

# City of Cottage Grove Planning Commission March 26, 2007

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a regular meeting of the Planning Commission was duly held at City Hall, 7516 – 80th Street South, Cottage Grove, Minnesota on the 26th day of March 2007, in the Council Chambers and telecast on local Government Cable Channel 16.

## Call to Order

Chairperson Brittain called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

## Roll Call

Members Present: Shane Bauer, Ken Brittain, Tracy Poncin, Chris Reese, David Thiede

Members Absent: Tina Folch-Freiermuth

Staff Present: Howard Blin, Community Development Director  
John McCool, Senior Planner  
Mark Grossklaus, City Council

## Approval of Agenda

Brittain stated that the agenda has been amended to so that the Agenda Item 6.2, Sprint Antenna, will be held prior to Agenda Item 6.1, McHattie Farms Concept Plan.

***Motion by Reese, second by Bauer, to approve the agenda with the amendment. Motion approved unanimously (5-0 vote).***

## Open Forum

Chairperson Brittain asked if anyone wished to address the Planning Commission on any non-agenda item.

Roger Grossklaus, 8189 – 76th Street South, Cottage Grove, expressed concern about excessive signage along the right-of-ways, especially in the commercial areas. Blin stated that staff would look into that.

## Chair's Explanation of the Public Hearing Process

Chairperson Brittain explained the purpose of the Planning Commission, which serves in an advisory capacity to the City Council, and that the City Council makes all final decisions. In addition, he explained the process of conducting a public hearing and requested that any person wishing to speak should come to the microphone and state their full name and address for the public record.

## Public Hearings and Application Reviews

## **6.1 Sprint Antenna at 3M – Case CUP07-015**

**Sprint/Nextel has applied for a conditional use permit to add communication antennas to the stem of the 3M water tower located at 10746 Innovation Road and to place communications equipment inside the existing shelter. (Public Hearing)**

McCool summarized the planning staff report and recommended approval subject to the conditions stipulated in the staff report.

***Brittain opened the public hearing. No one spoke. Brittain closed the public hearing.***

Thiede asked if there were other antennas on the tower. McCool responded there were none. Theide then asked if 3M approved of this application. McCool stated yes.

Brittain noted that there are three existing coverage circles and the proposed site is centrally located between those, none of the four circles including the new one overlap and he asked how does that handle with their coverage. Steve Trueman, representing Sprint, 6842 Merrimac Lane North, Maple Grove, responded that technically they will operate on the fringes. What the rings typically represent is what they call “in-building coverage.” The areas in between you can still get coverage if you are in your car or outside, but it is more difficult to get service within a building. It is tough to get complete overlap coverage. He then explained that those are just diagrams and if you have ever seen the actual colored zoning maps, they look like an ink blot test and are hard to make sense of, so he tried to provide something that would be a little easier to understand.

Thiede noted that he has Sprint and asked how he was getting service without this antenna. Trueman responded that what is happening in the industry is because more and more people are going to cell phones, it becomes an issue of capacity and a cell site can only handle so many calls. He explained that what this site will do at least for a period of time is eliminate dropped calls and the coverage will improve.

***Thiede made a motion to approve the application, subject to the conditions listed below. Poncin seconded the motion.***

- 1. The contractor that will be installing the antennas must complete a building permit application with the City’s Building Inspections Division and a building permit must issued before any construction can begin. An electrical permit must also be obtained prior to commencement of construction.***
- 2. No advertising shall be displayed on or affixed to any of the antennas or the equipment building.***
- 3. The applicant is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the equipment building and access agreement.***
- 4. The antennas must be painted the same color as the water tower.***

***Motion passed unanimously (5-to-0 vote).***

## 6.2 Concept Plan for McHattie Farms

**Chase Homes will present their concept plan for their proposed subdivision, McHattie Farms, which would be located south of Military Road, east of Jamaica Avenue, and north of Rose of Sharon Church.**

Blin summarized the staff report and recommended approval with the changes noted in the staff report.

