

MEMBERS PRESENT: Greg Colby, Tracy Davis, Jim Herreid, Alice Thomas, Suzie Nakasian, and Steve Rholl

ABSENT: Vacant Seat

ALSO PRESENT: Bob Gill, Rick Estenson, Betsey Buckheit, Northfield News, City Engineer Katy Gehler, Community Development Director Brian O'Connell, City Planner Dan Olson, Recording Secretary Sandra Bremer and other interested citizens

1) Call to Order and Approval of Agenda

Chair Colby called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

A motion was made by Herreid and seconded by Thomas to approve the agenda of January 7, 2010. All in favor. Motion carried.

2) Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Thomas and seconded by Davis to approve the minutes for the work session of December 1, 2009, as amended to attach an addendum to the minutes regarding Table 2.2-1. All in favor. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Davis and seconded by Nakasian to approve the minutes for the special meeting of December 15, 2009. All in favor. Motion carried.

3) Unfinished Business Action Items:

a) Recommendation on Annexation of Properties in Bridgewater Township

Olson gave a summary of his Staff report. He noted Staff was recommending Alternative #2.

Concerns raised by the members included the following:

- Clarification of the EQC recommendation regarding the impact on the wood turtles in this area.
- A Bridgewater Township Supervisor statement that they would not consider approving the annexation until the stream protection ordinance was in place.
- Timing regarding the annexation process, the stream protection ordinance review process, the LDC review process and Master Planning process.
- Consideration of Alternatives #3 and #4.
- Proceeding with the Master Planning process before the ordinances were in place and the cost benefit.

Staff addressed these issues.

Members were generally in favor of the annexation but a concern was raised in regards to the timing of the ordinance reviews.

A motion was made by Herreid and seconded by Rholl to recommend to the City Council Alternative #2 that reads the Planning Commission could recommend to the City Council annexation of the two properties knowing that the City has a Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) currently in place that will guide any development within City limits. In addition, storm water and creek protection ordinances are to be adopted by the City Council around mid-2010 (as required by the City's MS4 permit), in consultation with the Planning Commission, Environmental Quality Commission, Cannon River Watershed Partnership, and other interested groups or individuals. Therefore, these ordinances would be in place long before the properties are actually developed. If the City Council gives preliminary approval to the annexation requests, subject to the approval of a revised annexation agreement between the City and Bridgewater Township, the revision of the agreement and the adoption of the storm water and creek protection ordinances could happen simultaneously with the following conditions:

The City and Bridgewater Township sign a revised orderly annexation agreement, which will outline future tax payments and other issues related to this annexation.

1. The two property owners sign an annexation agreement with the City. Staff recommends that the following be made a part of this agreement:

- **In annexing the property, the City is not committing to assist in funding the needed infrastructure installations, including extensions of utilities and streets.**
- **The conceptual plan submitted by the applicant (Attachment #6) is NOT considered approved. Instead, a master plan for the properties would be developed by the Northfield 3rd Business and Industrial Park Steering Committee, and their consultant.**
- **The following recommendations of the PRAB are incorporated as a condition of approval of the annexation request:**
 - **The City Council should follow the park dedication requirements as per City ordinances during development.**
 - **The Neighborhood Park #9 as shown in the City's Park, Open Space, and Trail System Plan, be redesignated as a Community Park, and also relocated adjacent to Sechlar Park to create a larger park mass.**
 - **Create green corridors along both streams and parkland at the confluence of the two streams.**
 - **Protect any and all wetlands in the annexation area.**
- **The following recommendations of the EQC are incorporated as a condition of approval of the annexation request:**
 - **Development of the Praver-Gill property should not impact the wood turtle (*Clemmys insculpta*), within or nearby to the annexation area.**
 - **When master planning the annexation area, consideration should be shown to the connectivity of a given natural area to other natural areas, and the potential utilization of the area by local wildlife.**

