

**City of Falcon Heights
Planning Commission Minutes
August 26, 2014**

PRESENT: Commissioners Alexander, Black, Fite, Gustafson, Murphy, Williams, Council Member Harris, Staff Liaison Petersen, City Planner Lewis, and Attorney Mattick

ABSENT: Commissioner Wartick

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by the Chair, Commissioner Black, who noted that a quorum was present. New Commissioner Tom Williams was introduced to the Commission. The minutes of the May 27, 2014 meeting of the Planning Commission were approved.

Public Hearing on PUD Amendment at 1790 Larpenteur Ave W.

City Planner Addison Lewis presented the staff report on the case. The property at 1790 Larpenteur Ave W is the former Hermes site which previously received a PUD amendment in 2013 to allow for an urban farm and housing development. The Pohlads Family Foundation is requesting this amendment to the original PUD for the approval of revised site, architectural, grading, drainage, utility and landscaping plans. This new request was needed because the original PUD allowed for use of the existing buildings on the site, and since that time the buildings were found to be heavily damaged and unusable.

Another change since the original approval is that CommonBond is no longer developing the second parcel. Because the PUD was already approved for a 47 unit housing development that is the only allowed use for that parcel at this time. If a new developer would like to make any substantial changes to those plans another PUD amendment would have to be requested.

Lewis went over the staff findings including that the requested amendment is in harmony with the original purpose and intent for the development and is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The new principal building will be located in approximately the same footprint as the previous building. Only a portion of the building is proposed at this time with an allowance for two expansions at a later date. There will be more parking spots than were originally proposed, as a large outbuilding that was taken down will be replaced with a much smaller storage shed. In addition, the 4 small hoop houses that were originally proposed will be replaced with 3 slightly larger hoop houses.

Commissioner Murphy asked what the size difference was between the original approval and the new request. Lewis advised that the proposed new building is 12,612 sq.ft. with two future expansions, which would be roughly the same size as the previous 19,356 sq.ft. principal building.

The Chair opened the hearing at 7:16 p.m. The first speaker was a representative of the applicant, Terry Egge of the Pohlads Family Foundation. Egge provided an overview of the business operations, training, and educational opportunities that will be provided at the new Food Hub. She went on to say that once the Hub is established it will be turned over to a non-profit organization that the Pohlads Family Foundation will be founding for the sole purpose

of owning and operating the Food Hub. She also stated that the non-profit will not be seeking tax-exempt status.

Kim Bretheim of LHB, architect for the project, spoke on the new design concept. He stated that the building layout will be geared much more toward educational spaces than the previous building would have allowed. He also outlined several stormwater management measures to be taken including green roof space and rain gardens.

Jim Bykowski, 1745 St. Mary's St, asked who the target consumer was for the farm, Egge confirmed that the general public will be the target consumer. Bykowski went on to express concern that only one part of the property was being developed at this time and ask what actions are being taken to recruit a housing developer, and what happens if a successful developer is unable to be found.

There being no other persons wishing to speak, the hearing was closed at 7:30 p.m.

Planning Commission Discussion and Action

Black asked that the applicant speak on the development of the housing portion and what measures are being taken to develop the second parcel. Egge stated that The Foundation will continue to own the second parcel until they find a buyer that will be able to develop it in a complementary manner to the Food Hub as originally planned. The Foundation would like to get the Food Hub developed because they do not want to let both parcels sit empty until a housing developer can be found. They are actively seeking developers for that site and will proceed as soon as they are able, but wish to continue with the Food Hub at this time.

Alexander asked the Commission about the desirability of multifamily housing in Falcon Heights as many of the apartment buildings in town do not seem to be in high demand. Black said that he does not know the exact need for multifamily housing but that the Metropolitan Council encourages the building of multifamily units throughout the metro, and that the Comprehensive Plan needs to allow space for those types of developments.

Murphy asked the applicant why the lots were configured in that manner when they were replatted originally. Bretheim stated that traffic and emergency access to Larpenteur, as well as the location of existing curb cuts were a large part of the design of the plats. He also stated that the original plats were part of the previous approval and are not being changed at this time. Black stated that he understood the property lines were drawn that way to utilize the existing buildings for the Food Hub and allow for the housing development, and also so that each plat would have access to Larpenteur. Bretheim confirmed that was the reason.

Fite and Murphy expressed concern about potential issues with traffic and access from Larpenteur to the Food Hub. Bretheim stated that traffic counts show that even with full development of the Food Hub and housing development there will be less traffic than Hermes generated when it was operating at its peak at the same location.

Gustafson asked for clarification on the PUD as it allows for mixed-use at this location with the urban farm and housing in close proximity, but the housing portion is not being developed at this time. Mattick advised that the use is not changing for this parcel and the

only thing that is allowed on the second parcel is housing. Any changes to that use or the current plan would require the new applicant to apply for another PUD amendment.

Harris inquired as to the tax status of the non-profit organization to be founded. Egge stated that while the organization will be a non-profit, that they will not seek tax exempt status. Mattick confirmed that a non-profit could have the ability to apply for tax-exempt status, but is not guaranteed to receive that status.

Commissioner Murphy moved, Commissioner Gustafson seconded, that the Planning Commission recommend that the City Council grant a PUD amendment to Section 113-209. In addition, Commissioner Fite moved, Commissioner Gustafson seconded, that the proposed application be accepted by City Council and that they take the tax status of the future non-profit organization into consideration when deliberating this issue. Both motions were approved unanimously. The Council will take action on this application on September 10.

Information and Announcements:

Murphy asked about the notification process for public hearing as he was concerned that renters may not have been notified. Lewis and Mattick stated that the notifications are done in accordance with state statute and that public hearings are published in the official city paper and property owners within 350 feet are notified by mail. Commissioners expressed interest in learning more about notification processes.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Chelsea Petersen, Staff Liaison