



Approved: August 9, 2023

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
PLANNING COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 2023
6:30 P.M. - ARDEN HILLS CITY HALL**

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, Chair Paul Vijums called to order the regular Planning Commission meeting at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present were: Chair Paul Vijums, Commissioners Brad Bjorklund, Shelley Blilie, Joshua Collins, Arlene Mitchell, Kurtis Weber, and Jonathan Wicklund.

Absent: None.

Also present were: Community Development Director Jessica Jagoe, Senior Planner Elena Fransen and Councilmember Emily Rousseau.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – JUNE 7, 2023

Commissioner Blilie moved, seconded by Commissioner Wicklund, to approve the June 7, 2023, agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

May 3, 2023 – Planning Commission Regular Meeting

Commissioner Blilie moved, seconded by Commissioner Weber, to approve the May 3, 2023, Planning Commission Regular Meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

PLANNING CASES

- A. Planning Case 23-010; 4001 Lexington Avenue North – Site Plan Review – *Public Hearing Not Required***

Community Development Director Jagoe stated the Applicant has submitted a land use application for a Site Plan Review, seeking flexibility on the number and size of freestanding monument signs allowed for the Subject Property. New Horizon Academy is located within

Building C on the Land O’Lakes corporate campus. The campus consists of 47 acres that is developed with three buildings and two parking lots. The Subject Property has road frontage along County Road F West and Lexington Avenue. As part of the headquarter campus expansion in 2018, Land O’Lakes began partnering with New Horizon Academy to provide onsite childcare to their employees. Since 2020, New Horizon Academy has seen a decline in enrollment with many campus employees continuing to work full-time from home. As a result, the two parties have agreed to allow for open enrollment of childcare services to non-employees.

Community Development Director Jagoe reported the Applicant is seeking flexibility to install an additional single-tenant freestanding sign along Lexington Avenue in order to advertise their childcare facility to the community. As part of this application, the existing monument sign along County Road F will be refaced to include the New Horizon Academy name and updated Land O’Lakes logo. No other changes are proposed to existing signage that was approved in 2018 as part of the Master Sign Plan.

Community Development Director Jagoe reviewed the site data, surrounding area, the Plan Evaluation and provided the Findings of Fact for review:

1. The Subject Property is located in the I-1 Zoning District and is guided as Light Industrial and Office in the Land Use Plan.
2. In Sign District 6, one additional freestanding sign is permitted up to 22.5 square feet in area and 12 feet in height for properties that front more than one public street.
3. In 2018, the Subject Property was approved a sign standard adjustment for the permitted size of the freestanding monument and auxiliary signs as part of a Master Sign Plan through the Site Plan Review process.
4. The Applicant has submitted an application for Site Plan Review to allow a third freestanding sign for the Subject Property which would be the second freestanding sign located along the east property line adjacent to Lexington Avenue.
5. Sign Standard Adjustments to the requirements and standards for the height, number, type, lighting, area, and/or location of a sign or signs established by this Chapter may be approved with a Site Plan Review or a Planned Unit Development process as described for in Section 1320 and 1355 of the Zoning Code.
6. Flexibility through the Site Plan Review process has been requested for the number and size of freestanding signs allowed on the Subject Property.
7. The proposed additional freestanding monument sign would be consistent with the size and design of the existing signage approved as part of the Master Sign Plan for the Subject Property.
8. The proposed signage plan does not conflict with the general purpose and intent of the I-1 Zoning District or the Comprehensive Development Plan for the City.
9. The application is not anticipated to create a negative impact on the immediate area or the community as a whole.
10. The proposed plan will not produce any permanent noise, odors, vibration, smoke, dust, air pollution, heat, liquid, or solid waste, and other nuisance characteristics.
11. A public hearing is not required for Site Plan Review.

