



MAYOR & COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

DATE: June 2, 2015

REGULAR

ITEM # 7

AGENDA ITEM: Zoning Text Amendment – Commercial Wedding Ceremony Venue Ordinance

SUBMITTED BY: Kyle Klatt, Community Development Director

THROUGH: Dean Zuleger, City Administrator

REVIEWED BY: Nick M. Johnson, City Planner
Planning Commission

SUGGESTED ORDER OF BUSINESS (if removed from the Consent Agenda):

- 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: The Planning Commission is recommending approval of a zoning text amendment to expand the opportunities to conduct Commercial Wedding Ceremony Venues within the community.

FISCAL IMPACT: None – The City’s review of the requested Zoning Text Amendment is reimbursed through the submitted application fee.

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED: The City has received a request from Danielle Hecker, 11658 50th Street North, to amend the City’s Zoning Ordinance to allow Commercial Wedding Ceremony Venues as in interim use permit within the City’s RR – Rural Residential zoning districts. The City Code presently restricts such uses to the A – Agriculture and RT – Rural Transitional Districts. The applicant is also asking to increase the maximum number of guests allowed at each event from 150 to 200. After reviewing the request and conducting a public hearing on this matter, the Planning Commission and Staff are recommending approval of the requested amendment with further restrictions on the application of the ordinance as noted below. The motion to take the recommended action on the request is as follows:

“Move to adopt Ordinance 08-121, amending the Zoning Ordinance to allow Commercial Wedding Ceremony Venues as in interim use permit within the City’s RR – Rural Residential zoning districts and to increase the maximum number of guests allowed at each event from 150 to 200”

In addition, Staff is recommending that the City Council authorize summary publication of the approved ordinance through the following motion:

“Move to adopt Resolution No. 2015-45, authorizing summary publication of Ordinance 08-121.”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION/STAFF REPORT: The City of Lake Elmo has received a petition from Danielle Hecker, 11658 50th Street North, to amend the City’s Zoning Ordinance to allow Commercial Wedding Ceremony Venues as in interim use permit within the City’s RR – Rural Residential zoning districts. The City Code presently restricts such uses to the A – Agriculture and RT – Rural Transitional Districts. The applicant is also asking to increase the maximum number of guests allowed at each event from 150 to 200. The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on the request consistent with the review requirements for ordinance amendments. The applicant currently resides at the above address, and should the zoning amendment be approved by the City, intends to submit an applicant for an interim use permit in accordance with the Commercial Wedding Ceremony Ordinance to operate such a use from this property.

The attached report to the Planning Commission contains additional information concerning the request, in addition to the Staff recommendation to the Commission. Staff recommended approval of the request with additional restrictions concerning sites within RR zoning districts that would be suitable for such uses.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT: The Planning Commission reviewed the applicant’s request at a public hearing on May 27, 2015. The Commission heard testimony concerning the zoning amendment from two neighboring property owners as documented in the draft minutes from the meeting, and also received written comments from three additional individuals (these comments are attached to this memorandum). The City has also received one more email concerning the request since the Planning Commission meeting, and this email has also been copied for consideration by the Council. In general, the comments that have been received express the following concerns about the request:

- The increased traffic on 50th Street from the applicant’s site.
- The safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized commuters along 50th Street due to an increase in traffic and narrow travel lanes on the road.
- The lack of a trail along the western portion of 50th Street for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- The potential queuing of vehicles at Highway 5 and Highway 17 after events.

- That the proposed commercial use is not consistent with a residential area and is not consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- The ability of 50th Street to handle additional traffic.
- Potential conflicts due to noise and other nuisances from the wedding venue site that is not compatible with rural uses and activities.
- That the proposed change does not take into account the desires of the entire community.
- The compatibility of larger parking area with surrounding residential uses.
- The potential disruptions to residents that live along a quiet street in the community.
- The risk that the use of alcohol may be served and that reception-type activities would take place on the premises.
- Potential conflicts with the proposed residential development around the site.

The Commission generally debated the merits of the proposed amendment, and spent time discussing whether or not the ordinance change was consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan. It was noted that preserving an older, historic barn was in line with the City's Plan, and that protecting this type of historic building should be the primary objective of the ordinance and not specifically preserving farm land. The Commission also debated the maximum number of guests that should be allowed under the ordinance, and ultimately voted to increase this number to 200 as per the applicant's request. The applicant pointed out that the average wedding size through the nation is around 150, but that this number has been decreasing according to recent trends. The Commission also noted that the interim use ordinance process offers additional control for the City if any problems arise from the operation of the facility.

The Commission supported the Staff recommendation to further restrict the applicability of the ordinance to sites that have served as the farmstead for the surrounding agricultural land and that involve the re-use of a historic building on the site that is at least 75 years old.

The Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval of the zoning text amendment to allow Commercial Wedding Ceremony Venues as in interim use permit within the City's RR – Rural Residential zoning districts and to increase the maximum number of guests allowed at each event from 150 to 200 with the additional restrictions as recommended by Staff (Vote: 5-0).

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS:

Strengths: The Planning Commission found that the ordinance amendment would help preserve historic agricultural buildings within the City.

The ordinance expands upon the existing ordinance that allows additional opportunities for use of agricultural properties that may no longer be viable as farmland.

Weaknesses: The ordinance would allow the expansion of a more commercial-type of activity into rural residential areas.

Wedding ceremony venues will generate additional traffic at peak times immediately prior to and after each event. The venues could potentially generate other negative impacts that need to be managed on the site (noise, trash, parking, etc.).

Opportunities: The potential for re-use of historic buildings that would otherwise have limited use.

Threats: Wedding venues by their nature will result in the gathering of larger numbers of people at one location, which can result in some impacts to surrounding properties. The ordinance establishes standards in order to contain or limit any negative impacts.

RECOMMENDATION: Based on the aforementioned, the Planning Commission and staff are recommending that the City Council approve the proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to allow Commercial Wedding Ceremony Venues as in interim use permit within the City's RR – Rural Residential zoning districts and to increase the maximum number of guests allowed at each event from 150 to 200 with the additional restrictions as documented in the attached Ordinance 08-121. The recommended motion to take action on the request is as follows:

“Move to adopt Ordinance 08-121, amending the Zoning Ordinance to allow Commercial Wedding Ceremony Venues as in interim use permit within the City's RR – Rural Residential zoning districts and to increase the maximum number of guests allowed at each event from 150 to 200”

In addition, Staff is recommending that the City Council authorize summary publication of the approved ordinance through the following motion:

“Move to adopt Resolution No. 2015-45, authorizing summary publication of Ordinance 08-121.”

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ordinance 08-121
2. Resolution No. 2015-45
3. Planning Commission Report – 5/27/15
4. Application Form
5. Application Narrative
6. Proposed Ordinance Amendment (as requested by applicant)
7. Location Map (applicant's property in red)
8. Aerial Photograph of Site with Property Measurements
9. Propose Site Layout with Parking
10. Ordinance No. 08-107 (Commercial Wedding Ceremony Venue)
11. Public Comments:
 - a. Rebecca Tenpas
 - b. Laurel Drevlow
 - c. Jennifer Pelletier
 - d. Ann Heimerman