

**Cambridge Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 3, 2019**

A regular meeting of the Cambridge Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, September 3, 2019, at Cambridge City Hall Council Chambers, 300 3rd Avenue NE, Cambridge, Minnesota, 55008.

Members Present: Vice Chair Monte Dybvig, Member Aaron Berg, Member Robert Boese, and Council Appointee Marlys Palmer.

Members Absent: Chair Julie Immel (Unexcused), Member Marisa Harder-Chapman (Excused) and Member Arianna Weiler (Excused).

Staff Present: Community Development Director Marcia Westover, Community Development Specialist Carri Levitski and City Administrator Lynda Woulfe.

Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

Dybvig called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the Agenda

Westover stated Items 5A and 5B have been withdrawn from the agenda.

Palmer moved, seconded by Berg, to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried 4/0.

Commissioner Boese is a member of the Common Grounds Church and recused himself from discussion regarding Item 5F, Off Premise sign Request.

Approval of Minutes

Boese moved, seconded by Palmer, to approve the July 2, 2019 minutes as presented. Motion carried 4/0.

Public Comment

Dybvig opened the public comment period at 7:06 pm and, without any comments, closed the public comment period at 7:07 pm.

New Business

***PUBLIC HEARING – Zoning Code Amendment to Title XV Land Usage, Chapter 156 Zoning,
Section 156.078 Residential Structures, Minimum Requirements
(Roofing and Siding)***

Westover stated Staff has noted an increase in requests for metal roofing materials for residential properties. Staff is looking for clarification in the code on whether or not to allow metal roofing materials. Westover stated Staff would also like to clarify the siding materials allowed. The City's current code language is ambiguous and needs to be changed to allow or deny specific materials.

Westover stated the Planning Commission recently discussed exterior materials for commercial and industrial properties. Standing seam metal is allowed for a roof material for commercial and industrial properties. Exposed metal fastener roofs are not permitted. Metal is also not permitted as a siding material. A variance must be sought if metal is requested as an exterior siding material.

Westover stated the residential materials code language should be more specific. Westover presented an example amendment and asked the Commission to review and comment.

Westover provided photo examples and had a list of questions for the Commission to discuss.

Dybvig opened the public hearing at 7:11 pm.

John Nordin, 225 Elm St. N., Cambridge, MN, pointed out the list of approved building materials in the proposed example definition did not include brick siding.

Westover responded this was just an oversight on her part and brick will be added to the example definition for discussion. Brick is a standard residential building material.

Dustin Johnson, 533 2nd Ave NW, Cambridge, MN asked if a building or structure already has other siding and roofing materials that are not included in the clarified definition, would the owner need to change to a different exterior material or would this be grandfathered in.

Westover stated this would be considered existing nonconforming, grandfathered in, until there is a remodel or a change in siding or roofing materials. Westover stated if just a portion of the exterior materials needed to be replaced, for example due to storm damage, the repair materials need to match the existing materials currently on the structure.

Berg stated there are many roofing and siding materials available and asked how the City would decide which materials are approved and which are not since many new materials are becoming available all the time.

Westover stated the industry has changed, is forever changing and the City does need to review these new products from time to time. Builders will need to request a variance and get approval from the Planning Commission and City Council for materials not on the approved list.

The Commission discussed existing residential structures that have been permitted in the city that have metal/steel roofing materials.

Palmer believes the materials should be the homeowner's choice. Palmer discussed the safety problems with ice and snow just sheeting off and falling.

The Commission discussed the importance of safety features of the different types of roofing materials.

Ryan Scheller, 6469 401st St., North Branch, has worked with commercial siding and roofing materials and discussed the safety, durability, cost, roof pitch and aesthetics of steel roofing.

Dybvig closed the public hearing at 7:25 pm.

Boese stated Westover has asked the Commission many appropriate questions regarding roofing and siding materials that have not been answered and suggested the Commission is not ready to make a decision on the definition in the ordinance at this point.