Bill Pritchard, Vice President of Land Development for Homes by Chase, gave a power point presentation on the proposal, stating that this development is in Neighborhood 1 of the East Ravine and would consist of approximately 90 acres. He noted that they applied for a Planned Overlay District. He explained that Ravine Parkway, which would have a 140-foot right-of-way, would run throughout Neighborhood 1 and provide a park-like setting. He then stated that there would be landscaping and a large setback between Jamaica Avenue and the homes. He noted that the East Ravine Master Plan shows differing lot sizes and housing types in certain areas. He stated that the majority of the lots in the proposed PDO are 85 feet wide with 9 lots being 100 feet wide. Less than 24 percent of the development is lots that are less than 85 feet wide. He then described the home styles and architecture of the homes that Homes by Chase builds and showed photos and drawings of their product. He stated that the open space areas would be along Jamaica Avenue, within the knolls, and along Ravine Parkway. There would be trails along Jamaica Avenue, on both sides of Ravine Parkway, and the Military Road trail corridor. There would also be trails that would interconnect the neighborhoods. He then explained that the twin homes would be side-by-side ramblers on either look-out or walk-out lots. The grades in the southern area of the development meet the criteria for those types of lots. Pritchard then stated that they do not agree with staff's recommendation that the lots on the east side need to be 85 feet wide because they plan to add a considerable amount of landscaping as the East Ravine plan requires.

Thiede expressed concern about isolating the twin homes, noting that when he gets older, he would rather be in an area where there is activity as opposed to being segregated in one area. Pritchard responded that they don't believe they separating a neighborhood, but creating identity in neighborhoods. He stated that this would be one community and it is going to operate under an association. Thiede stated that he is concerned that every development would want to have four different classes of homes in separate neighborhoods. Pritchard responded that the East Ravine Plan showed pods of twin homes. Blin responded that twin homes are shown throughout Neighborhood 1, but primarily along the major roadways. The abutting property to the east do not have twin homes, but do have some lots that are less than 85 feet wide. The purpose was to give a little variety in lot sizes and not have a cookie cutter approach. He stated that staff is not concerned that every development is going to have this much of a mix. The difference with this development is that it is up against Jamaica Avenue. Thiede asked about the possibility of taking those twin homes and put them in the north along where they have the 76-foot lots so that they are integrated into the overall neighborhood. Brittain commented Jamaica Avenue is a heavily traveled entrance to the community, he is concerned about having smaller lots and twin homes along that entrance.

Bauer asked about the difference in size and values of the homes on the 76-foot, 85-foot, and 100-foot lot widths. Pritchard described the houses that Homes by Chase builds, noting that

several of the products would fit on the 76-foot wide lots. Most of the homes in McHattie Farms would be priced upwards of \$400,000, regardless of whether they are on 76-foot wide or 85-foot wide lots. The twin homes would also be valued around \$400,000. Bauer asked if they planned to do this development in different phases. Pritchard responded that there would be four to five phases. Bauer asked where they would start. Pritchard responded that they would be concentrating their first phase south of the Ravine Parkway due to the availability of sewer and water. Bauer stated that overall he thinks this is a good plan but he does agree with staff's recommendation that some of the 76-foot wide lots east of the road that runs parallel to Jamaica should be at least 85 feet wide. He believes that the percentage of smaller lots, when added to the twin homes, is too high compared to what was originally planned for this area.

Brittain asked if the 76-foot wide lots would the same value of home as the 85-foot lots would have. Pritchard responded yes, though the final value would depend on the amenities that the buyers choose for their homes. Brittain stated that he agrees with Thiede regarding the 76-foot wide lots and that there are too many housing styles in one development. Pritchard noted that this development has about 2.3 units per acre. Brittain noted that the original plan showed a pool and a community park, and this plan only has houses. He also believes there would be a better value to intermix the 85-foot and 76-foot wide lots. He stated that if they removed all of the 76-foot wide lots on the east side of that one road, it would bring the percentage of smaller lots down to about 20 percent of the single family homes, which is still a little high.

