations in the economic development and housing side of planning. Ben Van Tassel is the acting interim director of planning until a new director is hired.

Moses also proposed that the November planning commission meeting be moved to Wednesday, November 6th due to scheduling conflicts with the City Council and the upcoming presidential election. Commissioners determined that there would be enough people attending for a quorum to be made, so the November Commission meeting will be held on November 6th.

Heritage Preservation Commission Report – No report.

Joint Airport Zoning Board – No report. This item will be removed from the agenda going forward.

Duluth Midway Joint Powers Zoning Board – No report.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

Respectfully,

Jenn Moses, Manager
Planning & Economic Development