Dybvig said roofing and siding are two different things and suggested possibly separately addressing the details for roofing and the details for siding.

Boese moved, seconded by Palmer, to recommend Staff come back with two separate definitions about siding and roofing and add appropriate metal roofing as an allowable roofing material. Motion passed 4/0.

Westover stated Staff will bring these definitions to the October 1, 2019, Planning Commission Meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING – Variance for an Accessory Structure at 548 1st Avenue W. (New Library Site)

Westover stated Baas Properties, LLC, in coordination with the City of Cambridge, is requesting a variance for a garage at the new library located at 548 1st Avenue W. Westover stated during the planning stages, a garage was identified as a need for the new library. The planners/designers tried to find a location on the lot suitable without the need for a variance. However, due to the shape of the lot, the existing building location, and its proximity to adjacent parcels, the proposed location best fits the library's needs.

Westover explained a garage is requested for vehicles to be sheltered from the elements when delivering books. Snow, rain, and sun can be harmful to the books being brought into the library. There is an existing garage on the west side of the property, but it is 100+ feet to the building and in poor condition. Westover stated the planners/designers also looked at placing a new garage on the east side of the property, north of the building. However, this location would reduce the amount of existing parking spaces.

Westover stated the proposed location of the garage is tucked behind the existing building and shielded by an adjacent neighbor's fence. It is the most useable, yet least visible location for the existing property and the garage will not be in a front or side yard. The existing parking and drive on the east side of the building makes this the most feasible area for the main entrance, therefore allowing library vehicles entrance into the proposed garage.

Westover stated the proposed garage would be 5.3 feet from the rear property line. The minimum required setback in an R-3 Multiple Family zoning district is 20 feet.

Westover stated the purpose of the Variance process is to review applications on a case-by-case basis to determine whether relief may be granted from unforeseen particular applications of the zoning code that create practical difficulties. In considering an application for a variance, the Planning

Commission shall recommend the approval of the variance only upon the finding that the application complies with the seven standards required.

Westover stated City Administrator Woulfe has been part of the planning and designing and is available to answer any questions there may be regarding the request for a variance.

Dybvig opened the public hearing at 7:33 pm. Hearing no comments, the public hearing was closed at 7:34 pm.

Palmer addressed several concerns regarding the location of the garage being so close to the neighbor's property line and the two vans transporting books weekly to and from this location will be parking near the garage. Palmer stated she is concerned for the health of the neighbors nearby with the exhaust from the idling vans.

Woulfe explained the proposed garage location makes the most logical sense with the layout of the building, having the least impact on windows and the outdoor reading area. Woulfe stated the vans will be inside the garage and not be idling outside of the garage entrance as the garage will be a heated and cooled space to maintain the integrity of the books and library materials.

Boese commented that the proposed location of the garage is the closest to the office. This library will be the headquarters of the East Central Regional Library (ECRL), which is a 14 member library consortium, and the vans make trips to these 13 different branch locations weekly, bringing in hundreds of boxes with thousands of books that need to be sorted and then prepared to be delivered to the appropriate library branch locations.

Woulfe stated of the four possible locations of the garage, this location works best for ECRL, the vehicles will be inside with the garage doors closed at all times and it fits well with the layout of the library building.

Berg stated Staff has applied this variance request to the seven standards and the findings show a practical need for the variance.

Berg moved, seconded by Boese, to recommend the City Council approve the variance as presented, allowing the accessory structure to be built at 548 1st Ave W (New Library Site). Motion carried 4/0.

Window Clings Discussion

Levitski reviewed the current code language regarding window clings.

Levitski stated Staff enforces property maintenance only on a complaint basis due to limited resources. A new business owner approached the City and asked if they could cover their front window with window clings to help advertise their business. Levitski informed the business owner of the current regulations. The business owner did not understand why the City wasn't enforcing current regulations and supplied many examples of where the current regulations are not being enforced.