- **In developing the properties, it is important to realize shading of Rice Creek assists in maintaining the stream’s viability as a trout stream, and that slopes (~8%) near the streams in the annexation area are susceptible to erosion.**
- **Areas adjacent to the floodway (lower parts of benches adjacent to the streams) should be protected to allow for seasonal high water, and to further enhance the riparian zones of the streams.**
- **When master planning the annexation area, consideration should be given to the possibility of preserving productive agricultural land, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resource Conservations Service.**
- **Thorough geotechnical data should be collected prior to development of the annexation area.**
- **Tools or strategies should be investigated to preserve more open space. These tools are described as “Other Protection Programs” on pages 5.8 and 5.9 of the Comprehensive Plan.**
- **If the Praver-Gill properties are developed, conservation of open space land should be concentrated on the southeastern area of the properties (the area where the two streams converge with the Cannon River). Development would be better directed toward the northwest portion of the properties.**
- **The City should consider imposing buffer restrictions beyond those mandated by the State of Minnesota to ensure the long-term health of both streams. Input from the “Rice Creek (Spring Brook) Concerned Citizens Group”, who completed a report dated November 13, 2009, and the Cannon River Watershed Partnership should be considered in developing the buffer restrictions.**
- **Prior to development application(s) being submitted to the City, the property owners will submit the following information for the City’s review. This information is in addition to what the City normally requires in the development approval process:**
 - **As required by Minnesota Rules, the property owners will complete an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW), Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR), or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the annexation area.**
 - **Traffic study showing the transportation impacts on the area within the properties, and the surrounding area.**
 - **Delineate the wetland(s) on the properties.**
 - **Delineate the floodway and floodway fringe districts on the properties.**

Thomas indicated she would be voting no based on her concerns regarding the timing but she was in favor of the annexation.

Staff explained the annexation process and the relationship this process had to the ordinance review processes.

Vote on motion to recommend to the City Council Alternative #2 with conditions. Yes votes by: Herreid, Nakasian, Rholl, Davis, and Colby. No vote by Thomas. Motion carried.

Olson noted this item is slated to go to the City Council on January 19, 2010.

Members felt that the recommendation should also have a statement as from the Planning Commission as follows: At the Planning Commission meeting of January 7, 2010, the Commission selected Alternative #2, which recommended approval to the City Council of the 456-acre annexation request of the Praver-Gill properties, with the conditions noted in the motion. The vote of the Commission was five to one in favor of the request. The vote against annexation was based on the position that the annexation should be delayed until completion of both the Land Development Code and the updated stormwater and stream protection ordinances, both critical tools given the unique, sensitive natural resources involved. Commission members stated that they are unanimous in their support of the annexation requests, but have significant concerns about the impact of future development on the environmental resources, including the two streams in the area and more particularly, the Brook Trout habitat represented in Rice Creek. The Planning Commission advises the City Council that development in this area preserve and enhance the environmental features of the annexation area, while at the same time pursuing viable economic development for Northfield.

- 4) New Business Action Items:
 - a) Elect Chair and Vice Chair for 2010

Colby indicated he had submitted a letter to the Mayor indicating his desire to step down from the Planning Commission once the LDC is near completion. He indicated he has been chair for two years and would not want to continue as chair.

A motion was made by Herreid and seconded by Thomas to nominate Davis as Chair and Thomas as Vice Chair. All in favor. Motion carried.

Members thanked Colby for his two years as chair.

- b) Liaison Assignments for 2010

The following assignments were made and would be completed at the next meeting. It was noted that changes may be made once the new member is appointed.

EDA – Rholl
HRA – Herreid
Rice County Board of Commissioners or Planning Commission – Thomas
Dundas Planning Commission – Nakasian
EQC – Nakasian
CC – Davis with backup from Rholl and Nakasian
Arts & Culture – Thomas

PRAB – not assigned

There was discussion regarding the role of the liaison to cover these meetings and this will be discussed at the January 21, 2010, meeting in more detail.

The issue of being more involved in the Townships was raised and this will also be discussed in more detail. Staff reviewed the periodic governance meetings that are currently taking place.

c) Annual Review of Planning Commission By-laws

There was discussion of the by-laws with members raising questions that were addressed by Staff. The following changes were made to the by-laws and approved by the members: Page 3, Section V (c) change to read "...on the *first and third Thursdays* of the month..." and on page 6, Section VII (d) change to read "...conversations between *three* Commission members..."

The members would like to clarify the basis for our ZBA decisions. It was agreed that language would be added to the statement read before a public hearing at the Zoning Board of Appeals meetings that would reflect that the ZBA in its consideration of a variance is legally required to determine that each of the five criteria is met before a variance can be approved. The criteria will be cited by chair and/or listed in a medium visible to the public at the meeting.

d) Staff Presentation on Staff Reports

Staff asked members to take a look at the Staff reports presented to them and at a future meeting offer any comments, suggested changes, etc. on how they are presented.

e) Discuss Meeting Minutes – Removed from Agenda

5) Reports and Discussion Items: None

6) Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Submitted by:

Sandra Bremer
Recording Secretary