

Minutes
of the
NORTH MANKATO PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
North Mankato, Minnesota
December 12, 2019

A regular meeting of the North Mankato Planning Commission was held at 7 p.m., December 12, 2019, in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

Planning Commission Members present: Chair Stephanie Stoffel, Corey Brunton, Jason Beal, Randy King and Nick Meyer. Staff members present: Council Liaison Sandra Oachs, City Attorney Chris Kennedy, and Community Development Director Mike Fischer.

A motion was made by Commissioner Meyer, seconded by Commissioner King, to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2019, regular meeting of the North Mankato Planning Commission. Vote on the motion: all ayes, 0 nays; motion carried.

Burnett's Ravine Ridge No. 6 Preliminary and Final Plat

Staff presented a request from Burnett Farms, Inc. to plat 2.38 acres of land which is being annexed into the City limits located along the west side of Raymond Drive. The plat known as Burnett's Ravine Ridge No. 6 consists of eight lots for future single-family residential development. As all proposed lots exceed the minimum lot size requirements and individual water/sewer services have already been made available to accommodate future residential development, staff recommended approval of the preliminary and final plat, pending successful annexation of the property into City limits. It was moved by Commissioner Brunton, seconded by Commissioner King, to approve the preliminary and final plat of Burnett's Ravine Ridge No. 6. Vote on the motion: all ayes, 0 nays; motion carried.

Z-2-19, A Request to Zone Burnett's Ravine Ridge No. 6 as R-1, One-Family Dwelling

Staff presented a request from Burnett Farms, Inc. to zone Burnett's Ravine Ridge No. 6 as R-1, One-Family Dwelling. Staff indicated as the property is being annexed into the City limits, it is necessary to provide a zoning classification based on the intended use of the property. Staff noted that all proposed lots exceed the minimum lot size requirements for R-1 zoning districts. Additionally, the R-1 zoning request is consistent with the Future Land Use Map and consistent with existing area zoning. It was moved by Commissioner King, seconded by Commissioner Beal, to approve Z-2-19. Vote on the motion: all ayes, 0 nays; motion carried.

Northport No. 21, Preliminary and Final Plat

Staff presented a request from the North Mankato Port Authority to replat Outlot A, Northport No. 19 and part of Section 3. Staff indicated that the Port Authority has recently purchased land in Section 3 to be combined with land with it currently owns to be platted as Northport No. 21. The proposed plat consists of 2 lots with access from Howard Drive West. Lot 1 would be sold to D&K Powder Coating for construction of an additional building and Lot 2 would be marketed for future industrial development. Chair Stoffel requested clarification of the land currently owned by the Port Authority and land recently purchased. It was moved by Commissioner Meyer, seconded by Commissioner Beal, to approve the preliminary and final plat of Northport No. 21. Vote on the motion: all ayes, 0 nays; motion carried.

Off-Street Parking Amendments

Staff summarized the previous discussions about off-street parking amendments by the Planning Commission and summarized proposed amendments to Section 156.035 (FF) regarding the off-street parking of campers, trailers, boats, and recreational vehicles in residential districts. Bess Tsaouse, 136 Mary Circle, raised concerns about enforcing the amendments. Barb Church, 102 Wheeler Avenue questioned the newspaper notification for Planning Commission meetings, as well as the justification for specific language in the amendments relating to the storage of vehicles and the language limiting the number of vehicles to 2. Planning Commission members discussed citizens' concerns, clarifying several points of language within the amendments. The Planning Commission discussed the language in the amendment which specifies that vehicles, campers, boats and trailers stored on residential property must be licensed and registered to the property owner or tenant and the storage of material within them. It was moved by Commissioner Brunton, seconded by Commissioner King, to recommend approval of the proposed amendments subject to a revision of (3) whereby automobiles, trailers, campers, boat and recreational vehicles do not need be licensed and registered to the property owner or tenant. Vote on the motion: all ayes, 0 nays; motion carried.

Amendments to City Code Chapter 90: Grass and Weed Control

Staff presented proposed amendments to City Code Chapter 90, Management of Public and Private Property, which would allow property owners to create habitat for pollinators which exceeds 6 inches in height. Staff explained that this model is used by another Minnesota City and allows all residential and commercial property owners the ability to create pollinator habitat subject to size and setback requirements. Staff summarized the application process required for larger pollinator habitats. After a brief discussion of the proposal, the subject was opened for public discussion:

Barb Church, 102 Wheeler Avenue, commented that the City should not be involved with the planting of vegetation on private property and health and safety issues should be considered. She requested that the Planning Commission table the request.

Stephanie Jaquette, 509 Wheeler Avenue, expressed concerns for private property rights, questioned why only one other City policy was considered, believed the process would discourage homeowners from planting natural lawn areas, referenced State orders for pollinator habitat and requested that the Planning Commission table the issue.

Bess Tsaouse, 136 Mary Circle, stated the policy was restrictive, believed the definitions need to be expanded and provided the Planning Commission with documentation from the State encouraging natural lawn areas.

Mara Natrakul, 59254 230th Street, Mankato, urged the Planning Commission to clarify definitions and specify types of plants allowed and referenced State grants available for the creation of pollinator habitats. Additionally, she felt that the process to discouraging to those who want to plant pollinator habitats.

Tom Hagan, 927 Lake Street, commented about a prior lawn complaint on Allan Avenue, the treatment of elderly persons, urged citizens of North Mankato to be better neighbors and believed more education of the subject is needed.

Diane Anderson, 225 Allan Avenue, spoke about a nuisance property on Allan Avenue that decreases property values and that people could move out of City limits if they want more greenery and less regulations.

Tracy Mcquown, 200 West Lind Street, asked questions about specific plants and how the policy would be enforced. She provided an example where she worked with City staff to make changes to her vegetation based on traffic visibility.

Kay Helms, 1025 East Mulberry Street urged the Planning Commission to recognize the difference between an un-kept lawn and pollinator habitat. She also brought up that most turf grass is not native and therefore is difficult to maintain.

Following public comments and questions, the Planning Commission held considerable discussion regarding the proposed amendments and many of the concerns raised by the public. Discussions included the need to regulate pollinator habitats, balancing the rights of all property owners, safety concerns, needing more information including more definitions and that the proposed amendments allow pollinator gardens which are currently not permitted. It was moved by Commissioner Beal, seconded by Commissioner King, to table the amendment. Vote on the motion: Meyer, King, Beal, and Stoffel aye, Brunton nay. Motion carried. Following the motion, Chair Stoffel directed Staff to obtain more information and present more options for further discussion at a later date.

Other Business

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Meyer, seconded by Commissioner Brunton, to adjourn. Vote on the motion: all ayes, 0 nays; motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