Levitski explained that after the number of violations were brought to her attention, letters were sent to all businesses that had more than 30% of their windows covered. Almost every business owner contacted Levitski with concern and communicated their disagreement with this code requirement. With the push back from the local businesses, and the fact Staff have not discussed window clings in quite some time, Staff decided to bring this topic to the Planning Commission for their consideration. Local businesses were informed and invited to attend the meeting to voice their concerns.

Levitski stated Staff reached out to numerous communities to find out how they regulate window clings. Most cities have regulations in place, however, when asked if they enforce this code, almost every city responded they did not enforce their regulations. Levitski stated it begs the question whether or not this is a code requirement that is needed or at a minimum be looked at to determine if the City can install other parameters. Levitski presented the following things to consider including: limiting the amount of window space covered, visual effect versus advertising, limit to interior or exterior of windows, using clings in lieu of blinds, and how to determine the amount of coverage to limit based on per window or square feet of all windows.

Levitski stated new things trend, times change, practices change and it is time for the City to review the current regulations.

Palmer stated the Cambridge Police Department conducts frequent safety visits and checks to see that front and back doors are locked on all commercial properties in the City of Cambridge. Palmer stated advertising is expensive and using window clings in the store front windows is one option. Palmer also said that if the police cannot see through the window clings to do a safety check, it is the business owner's decision to make.

Berg stated the City is working hard to attract and retain businesses and doesn't want restricting window clings to be a roadblock in encouraging businesses to come to and stay in the City. Berg stated he is in favor of leaving the window cling choices up to the business owners and not placing restrictions on them.

Palmer pointed out that some franchise businesses must be compliant with directives from their corporate headquarters as to what advertising is displayed in their window fronts.

Boese stated these restrictions may have been written when Cambridge had an old downtown which was a pedestrian-oriented area. Today, downtown is a vehicle-oriented area. The dynamics of the commercial businesses have changed. Boese agrees with Berg to not restrict use of window clings.

Dybvig stated this topic is full of personal opinions, centers around what is aesthetically pleasing and is a challenge to legislate. His opinion is if the window treatment aesthetically matches the theme of the business and enhances Main Street, it should be allowed. Dybvig commented that window treatments can consist of window clings, banners or posters attached to the window or hanging inside the window.

Levitski agreed that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder and is difficult to legislate. Levitski stated Staff have not received complaints but needs direction as to revising the requirements and/or enforcing the requirements as they are written.

Ryan Scheller, 6469 401st Street, North Branch, and owner of RVS Performance, 430 1st Ave., Cambridge, MN, commented he has recently been working with City Staff regarding advertising options for his business. Mr. Scheller stated advertising has changed and many different options are now available. He explained the window clings being discussed are made of a printed vinyl wrap material which is perforated with small holes allowing visibility day and night. Mr. Scheller stated if the window clings are not hideous or in poor taste, he stated he is pleased to hear discussion regarding leaving this decision up to the business owner.

Ashley Schaefer, 208 Main St S., owner of 208 Hair Salon, Cambridge, MN, stated her business uses the perforated vinyl window clings. She explained this material blocks the sun during the day but still allows visibility into the building at night. Ms. Schaefer pointed out this is a good way to advertise as they are limited to placing a huge sign on the top of the building which is costly and hard for people to see as they drive by.

Levitski said the discussion seems to be leading toward changing the code language. Levitski stated Staff could do more research, talk to some of the business owners in the community regarding the types of vinyl clings and window wraps they are currently using, contact some of the vinyl cling sign companies and bring this information back for the Planning Commission's discussion at a future meeting.

The Commissioners agreed to this plan.

Off-Premise Sign Request

Levitski stated the City Code does not allow permanent off-premise or way finding signs. As with all code enforcement, Staff enforces on a complaint only basis. Staff received a complaint on Common Ground's new off-premise (way finding) sign located on the Cambridge-Isanti School District property on the NW corner of Cypress St N and Highway 95. Staff contacted Common Ground and informed them of the complaint. After discussions with Common Ground representatives, Staff recommended them to write a letter requesting a code amendment.

