



MAYOR & COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

DATE: December 2, 2014

REGULAR

ITEM # 16

AGENDA ITEM: Halcyon Cemetery Sketch Plan Review

SUBMITTED BY: Nick M. Johnson, City Planner

THROUGH: Dean Zuleger, City Administrator

REVIEWED BY: Planning Commission
Kyle Klatt, Community Development Director

SUGGESTED ORDER OF BUSINESS:

- Introduction of ItemCommunity Development Director
- Report/Presentation.....Community Development Director
- Questions from Council to Staff..... Mayor Facilitates
- Call for Motion Mayor & City Council
- Discussion Mayor & City Council
- Action on Motion..... Mayor Facilitates

POLICY RECCOMENDER: Mr. Lee Rossow has submitted a Sketch Plan for a proposed cemetery to be located on a 10-acre parcel located at 11050 50th Street North. The sketch plan review provides the applicant the opportunity to receive initial feedback on a development concept from the City Council, Planning Commission and staff. The sketch plan review is intended to assist the applicant in the preparation of a Preliminary Plat application.

FISCAL IMPACT: None – City costs related to the review of the sketch plan are reimbursed by an application fee and a development review escrow.

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED: The City Council is being asked to review a Sketch Plan submitted by Mr. Lee Rossow for a proposed cemetery at 11050 50th Street North. The Planning Commission reviewed the sketch plan for the cemetery, to be called Halcyon, at the 11/24/14 meeting. As the sketch plan review requires no formal action, the City Council is asked to provide preliminary feedback and high level review of the proposed development. In order for the cemetery to be properly filed with Washington County, a required step per State Statutes, the City ultimately needs to approve the plat. The Sketch Plan allows the City to provide initial feedback in advance of preliminary/final plat application.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Attached is the original detailed Staff Report that was provided to the Planning Commission on 11/24/14 regarding the Halcyon Cemetery. The Staff Report includes general information about the proposed cemetery, a summary of the relevant planning and zoning issues, as well as a review of the proposed design. In terms of the specifics of the review, greater details are found in the Staff Report dated 11/24/14, as well as the attachments.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT:

The Planning Commission reviewed the sketch plan at its November 24, 2014 meeting. In reviewing the Halcyon Cemetery Sketch Plan, the Planning Commission provided high level review and initial feedback to the applicant regarding the proposal. Greater detail of the Planning Commission's review comments can be found in the Planning Commission minutes (DRAFT). However, staff wanted to highlight the following items that were identified during the Planning Commission review:

- The Planning Commission asked why the proposed cemetery is subject to the plat review process of the City's subdivision ordinance. In order for use of the property as a cemetery to proceed, it must be properly filed with Washington County as a plat. In order for this to occur, the City must approve the plat.
- There was general discussion about the use of the existing buildings on site. The existing home would be used for administrative purposes, as a greeting or gathering space, and as a full-time caretaker's residence. The existing accessory building on the site would be used as a maintenance building or garage.
- There was discussion about the location of the access with regards to access spacing to nearby Lake Elmo Avenue (CSAH 17). Staff will contact Washington County to get their input on the location of the driveway on 50th Street.
- The proposed activities of the cemetery were discussed. The applicants noted that the site will not perform the same services as a funeral home. Cremation services or other services for the dead will not be performed on-site.
- The security of the site was also discussed. The applicant is planning for a tall security fence to secure the site. A gate will also be employed when the site is closed at night. In addition to security, screening using landscaping or trees was also discussed adjacent to residential properties.
- The neighboring property owner, Deb Downing, provided the Planning Commission with a list of questions for the applicant. Ms. Downing's email is provided as Attachment #6. The applicant and staff addressed several of the neighbor's questions.

In providing feedback directly to the applicant, the Planning Commission was able to communicate the areas of future focus and review. The applicant noted that after review by the City Council, they will likely start preparing a preliminary plat application.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS:

Strengths: Providing a review of a sketch or concept plan allows for initial review of a development plan in advance of preliminary/final plat application. This process allows the City to identify critical issues and set expectations before the applicant has expended significant resources in preparing a preliminary plat.

Weaknesses: Transitioning the use from a single family home to a cemetery will take the property off the property tax rolls, as cemeteries under 300 acres are exempt. However, per current zoning ordinance, cemeteries are a permitted use in Agricultural and Rural Residential zones.

Opportunities: The applicant has noted that there are few opportunities for non-denominational burials and similar services in the area. They view the potential market for such use in the coming years as strong.

Threats: None

RECOMMENDATION:

No formal action is required as part of the sketch plan review. The City Council is asked to provide high-level review and feedback regarding the proposed cemetery. The review comments and issues identified in this stage of review are utilized to inform a future preliminary/final plat application.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Staff Report to the Planning Commission, 11/24/14
2. Location Map
3. Application Form
4. Existing Conditions Plan
5. Cemetery Sketch Plan
6. Email from Deb Downing, 5135 Lake Elmo Ave. N.