Community Development Director Jagoe reviewed the options available to the Planning Commission for Planning Case 23-010 for Site Plan Review of a sign standard adjustment at 4001 Lexington Avenue N.:

1. Recommend Approval with Conditions
 - 1) That the project shall be completed in accordance with the plans submitted. Any significant changes to these plans, as determined by the Community Development Director, shall require review and approval by the Planning Commission and City Council.
 - 2) A separate sign permit shall be required for all proposed signage.
 - 3) All signage shall meet all other requirements of Sign District 6.
 - 4) All freestanding signs shall be externally illuminated in accordance with the Master Sign Plan.
 - 5) Prior to issuance of a sign permit for the New Horizon Academy freestanding monument sign, the Applicant shall stake the location of the proposed new sign adjacent to Lexington Avenue. Planning staff shall approve the location meets the minimum setback of 5 feet from any property line prior to installation.
2. Recommend Approval as Submitted
3. Recommend Denial
4. Table

Chair Vijums opened the floor to Commissioner comments.

Commissioner Weber asked if the sign would be located in Ramsey County right of way.

Community Development Director Jagoe stated the sign would not be within the Ramsey County right of way and the sign code requires a five foot setback as measured from the property line for freestanding signs.

Commissioner Weber questioned why this sign was located between County Road F and the eastern entrance. He suggested the sign be placed at the south side of the eastern entrance.

Community Development Director Jagoe reported the sign designer was in attendance and could address this comment.

Craig Heitzmann, Electro Signs, explained the proposed sign location provided the greatest visibility for traffic going north on Lexington Avenue and did not crowd the existing sign. He reported other sign locations were considered but would require the removal of trees and this was not allowed per City Code.

Marcia Droege, Land O'Lakes representative, indicated she has had long discussions about the size and location of the sign. She reported if the sign were larger a second adjustment would be required. She stated the current monument sign was lower than the New Horizon sign, which would create good visibility for both north and southbound traffic traveling along Lexington Avenue.

Chair Vijums asked how far apart the two monument signs would be.

Community Development Director Jagoe stated the two monument signs would be 244 feet apart.

Commissioner Weber questioned if any other items had to be considered given the fact a second use would be added to the Land O'Lakes campus.

Community Development Director Jagoe explained a child care facility was a permitted use for this zoning district. She commented she did not see any conflict with the Master PUD or land use.

Commissioner Bjorklund questioned why this could not be counted as a third sign.

Community Development Director Jagoe reported under the Master PUD only two monument signs were allowed, along with four auxiliary signs. She indicated there was no way to approve a third monument sign administratively.

Commissioner Mitchell stated she supported the proposed site plan review.

Chair Vijums inquired if this sign would be externally illuminated.

Community Development Director Jagoe indicated the 2018 approval allowed the applicant to have externally illuminated signs. She noted as proposed, the monument sign would be non-illuminated.

Chair Vijums commented he was not opposed to the sign, but he feared the visibility would be difficult at the proposed location.

Commissioner Wicklund moved and Commissioner Weber seconded a motion to recommend approval of Planning Case 23-010 for a Site Plan Review at 4001 Lexington Avenue North based on the findings of fact and the submitted plans, as amended by the conditions in the June 7, 2023, report to the Planning Commission. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).

B. Planning Case 23-011; Zoning Code Amendment to Chapter 13 to TCAAP Redevelopment Code in The Campus Commercial Zoning District – *Public Hearing*

Community Development Director Jagoe stated in November 2012, the City Council approved a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with Ramsey County which establishes a partnership between the City of Arden Hills and Ramsey County with the goal of the remediation and redevelopment of the 427-acre Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant (TCAAP) site. Under the JPA, the City and County created a Joint Development Authority (JDA) that is the joint governing entity of the TCAAP site as allowed by the Joint Powers Act and MN State Laws. The JDA is the authority responsible for, but not limited to, environmental remediation, elimination of blight, infrastructure construction and financing, comprehensive planning and zoning, and economic development and redevelopment. The JDA Board is comprised of two County Commissioners, two City Councilmembers, and an additional non-elected City appointee as the Chair. Key points of the JPA are as follows:

- The County will purchase the site from the U.S. Government and will work with Bolander and Sons to remediate the site to a residential standard including the demolition of remaining buildings. – Completed
- The City will prepare an AUAR and Master Plan. The Master Plan will be approved by both the City and the County and will be implemented by the JDA. – Completed
- The City and County are responsible for installing their respective public infrastructure as outlined by the JPA. TBD

