

**City of Falcon Heights
Planning Commission Minutes
March 24, 2009**

PRESENT: Commissioners Gosline, Gustafson, Hasegawa, Noble, Rodich and Watkins, City Council Liaison Kuettel. Also present was Staff Liaison Deb Jones.

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by the Chair, Erick Watkins, at 7:00 p.m.

The minutes for the February 24, 2009, meeting were approved.

Public Hearing: Proposed code amendment regarding garages in R-4

In the introductory staff report, Ms. Jones reviewed the Commission's February discussion on this issues, which is the challenges and contradictions faced by owners of the small Larpenteur Avenue apartment properties in providing on-site parking or changing the parking configurations they already have. None of these properties conform to the parking requirements, and, due to lack of space, none of them can. Existing code provisions make it nearly impossible for anything to be changed on any individual property without some kind of variance.

In their February discussion, the Commission came to the consensus that **removing the requirement that half the parking places must be enclosed, for apartment properties with alleys**, would at least allow the option of providing only uncovered parking without the need for a variance, without creating more complications and unforeseen consequences. For new apartment garages, the Commission would prefer to handle variances on a case by case basis. Only nine properties are affected. Tonight's proposed code amendment was written to reflect the conclusion of the Commission in February. The amendment does not affect single family properties.

When the hearing was opened, the only member of the audience who came to the podium was Mr. John MacDonald, resident of Hastings, Minnesota, and owner of the apartment property at 1490 Larpenteur. His building has four units and four parking places, of which one is in a garage. He was concerned that the code change might require him to remove the existing garage, which he would rather continue to maintain on the property. Assured that the amendment would not force him to make any changes, only allow the option of removing the garage if he should so choose, he said he had no objections.

There being no other speakers, the hearing was closed.

Discussion and Commission Action

After a brief discussion a motion was made by Commissioner Gustafson, simultaneously seconded by Commissioners Rodich and Noble, that the code amendment be recommended for approval. The motion was approved unanimously.

Presentation by Brady Rutman, UM student, on his University Golf Course Project.

Mr. Rutman is a student of landscape architecture and planning at the University of Minnesota. Early in the semester he approached city staff with questions regarding the city's comprehensive plan in relation to a class project planning a new hypothetical configuration for the Les Bolstad University of Minnesota Golf Course. He was invited by staff to present his project to the Planning Commission in the spring as an illustration of the kind of changes that might take place if the University should decide to repurpose the golf course land some time in the future. In her introduction, Ms. Jones emphasized that no actual changes are planned at this time.

Mr. Rutman outlined the objectives of his project: to illustrate how housing could be combined with recreational use on the half-mile block of the golf course in a way that would be compatible with the City's draft comprehensive plan, provide good traffic and pedestrian connections, and preserve a cherished outdoor space as a recreational resource serving the wider community. He showed maps of three successive plans developed over the course of the semester and explained the evolution of each plan. Commissioners had a lot of questions, and a lively discussion ensued.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Jones, Staff Liaison