Reese asked how many lots would be lost if the 76-foot lots were increase to 80 feet. Pritchard stated that he would have to analyze that but his guess would be one or two lots. Reese also would like to see the varying lot sizes more intermingled in the development. Pritchard stated that they discussed with staff what strategically would look best and how it might fit in terms of a neighborhood. They decided to put the 76-foot wide lots along Jamaica because there is a good-sized buffer that will be heavily landscaped. He stated that Homes by Chase would be working with the city to create a variety and diversity of the housing mix and product because that is what the planned overlay district is.

Reese stated that in Highland Hills, where they are not the sole builder, there are different varieties of homes and lot sizes. He reiterated that the various lot sizes should be better interspersed throughout the development. He understands having all the twin homes together but asked if there was a way to make them more a part of the community. He also expressed concern about the twin homes abutting Jamaica Avenue, which would be a focal point when entering the city, so he wants to ensure that that area is heavily landscaped. Pritchard responded that there would be a trail area along Jamaica that will be maintained the homeowners association for both the single family and twin home areas. He then explained that within that association there will be an association for the single-family homes and one for the twin homes. The twin homes association would be responsible for maintaining the common areas and the buildings and for snowplowing. It is a separate neighborhood but it is part of the overall community of McHattie Farms that is integrated with trails and street connections. Reese noted that this is the first large development in the East Ravine and the Commission wants to make sure to get it right, which is why there seems to be more scrutiny. Pritchard stated that they want to be sure that they are doing things that meet the city's goals and vision as well. He believes that this plan conforms to the vision of the East Ravine Master Plan.

Thiede noted that the south road was moved off the property line alignment to the east and asked what the reason was for that. Pritchard responded that they showed connections into

the neighboring parcels. Blin stated that when the plan moves into more detailed engineering, staff will take a look at that alignment more precisely. Thiede stated that compared to the plan presented last year, the ambiance of the neighborhood looked a lot more friendly with more green space in the middle, and he asked why they moved away from that concept. Pritchard responded that the current plan is less dense with more green space and the lot sizes are more in conformance with the East Ravine plan.

Poncin stated that she likes the buffering along Jamaica and Ravine Parkway but asked if the green space was usable and are there plans for a picnic shelter or a playground structure. Pritchard responded that there are two park areas that could be landscaped to function as usable park space. There are trails along Ravine Parkway that will lead to those areas. In addition there will be fairly extensive community park less than a quarter mile to the east. Blin stated that the Parkway itself is thought of as a park feature and the eyebrow parks are a wider spot along that. He also pointed out that the wider, longer cul-de-sacs have islands that could become a neighborhood focal point. Pritchard thanked the Commission for their comments, noting that they want to start construction on the project this year.

Brittain asked if anyone in the audience wanted to comment on the concept plan. No one did.

Brittain asked what benefits the city gains from this development being a PDO rather than just a regular preliminary plat. Blin responded that it allows for a variety of lot sizes and a higher degree of design for the individual houses.

It was the consensus of the Commission that the 76-foot wide lots on the east side of the road paralleling Jamaica should be 85 feet wide, there should be an emergency access or connection to the twin home neighborhood, and fewer 76-foot wide lots.

Blin explained that the Commission is being asked to make a recommendation to the City Council as to whether to approve this preliminary development plan with comments.