Community Development Director Jagoe reported between 2013 – 2016, the City facilitated the process of developing the Master Plan for the TCAAP site, which as noted above was the responsibility of the City under the JPA. Planning elements of the Master Plan included defining the public engagement process, land use, circulation and movement, utilities, environmental remediation, parks and open space, implementation plan, and a regulatory plan. In 2016, the City adopted the TRC, Section 1380 of the zoning code which includes the regulating plan, land use table, design standards, and other regulations related to land development that are specific to the TCAAP site. The proposed 427-acre redevelopment referred to as Rice Creek Commons will include:

- Retail, office and light industrial development
- A town center
- Well-defined neighborhoods with architectural diversity
- A wide variety of housing options to serve young professionals, empty nesters, and seniors
- Abundant parks and open space
- Trails that provide for convenient and safe pedestrian access to commercial areas and other site amenities

Community Development Director Jagoe stated in addition, this document also includes a development flowchart that outlines the approval processes for future land development of TCAAP that follows the terms as outlined in the JPA. Future development proposals for TCAAP conforming with the TRC (or within the flexibilities permitted) would fall under the purview and review of the JDA. As noted on the chart below, the City maintains the responsibility for processing TRC Amendments (also elements not meeting allowed flexibilities). The JPA identifies two classifications of an Amendment to the TCAAP Master Plan: 1) Major Amendment or 2) Minor Amendment. A minor amendment does not involve an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan and is a change within a Development Site (i.e. TRC Zoning Districts) deemed desirable by the JDA to implement the Development. The JDA shall recommend such minor amendments to the City and County, and if approved by both parties, the TCAAP Master Plan shall be modified consistent with the approved amendment. A TRC Amendment would follow the City's standard procedures for processing a land use application with a recommendation of the Planning Commission and City Council decision. As part of a TRC Amendment, the City will request confirmation of approval by Ramsey County.

Community Development Director Jagoe explained at their May 1, 2023 work session, the JDA discussed the Campus Commercial Zoning District and indicated support for the City to proceed with consideration for expanding the allowed uses in this zoning district.

Community Development Director Jagoe reviewed the Campus Commercial Zoning District Background, commented on the Zoning Code Text Amendments and provided the Findings of Fact for review:

1. The City of Arden Hills is proposing to amend ordinance language to allow for commercial land uses outlined in the TRC land use chart as permitted or accessory uses within the Campus Commercial Zoning District.
2. The proposed ordinance will include amendments to the language of Chapter 13 – Zoning Code, Section 1380 – TCAAP Redevelopment Code, Subsection 5 – Schedule of Permitted Uses of the City Code.
3. The proposed amendment advances the purpose and intent goals in the City’s TCAAP Redevelopment Code by broadening the commercial land uses allowed in the Campus Commercial Zoning District.
4. The proposed amendment is consistent with the Campus Commercial future land use classification in the City’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan.
5. Amendments to the Zoning Code regulations require a public hearing prior to action by the City Council.
6. If the zoning amendments were approved, an Applicant would be required to submit a land use application that would be subject to the formal review process.

Community Development Director Jagoe reviewed the options available to the Planning Commission for Planning Case 23-011 for a Zoning Code Amendment to Chapter 13, Section 1380 – TCAAP Redevelopment Code, Subsection 5 – Schedule of Permitted Uses of the Arden Hills City Code to add permitted and accessory uses in the Campus Commercial Zoning District:

1. Recommend Approval
2. Recommend Approval as Amended
3. Recommend Denial
4. Table

Chair Vijums opened the floor to Commissioner comments.

Commissioner Bjorklund thanked staff for the detailed presentation. He believed the recommendations of the JDA were wonderful. He was pleased the JDA was beginning to move on this project. He stated he appreciated the proposed flexibility that would allow for big box retail. He asked if the thumb property already had water and sewer lines.

Community Development Director Jagoe explained Ramsey County had a Request for Interest proposal out for this property and the County would be taking proposals through July. She indicated this property was site development ready.

Commissioner Wicklund reported he would be recusing himself from voting on this item.