Levitski reviewed the current City Code which regulates temporary off premise signs.

Levitski stated way finding signs for government agencies along with schools and churches are very common in communities, helping individuals visiting government agencies, schools and churches to find the location when they are not familiar with in a certain area. Levitski said churches and schools are often located in residential areas and are not visible from the main thoroughfares. MnDOT will also place these types of signs in the right-of-way. In this situation, Levitski stated the way finding sign is on private school district property and is not in the right-of-way.

Levitski asked the Commission to discuss current regulations and give direction to Staff if the Commission would recommend amending the sign code to allow way finding signs for government agencies, schools, and churches on private properties.

Dybvig commented that signs for places people need to find, such as government offices, schools, churches and hospitals, should require a separate ordinance. He went on to say this is a separate issue from signs advertising fresh fruit sales, garage sales or wine tasting events.

Palmer agreed we need to be able to find places such as church, hospitals and schools.

Berg asked if the City would entertain the idea if Common Ground has gotten written permission from the school district to place their sign on school property.

Levitski stated Common Ground does have written permission from the school district but the City doesn't allow it since it is an off-premise sign. Levitski stated the City would need to amend the ordinance to allow way finding signs for government, public agencies and institutions on private properties.

Berg asked if MnDOT has any regulations on way finding signs on their roads. Westover replied MnDOT has their own regulations. The consensus of the Commission was for staff to look into MNDOT's sign regulations.

Randy Wallace, 343 Birch St. S., Cambridge, MN, the Co-Chair of the Administrative Council at Common Ground, stated the Council was advised to contact MnDOT once they learned the sign location was on school district property. MnDOT's response was the sign could not be bigger than 24" x 24" and no higher than any existing signs. Mr. Wallace stated Jill Reller, from Signs By Jill, designed the sign to those specifications, made sure the sign was no higher than the stop sign and had Gopher State One check for any utilities before installing the sign. Mr. Wallace believed they have done their due diligence and also had the approval of the school attorney and the approval of Mark Eisenbacher, the former Building and Grounds Director, at Cambridge-Isanti Schools to move ahead with installing this sign.

Dustin Johnson, 533 2nd Ave NW, Cambridge, MN, asked if temporary signs cannot obstruct field of vision.

Levitski responded that no signs can obstruct vision and no signs can be placed in the Right of Way.

Mr. Johnson inquired about large flags signs put up on Birch St N and Hwy. 95 by Spirit of Life Church on Sundays. He has noticed on Monday mornings when driving to work, he cannot see oncoming traffic at this intersection.

Levitski stated flag or feather signs are permitted with a temporary sign permit. Westover stated Staff will contact Spirit of Life Church via a letter.

Berg asked if the City has any specific language that requires the sign owner that wants to put a sign on someone else's property that they have written permission.

Levitski stated there is a place on the temporary sign permit application for the property owner to sign off on.

Dybvig asked Staff to do some research and bring back some language for the Commission to review.

Levitski stated Staff will bring this back for discussion and in the meantime, Staff will not be asking anyone to take down signs and will not be pursuing enforcement at this time.

Other Business/Miscellaneous

City Council Update

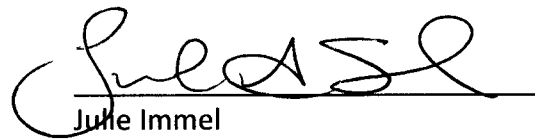
Palmer updated the Commission on the last City Council meeting.

Parks Commission Update

Levitski updated the Commission on the last Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission meeting.

Adjournment

Being no further business before the Cambridge Planning Commission, Palmer moved, seconded by Berg, to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:43 pm. Motion carried 4/0.



Julie Immel
Cambridge Planning Commission Chair

ATTEST:



Marcia Westover, Community Development Director