***Brittain made a motion to recommend approval of the planned development overlay with the following changes: remove the 76-foot wide lots on the east side of that street and reduce the number of 76-foot wide lots on the west side, adding a trail access point to twin homes, and a secondary access point for public safety purposes for the twin homes. Poncin seconded.***

Thiede asked why there has been more discussion lately regarding emergency accesses. Blin responded that the reason we are seeing these is that we are applying a new standard, which is a 30-unit per dead-end street maximum for those types of streets. Staff would prefer not to see so many of them but in cases like this we think they provide the emergency access we need without putting in another street. These access points look like trail corridors so they serve that pedestrian function but also allow a fire truck to get in there if needed. Thiede expressed concern about these types of emergency accesses and suggested a loop road for the twin home area. He also would like to see a little more integration of the twin homes noting that there will be a fairly sizable area to the east by the mansion that has been designated for higher density development. Blin responded that in concept integrating the twin homes into the rest of the development is a good idea, but it might be a marketing problem to sell a single family home next to a twin home. Much as we'd like to integrate, single family home buyers tend to want to be next to single family homes.

Reese expressed concern about the lack of a park in a development of this size. Brittain asked Reese if he wanted to amend the motion to include a park. Reese responded yes. Brittain and Poncin agreed to amend the motion. Brittain did not support integrating the twin homes throughout the development.

***Motion passed on a 3-to-2 vote. (Reese, Thiede voted nay).***

Thiede stated that he is not prepared to recommend approval of this design as a precedence for the segregation of twin homes. He felt that last year's plan was more neighborhood-like. He expressed concern about pedestrian access to the open space along the parkway. Pritchard stated that there are trails and sidewalks on one side of each street. He stated that this plan has more trails and interconnection than the previous plan.

Reese stated that there have been a number of developments that have come before the Commission in the last six months where we have held firm on the 85-foot lots. While he realizes that the master plan allows for different lot sizes, he feels there are too many smaller lots in this development. He wants more diversity in the development. He also stated that the previous plan had a community area where the neighborhood could gather to form a community, which this plan does not have. Overall he does not have anything against the plan but he thinks it still missing some things.

### **6.3 Cottage Grove Dental – Cases ZA07-016, SP07-017, V07-018**

**Colonial Commons, LLC has applied for a zoning amendment to change the zoning of property at 7500 – 80th Street South from B-1, Limited Business, to B-2, Retail Business; a site plan review of a multi-tenant office/retail building, and a variance to City Code Title 11-10B-6C(1), Lot Requirements in the B-2 Zoning District, to reduce the required 35-foot rear yard setback. (Public Hearing)**

McCool summarized the staff report and recommended approval subject to the conditions stipulated in the staff report.

Thiede asked if it was possible to leave the existing building in place until construction is complete on the new building. McCool responded no.

Brittain asked how much of the south parking lot would the temporary building occupy. McCool responded that the temporary building would probably occupy six or seven parking spaces and would allow for parking on the north side. He then stated that they are exploring the option of occupying space in the empty building next door so they would not have to bring in a temporary building.

Thiede asked if the front of the new building would line up with the fronts of the other existing buildings in the area. McCool responded that it would be very similar to the Oak Park Commons setbacks. Thiede asked how many retail spaces would be located in the new building. McCool stated that there would be four bays. Thiede asked about the city's current vacancy rate for retail space. Blin responded that staff does not have information on that this evening, but would get that figure prior to going to Council. Brittain reminded the Commission that the vacancy rate cannot be considered when reviewing applications, only whether they

meet the city's ordinance criteria. Blin then noted that there is a natural churning of retail space and some of the empty spaces are being leased.

Brittain asked if there would be enough parking spaces for the temporary building and is there a possibility of using the parking lot at the building next door. McCool responded that they are considering that as well.

Bruce Miller, MFC Properties, 3470 Washington Drive, Suite 102, Eagan, Minnesota, explained the background of the proposal. He stated that the retail vacancy rate is higher than they like to see and the office vacancy is worse, but that is due to new product that has been brought into the market, which takes time to absorb. They are confident that the long-term solution for the site is to redevelop it. Brittain expressed concern about the availability of parking for the temporary structure. Miller stated that by the time that they need to occupy the temporary structure they will have a deal with Health East to use their space.

Thiede asked how long the temporary building would be there. Miller responded not more than six months. Brittain asked when construction begin. Miller responded by May or June but pre-leasing another space is critical.

Thiede expressed concern with the peak only being on one side of the building. Miller responded that the peak is a very expensive feature, but the dentists, who would own the building, were directly involved in the design of the building and really liked the look of it. The intent is to draw the eye towards the building.

Reese asked if most of the mechanical equipment would be located in the peak. Miller responded that most of the mechanical would be on the flat part of the roof and won't be seen due to the parapet wall.

***Brittain opened the public hearing. No one spoke. Brittain closed the public hearing.***

Thiede asked for a consensus of the Commission on the peak. Poncin stated that she believes it adds interest to the building. Bauer stated that it seems unusual to him; usually there would be a peak on both ends or no peak. McCool displayed a color drawing of the building. Brittain stated that the peak does catch his eye because it sticks out and seems odd. Blin stated that if the building were longer, they may have been able to put a peak on the other, but this building is designed to be asymmetrical and the reason they chose that side is because it is the more visible corner of the building. Reese stated that he first thought it looked weird with the peak on only one half of the building, but it would break up the rest of the architecture along 80th Street.

***Thiede made a motion to approve the three applications, with a slight reservation on the peak, subject to the conditions listed below. Reese seconded the motion.***

Reese asked about signage. McCool responded that condition #16 requires that a comprehensive sign plan be submitted to the city.

***Motion passed unanimously (5-to-0 vote).***

#### **6.4 Park Dedication Fees – Case TA07-022**

**The City of Cottage Grove has applied for a text amendment to City Code Title 10-4-3C, Schedule of Park Dedication Requirements, to increase the cash amount required to be paid in lieu of a land dedication for subdivision of residential land. (Public Hearing)**

McCool summarized the staff report and recommended approval.

Poncin asked if it is customary for the city to increase the park dedication fee annually. Blin responded that the city reviews the fee annually but not necessarily increases it. Poncin then asked if there was any advantage of a bigger increase or is the city just trying to keep up with the market. Blin answered that the city is trying to keep up with the market, though there is lag behind land prices because if the fee was ever challenged, we have to demonstrate that existing land values warrant the amount of our park dedication fee.

Brittain stated that he believes it is a good idea to review the park dedication fees on an annual basis to ensure that the city stays at a fair rate.

Reese stated that it seems that the developers that have come in would rather pay the park fee and asked if the increases are making it is a tougher decision for them. Blin stated that he is not sure that there is a tendency towards developers preferring to pay the fee; staff reviews the plan for possible park land dedication. He noted that with land dedication, the developers get an amenity feature, which helps market the development.

***Brittain opened the public hearing. No one spoke. Brittain closed the public hearing.***

***Bauer made a motion to approve the application, subject to the conditions listed below. Thiede seconded the motion.***

***Motion passed unanimously (5-to-0 vote).***

## **6.5 Review of TIF District No. 1-14 – Case M07-023**

Blin summarized the staff report and recommended approval.

Brittain asked what benefits the city would receive by having this type of proposed development adjacent to the current homeowners versus some other type of industrial use that could potentially go there. Blin responded that the use being looked at for this property is a relatively low impact use with only a small amount of truck traffic, and there would be no odors, fumes, noise. About 30 percent of the space would be for office use and they would have a fairly high employee count. He then explained the proceeds from this TIF district would be used to construct the ponds necessary for stormwater improvements required by MnDOT in Hamlet Park.

Thiede asked what would be the implications if the City did not approve this TIF district. Blin stated that very likely this business would not locate in Cottage Grove. He explained that a fairly detailed economic analysis was done that shows that the developer's gap in meeting their pro forma is such that "but for" this TIF, the project would not happen. Thiede asked if the tax revenue would be used to finance the development and would the city forgo any tax revenue currently being collected for this property. Blin responded that the existing tax revenue

would continue to flow into the various taxing jurisdictions, but the increment, which is the amount created above that base level, is captured in the TIF district for a period of eight years and would be used to fund ponding improvements and to add fill from the ponding project to the site to make it buildable.