Chair Vijums encouraged the City Council and others to think about the Town Center and what uses would most benefit the development. He reported his main concern with the development was that there was one road that serves the area. He feared how traffic in the area would be impacted stating it was his understanding the intersections surrounding TCAAP already had a D rating.

Commissioner Weber stated there was a list of changes that the Commission was being asked to approve and it was his understanding some uses have been left out. He questioned some of the uses that would be permitted under the proposed amendment due to their environmental impact, notably a fuel service station and dry cleaning services.

Chair Vijums asked if the Commission was voting on each use for the Campus Commercial Zoning District.

Community Development Director Jagoe stated the Commission could move this item forward as drafted, or the Commission could recommend amendments.

Commissioner Weber questioned where the proposed list of allowed uses came from.

Community Development Director Jagoe explained the proposed list was based on input from the JDA, Ramsey County, along with consideration for land uses currently allowed within the TRC and met the intent of the Campus Commercial Zoning District mirrored primarily after those land uses allowed for in the Town Center Zoning District.

Chair Vijums asked if a service station would be allowed anywhere else within the development.

Community Development Director Jagoe stated a service station would be allowed in the Retail Mixed Use or the Flex Office zoning districts.

Chair Vijums questioned if a dog kennel would be allowed anywhere within the development.

Community Development Director Jagoe reported a dog kennel was a permitted use in the Flex Office zoning district.

Commissioner Weber stated he was all for expanding uses in order to move this project forward, but he feared this list was limited.

Community Development Director Jagoe explained the proposed list was based on the currently allowed land uses within the TRC.

Commissioner Blilie stated she had no concerns with the development and noted she could support the Zoning Code Amendment.

Commissioner Bjorklund asked where traffic data information was available for this project.

Community Development Director Jagoe reported the City had previously completed an AUAR for this project in 2019 and would be completing another AUAR in 2024.

Commissioner Bjorklund stated he was pleased the thumb property would have to two major roadways of access purposes.

Chair Vijums encouraged the JDA to put their heads together to ensure the proper infrastructure was in place to serve the existing residents of Arden Hills and the new residents that would be living on TCAAP.

Chair Vijums opened the public hearing at 7:35 p.m.

Chair Vijums invited anyone for or against the application to come forward and make comment.

There being no comments Chair Vijums closed the public hearing at 7:35 p.m.

Chair Vijums moved and Commissioner Weber seconded a motion to recommend approval of Planning Case 23-011 for a Zoning Code Amendment to Chapter 13, Section 1380 – TCAAP Redevelopment Code, Subsection 5 – Schedule of Permitted Uses of the Arden Hills City Code to add permitted and accessory uses in the Campus Commercial Zoning District based on the findings of fact and the submitted plans in the June 7, 2023, report to the Planning Commission. The motion carried 6-0-1 (Commissioner Wicklund abstained).

UNFINISHED AND NEW BUSINESS

None.

REPORTS

A. Report from the City Council

Councilmember Rousseau provided the Commission with an update from the City Council. She invited the Planning Commission to attend the Appreciation Picnic on Tuesday, July 18. She explained letters were sent out to homes in Arden Hills with racial covenants and staff would be working with these properties. She stated the Economic Development Commission was seeking volunteers at this time and hoped to hold their first meeting in August. She noted the PTRC was looking to add a youth commissioner. She questioned if the Planning Commission would be interested in having a youth commissioner.

Chair Vijums stated a voting right may be difficult for a youth commissioner, but he believed the feedback and input would be valuable.

Commissioner Bjorklund and Commissioner Wicklund agreed.

Commissioner Weber suggested a youth commissioner be brought onto the PTRC for a year and that the Planning Commission reconsider this matter after a year. He was of the opinion a youth commissioner on the Planning Commission should be a non voting member.

B. Planning Commission Comments and Requests

Commissioner Weber commented on the plans for the federal build out for charging stations.

Commissioner Bjorklund explained he testified in front of the Ramsey County Future Transportation Advisory Committee noting he stated he was concerned with the planning for transportation along Highway 96 and Hamline Avenue.

ADJOURN

Chair Vjums moved, seconded by Commissioner Wicklund, to adjourn the June 7, 2023, Planning Commission Meeting at 7:53 p.m. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).