



**City of Lake Elmo
Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes of November 9, 2015**

Chairman Dodson called to order the meeting of the Lake Elmo Planning Commission at 7:00 p.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Dodson, Dorschner, Haggard, Larson, Griffin Kreimer and Williams. Fields joined at 9:15

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Fields until 9:15

STAFF PRESENT: City Planner Stephen Wensman

Approve Agenda:

The agenda was accepted as presented.

Approve Minutes: None

Presentation – Public Safety and Response Time

Chief Malmquist presented data regarding public safety and response time. They identify those things that they can control and make the response time quicker. Chief Malmquist went over the County street naming system. It is a grid pattern. This has been complicated with the winding roads in the new developments. The other problem we have in Lake Elmo is the one access point in Developments.

Chief Malmquist also talked about the street widths. He stated that he had sat down with Engineer Griffin and came up with some standards and would like the City Council and Planning Commission to support those standards. Malmquist talked about connectivity. There is a reason that the City put in stubs. These neighborhoods need to be connected for response time. If they are on a call, they may get another one and have to go around to the next one. One argument against connectivity was that it creates a safety issue for children. Malmquist stated that for how dense Cimarron is, there has never been a call for a child being struck by a car.

Chief Malmquist would appreciate the Planning Commission supporting his recommendations for safety issues moving forward.

Business Item – General Discussion of Open Space Preservation Ordinance

City Planner Wensman introduced the topic of the Open Space Preservation Ordinance. There is currently a project in the works, and the City Council thought this would be a good time to discuss if some changes would be appropriate. The topics that have been suggested for discussion are to review the purpose and possible flexibility. Should the density go from 18 to 20 homes per 40 acres? How should the density be calculated and how should the buffer setbacks be dealt with? Should there be a buffer between two OP developments. What should septic system options be? Should community systems be allowed going forward? Should there be a minimum lot size for individual septic? Should we allow the community septic? How should lot design be determined? Should the septic be the most important?

Dorschner stated that we need to decide if we want to stay rural. If that is the case, we need to consider the environment and the impacts of septic if we are not going to have sewer. He would like to hear from U of M or Washington County on what is acceptable.

The Commission likes the OP, but some would like more choice such as RE. Dodson mentioned that with RE, residents would use their property more for things such as gardens etc. In some OP developments, the open space is not accessible or even usable.

Larson would like to talk about the land trust documents as well and what kind of uses would be allowed.

Williams thinks the first sentence of the purpose statement is fine, but would like the second and third sentence to read “This type of development is intended to provide additional flexibility of housing styles in the City. It provides an alternative to large lot, single family housing and will reduce the cost of constructing and maintaining costly infrastructure.”

Dodson asked what single family attached would mean. Wensman stated it is 2 or more single family homes that share a common wall.

Haggard would like to add “natural Habitats” and have the first line read “The purpose of open space preservation (OP) is to maintain the rural character of Lake Elmo by preserving agricultural land, woodlands, corridors, natural habitats and other significant natural features, while allowing residential development consistent with the goals and objectives of the City’s Comprehensive Plan.”

Planning Commission would like an update from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and Washington County regarding septic design and why there are failing systems.

Dodson would like on page 3 Item (2) 4 to change “deed Covenants” to “CIC Declarations”.

There was a general discussion regarding septic systems. What type should be allowed and who should oversee. There are several items that need to be discussed, but the Commission would like a presentation from the County and MPCA before a decision would be made on which way to go.

Wensman asked if the Commission felt it was appropriate for septic systems to be located in the preserved open space. Some members thought it was fine, but others wanted to think about it.

Williams is not in favor of increasing the density. The density already reflects a bonus that was intended to stimulate development. The smaller lots already provides a bonus by having fewer roads and infrastructure when the homes are clustered. Dorschner and Dodson do not believe that we should increase the numbers in the rural areas for OP to relieve the numbers in the sewerred areas. This is where the higher numbers belong. We need to think about the environment and how we are managing these septic systems. The Planning Commission as a whole is not in favor of increasing density. They also are not in favor of changing the density calculation. They would like to leave it at buildable acres. Wensman stated that buildable land is usually how all developments are measured.

Williams suggested that the Commission consider changing the 50% open space to be based on gross acres vs. buildable acres.

Dodson feels that minimum lot size is linked to the type of septic that it has. Others are interested in what Washington County has to say regarding septic. Williams might like to see larger lots to preserve the rural character in the OP. Kreimer is concerned that the 1 acre for individual well and septic might not be big enough. He feels that there should be a requirement at preliminary plat to prove that the lot perks when they come before them for primary and secondary drainfields and where the house is going to be.

The majority of the Commission still would like to see a 1 acre minimum even with a shared sewer system.

Williams mentioned that there is such a variance in buffer zones because in the past, there was not enough oversight. He would like the existing rules to be enforced.

The Commission was interested in exploring using discretion with the buffers. They would like to explore a possible list of things that could be used for deciding when and how large of a buffer to employ, instead of just requiring one.

Dodson feels that anything less than 40 acres is too small for an OP development, especially if there is a CIC. Other Commissioners felt that anything smaller than 40 acres might require private septic. The Commission wanted the Planning staff to explore if it is even viable to do less than 40 acres for OP. Some thought anything less than 40 acres should possibly be RE.

The Planning Commission discussed the lot design objectives and their relevance. There was no real consensus on this.

Dodson asked that the boulevard landscaping be checked for consistency with our landscaping code. If it is a higher standard we would keep it in, if not we should probably defer to the landscape code.

Williams asked about the impervious surface allowed and thought 20% of gross seemed high and possibly should be buildable.

Williams thinks the review process should follow that of any other development within the City. This section needs to match what we are already doing, or possibly it should be one section for all types of development. Also the wording in 150.179 should probably be changed from “development stage plan” to “Preliminary Plat”. 150.183 (2) (e) should also include trails. 150.184 should be reviewed for public hearing and stage requirements. Williams would like to add something to the effect that an application is not complete until all of the City Engineers comments are met. Commissioners would like these met before the preliminary plat moves forward.

Dodson would like “Homeowners Association” changed to “Common Interest Community” wherever it appears in ordinance.

Council Updates – October 20, 2015 Meeting

1. Hammes Plat Extension – Passed

Staff Updates

1. Upcoming Meetings
 - a. November 23, 2015
 - b. December 14, 2015

Commission Concerns

Haggard asked if the staff has a chart regarding all of the developments that have passed and all of the conditions of approval. Have they all been met? How is this tracked? Wensman stated that it is an issue that they are going to be working on.

Dodson stated that Fields, Rolf and he went to a seminar. He went to energy planning which was very interesting and they talked about how this should be part of the planning.

Williams stated that his packet did not arrive until Monday at 5:00. He would like to see packets arrive on Thursdays before the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Ziertman
Planning Program Assistant