Brittain stated that the benefit of this type of low impact industrial use would provide a buffer zone between the homeowners and that it would add to the city's tax base in the future.

Reese asked how they determined that the TIF district would run for eight years. Blin responded that is the maximum amount that is allowed in an economic development tax increment financing district by state statute.

Bauer asked approximately how many jobs would be created. Blin responded approximately 100 initially with some expansion, and of those 100 jobs, 40 to 45 would be office jobs. Brittain noted that the jobs would have to be 160 percent of minimum wage as part of the TIF district.

Brittain asked if anyone wanted to speak on this application. No one did.

***Thiede made a motion to approve the Tax Increment Financing District 1-14 as written. Bauer seconded. Motion passed unanimously (5-to-0 vote).***

## **Discussion Items**

None.

## **Approval of Planning Commission Minutes of February 26, 2007**

Reese noted that Cavallo should be listed as absent.

***Being that there were no corrections or additions to the February 26, 2007, minutes, they were approved as sent.***

## **Reports**

### **9.1 Recap of March City Council Meetings**

Blin reviewed the items discussed by the City Council at their March 7 and 21, 2007, meetings.

### **9.2 Response to Planning Commission Inquiries**

Blin stated that at the last meeting Reese asked about lot widths and staff wanted to offer more information on that topic. He stated that the subdivision ordinance states that lot widths are measured at the setback line, which for most lots is 30 feet back from the front property line. Reese asked if clarification on that could be made in the staff report. Blin then stated that Brittain had asked about the dumpster doors at Walgreen's. McCool stated that he has been trying to contact the manager about the issue. Blin stated that Thiede had asked about the Coldwell Banker dumpster, which is not being kept in the enclosure, and staff is currently working to get that resolved.

### **9.3 Planning Commission Requests**

Thiede asked as developments are approved, could they be added to the East Ravine Plan so future developers could see how the adjacent areas were developed prior to applying for new plats.

Reese asked for an update on electronic billboards. Blin responded that it is very likely the city will extend the moratorium as the League of Cities has not yet completed their study on the traffic safety issues associated with those billboards.

Thiede asked for an update on the Red Rock Corridor. Blin responded that there has not been any new information recently.

Reese asked when construction will begin on the roundabouts. Blin responded in June.

### **9.4 Organizational Meeting and Election of Officers**

Brittain asked if there were any nominations for Planning Commission Chair. Reese nominated Thiede as Chair. Brittain seconded. Thiede accepted the nomination. Brittain asked if there were any other nominations. There were none. Motion passed unanimously (5-to-0 vote).

Brittain asked if there were any nominations for Vice Chair. Bauer nominated Brittain. Brittain turned down the nomination because this was his last year on the Commission and he felt that another Commissioner who would serve for a longer time would be a better choice. Thiede nominated Bauer for Vice Chair. Bauer turned down the nomination as he will be moving out of the city limits this summer. Poncin nominated Reese for Vice Chair. Brittain seconded. Reese accepted the nomination. Brittain asked if there were any other nominations. There were none. Motion passed unanimously (5-to-0 vote).

Brittain asked if there were any nominations for Secretary. Reese nominated Poncin. Thiede seconded. Poncin accepted the nomination. Brittain asked if there were any other nominations. There were none. Motion passed unanimously (5-to-0 vote).

Blin asked if there were any proposed changes to the Planning Commission rules. He explained that the Commission would formally adopt these rules next month.

Reese asked about filling the vacancies on the Commission. Brittain explained that there are applications for the vacancies, however, the City Council is revising the process of selecting Commission members to ensure consistency for all the City's Commissions, which is the reason for the delay.

### **Adjournment**

***Brittain adjourned the meeting at 9:33 p.m.***