

**City of Rockford, Minnesota
Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting
7:00 p.m., Thursday, March 11, 2021**

Chair Werman called the regular meeting of the City of Rockford Planning and Zoning Commission to order on at 7:01 p.m. The meeting was held in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 6031 Main Street, Rockford, MN.

OATH OF OFFICE: Wendy Petersen-Biorn took the Oath of Office and was sworn in as a Planning and Zoning Commissioner by Administrator / Attorney Madsen.

Roll call was taken and the following members were present: Werman, Petersen-Biorn, Morter and Sand. The following members were absent: Cihlar. City Administrator / Attorney, Dan Madsen; Deputy Clerk, Amy McNellis; and Mark Saliterman were also in attendance.

PUBLIC HEARING – Westrock Shopping Center Self-storage Planned Unit Development Amendment

Chair Werman opened the Public Hearing at approximately 7:04 p.m. Administrator / Attorney Madsen explained that Westrock Shopping Center, LLC was proposing to renovate the vacant 22,500 square foot space on the west side of the Westrock Shopping Center to include 8,640 square feet of self-storage units. Westrock Shopping Center is located at 8900 – 8956 Walnut Street, Rockford, Minnesota 55373; Lot 1, Block 1, Rockford Commercial Center; PID #: 113.059.001.010. The planned unit development for this property currently allows a strip mall shopping center with an underlying Highway Commercial zoning designation; but does not allow for the proposed self-storage use, which is typically an industrial-type use.

Planned Unit Development Districts serve the purpose of allowing for the mixing of land uses within a development when such mixing cannot be otherwise accomplished within the Zoning Districts established by the Zoning Ordinance. Section 1001-21 of the Zoning Ordinance states that any use allowed within the various zoning districts established by the Zoning Ordinance may be allowed within a PUD District.

Property owner, Mark Saliterman, spoke of the difficulty he has had in leasing the larger spaces at the Mall. The Planning and Zoning Commission heard that these difficulties are consistent with trends in the broader market towards concentrated regional nodes of commercial development and growth of retail commercial delivery services such as Amazon experienced both within the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and nationally.

Chair Werman then called for public comment. With no one in attendance and no public comment offered, Chair Werman closed the Public Hearing at approximately 7:35 p.m.

Chair Werman opened the public hearing at 7:04 p.m.

SET AGENDA AND APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

MOTION was made by Petersen-Biorn, seconded by Morter, to set the agenda and accept the July 23, 2020 Regular Planning and Zoning Commission Minutes.

MOTION CARRIED – VOTING IN FAVOR – WERMAN, PETERSEN-BIORN, MORTER, and SAND

NEW BUSINESS: Westrock Shopping Center Self-storage Planned Unit Development Amendment

Attorney / Administrator Madsen reviewed the Memorandum submitted by City Planner, Dan Licht. The PUD District for Westrock Center allows uses as provided for within the C-3, Commercial Highway District. Self-storage facilities, which is a warehousing use, are not allowed within the C-3 District. PUD Districts serve the purpose of allowing for the mixing of land uses within a development when such mixing cannot be otherwise accomplished within the Zoning Districts established by the Zoning Ordinance. Section 1001-21 of the Zoning Ordinance states that any use allowed within the various zoning districts established by the Zoning Ordinance may be allowed within a PUD District.

The property owner's narrative describes the difficulties they have encountered in trying to lease the available space within Westrock Center. These difficulties are consistent with trends in the broader market towards concentrated regional nodes of commercial development and growth of retail commercial delivery services such as Amazon experienced both within the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and nationally. These trends have been had more severe impact on commercial real estate during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to these trends, there has been increased development of self-storage facilities locating in what have been traditional commercial locations. The opportunity to repurpose former mall or big and medium box retail stores into self-storage has been an element of this development.

The floorplan submitted by the property owner illustrates that the front 25 feet of the interior space would be reserved for retail and office uses taking advantage of the existing exterior doors and windows for access and visibility. The remaining unoccupied space would be converted into individual storage units accessed by interior corridors. The interior of the building would continue to be climate controlled. The unit dividers would be temporary in nature allowing flexibility and the possibility to shift back to retail space if the market improves.

Self-storage facilities are low-traffic generators. Parking requirements of the Zoning Ordinance for office and retail uses are one off street stall per 200 square feet of building and for warehouse uses are one stall per 1,500 The Westrock Mall. As a result, the change in occupancy reduces the demand for parking at Westrock Mall, which has current a supply of 317 off-street parking stalls, of which 18 are shared with Dollar General.

After additional discussion and review, **MOTION** was made by Werman, seconded by Sand, to approve the Planned Unit Development Amendment as proposed and recommended.

MOTION CARRIED – VOTING IN FAVOR – WERMAN, PETERSEN-BIORN, MORTER, and SAND

NEW BUSINESS: 2021 Goals

Administrator / Attorney Madsen presented the City Council’s Goals for 2021 and asked what goals the Planning and Zoning Commission may be interested in for the upcoming year. During discussion, goals were considered including installation, improvement and connectability of sidewalks in the community, redefining and focusing on park spaces, focusing on future commercial and residential development and working on improvements to Downtown Rockford.

After discussion and review, the aforementioned goals were generally accepted by the Commission. No formal vote was taken, and the matter could potentially be revisited in the future.

NEW BUSINESS: Commission Appointments

Administrator / Attorney Madsen discussed the Chair and Vice-Chair positions on the Planning and Zoning Commission were up for appointment. After discussion and review, **MOTION** was made by Petersen-Biorn, seconded by Sand, to appoint Commissioner Werman as Chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

MOTION CARRIED – VOTING IN FAVOR – WERMAN, PETERSEN-BIORN, MORTER, and SAND

MOTION was then made by Petersen-Biorn, seconded by Werman, to appoint Commissioner Sand as Vice-Chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

MOTION CARRIED – VOTING IN FAVOR – WERMAN, PETERSEN-BIORN, MORTER, and SAND

Members of Staff and the Planning and Zoning Commission then presented general updates including Parkwood 5th Development progress; that there had been 17 new home permits pulled to date, and 47 last year; that a company was in the process of remodeling the old Lieder Press and old Bank Buildings on the corner of Main Street and Bridge Street in Downtown Rockford, and introduced new employee Amy McNellis as the City’s Deputy Clerk; as well as other updates of general interest.

MOTION was then made by Sand, and seconded by Morter, to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION CARRIED – VOTING IN FAVOR – WERMAN, PETERSEN-BIORN, MORTER, and SAND and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:10 p.m.

Typed this 14th day of June, 2021.

Dan Madsen
City Administrator, Special Counsel
City of Rockford Minnesota

All meetings of the Rockford Planning and Zoning Commission are video recorded and available for viewing on-line at www.cityofrockford.org. Meeting minutes are intended to be a general synopsis of the meetings of the Commission, and more detail regarding discussions and policy considerations is provided by watching the recording of the meeting.

Approved:

Renee Hafften
Mayor

Attest:

Dan Madsen
City Administrator, Special Counsel