

**CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
ST. FRANCIS, MN
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
DECEMBER 20, 2023**

1. **Call to Order:** The Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chairwoman Fairbanks

2. **Roll Call:** Present were Dean Becker, Liz Fairbanks, Gail Genin, Deborah Humann, Dustin Hingos, Dustin Pavek, and Danial White. Absent: None.

Others in attendance: Kate Thunstrom, Community Development Director; Beth Richmond, City Planner; and, Kevin Robinson, City Council.

3. **Adopt Agenda:** Motion by Pavek, second by Hingos to approve the agenda. Motion carried 7-0.

4. **Approve Minutes:** Motion by Genin, second by Becker to approve the September 20, 2023 minutes. Motion carried 7-0.

5. **Public Comment:** None

6. **Public Hearing:**

a. Educational Facility Zoning Ordinance Amendment

Richmond reviewed the Staff packet in regard to the educational facility zoning ordinance amendment. She shared that this is a request from the School District to allow educational facilities in the B-1 Business District.

Public Hearing opened at 7:09 p.m.

Chris Lindquist, 4115 Ambassador Boulevard NW, an employee of the School District came forward and shared that this has been something they have been working on for a while. He noted that they did not foresee the changes in the legislation that came about that changed the age of the young adults in this program from 21 to 22. He said that they have a space crunch with their current space. He added that this building is not their perfect location; however, they need space to support this program.

The Commission asked if the School District and the City owned this building together in the past. Richmond explained it was a variety of School Districts that co-owned the building together. Mr. Lindquist gave the background on the building and shared that it was built for use as a school building.

The Commission asked about parking for the facility. Richmond shared that if this is something that the City is supportive of then this would go through the interim use permit process and this would be discussed later. She noted that this parking lot does need to be updated.

The Commission asked how long they anticipate staying in this building. Mr. Lindquist stated it would likely be more than ten years.

The Commission asked about the interim requirements from the City. Richmond explained that there would need to be a clear end but this can be set as part of the permitting process.

The Commission asked about anticipated enrollment for the following year. Mr. Lindquist stated they were looking at enrollment in the upper 20s, low 30s.

Amy Balabon, 23318 Salish Street, came forward and asked what another school building on Bridge Street would do for the traffic in the morning and afternoon. She shared she is a parent who has a child in the Middle and the High School and traffic is very bad in the morning and afternoon. She asked if the students at this facility would have the same drop-off and pick-up time as the other students.

Deb Parson, 4115 Ambassador Boulevard, came forward and shared that this building would not be adding any additional traffic.

The Commission asked if the students are picked up at their homes or at the school. Ms. Parson said at their homes.

Public Hearing closed at 7:22 p.m.

The Commission discussed that they do not see this as the future for Bridge Street; however, they acknowledge that this program needs the space. They asked if there has been any other interest in this property. Richmond explained that this property does not receive much interest. She noted there was a church earlier in the year that was considering the property.

The Commission asked what would happen if the School District is allowed to use the building and then there is commercial interest in the building. Richmond explained that the interim use permit would be good for as long as the permit allows. She said the City would not be able to kick them out of using the building because there is interest.

The Commission discussed that not a lot has been going into this area of Bridge Street and it would be a good addition since this building has sat vacant for so long and there is plenty of other room for commercial development.

Chairwoman Fairbanks shared she is not against them; however, she did have concerns. She stated that Bridge Street is not pedestrian-friendly and if this does move forward they will need to push the County on getting some pedestrian crossings. She shared concerns with parking and safety. She noted that this seems to be a great temporary solution, but not long-term. She added that she is also concerned that School Districts do not always spend money properly.

Motion by Fairbanks, second by Becker to recommend approval of the amendment and allow educational facilities in B-1 district as an interim use. This would give the City the opportunity to review each proposed educational facility and set parameters for how long the facility would be able to operate within the B-1 district. The interim use designation would allow educational facilities as a temporary use while preserving the land for commercial uses in the future. Motion passed 6-0.

b. 2023 Code Revisions

Richmond reviewed the staff packet concerning the 2023 code revisions.

The Commission discussed how the change to allowing living on Sacred Settlements could promote cult activity. Richmond explained that this is to provide additional housing opportunities to the homeless, previously homeless, or extremely low income.

The Commission noted that there have been areas who have had success with this kind of living.

Robinson asked if the housing on Sacred Settlements will be mobile. Richmond explained there are very specific definitions for exactly what this will look like in the State statute.

Richmond acknowledged that there are many questions concerning the Sacred Settlements and that the City does not have any leeway to change or add any regulations. She shared that the property would require access to water and electricity. She reviewed the other requirements in the statute.

Robinson asked if a church has owned a property for a while and they have not built anything on it and the primary structure was not there if they would be able to build this type of housing on the land. Richmond stated it would have to be contiguous with the primary structure in order to build the housing.

The Commission asked why this was being brought forward to them if they do not have a say in it due to State legislation. Richmond explained that cities are updating their codes to reflect this change.

Richmond reviewed the types of units that will be allowed for this change. She noted these homes will still be held to the same nuisance code as the rest of the City.

The Commission discussed the septic setbacks and asked if anything has changed with this. Richmond explained that this has been proposed to be added to the code because it is a step that Staff does during their review that is not notated anywhere in code that there is a septic setback.

Public Hearing opened at 7:53 p.m.

No one came forward to address the Commission.

Public Hearing closed at 7:53 p.m.

The Commission asked why they are excluding the Planning and Zoning Commission from zoning approval extensions. Richmond explained this is being removed as they are not all being brought to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Commission only meets when there is an application to be reviewed and the Council meets twice a month. She noted that the Planning and Zoning Commission would need to meet more often if they were going to be doing extension approvals. She added that they often do not get a lot of lead time for these requests.

Motion by Hingos, second by Humann to recommend approval of the revisions of the City's Zoning Code with conditions and findings of fact as recommended by Staff.
Motion passed 6-0.

7. **Regular Business Items** – None

8. **Planning Commission Discussion**

Chairwoman Fairbanks shared that she will be stepping down as Chairwoman of the Commission.

Richmond shared that they will be appointing a new Chairperson at the beginning of the next meeting.

9. **Adjournment:**

Motion by Becker, second by Humann to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed 6-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Website Link to Packets and Minutes for the Planning Commission:

<https://www.stfrancismn.org/meetings>

Recorded by: Kate Thunstrom

DATE APPROVED: