



**CITY OF LONG LAKE  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
May 8, 2018**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Adams.

Present: Commission Members: Adams, Miner, Hughes, See, and Keating; and City Administrator Weske

Absent: None

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**APPROVE AGENDA**

*Commissioner See moved to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Keating seconded. Ayes: all.*

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**A. Minutes of the February 13, 2018 Planning Commission Meeting**

Commissioner Keating requested a correction to page 1, last paragraph, changing 'Adam' to 'Adams' and the motion second from Commissioner 'Keating' to Commissioner 'Miner.'

*Commissioner Miner moved to approve the Consent Agenda as corrected above. Commissioner See seconded. Ayes: all.*

**OPEN CORRESPONDENCE**

None.

**BUSINESS ITEMS**

**A. Review of Draft "Vernacular Design Guidelines" Document Prepared by Consultant Barry Petit (2<sup>nd</sup> Draft, Received 5/1/2018)**

It was noted staff recommends the Planning Commission review the draft "Vernacular Design Guidelines" document prepared by consultant Barry Petit, and provide feedback focused on use and application of the document during consideration of future land use applications, development, and redevelopment projects.

Chair Adams noted a new draft has been distributed for review tonight.

Mr. Petit stated this is the latest draft, noting the front-page mention of this being part of the Zoning Ordinance or Comprehensive Plan, which is also noted on page 1. Mr. Petit stated his preference would be for the Vernacular Design Guidelines to be incorporated by reference in the Zoning Ordinance. Theoretically, the Comprehensive Plan would be at the '10,000-foot level' and the Vernacular Design Guidelines would be more definitive in detail.

Mr. Petit described what an applicant would receive and what the City expects to be submitted. He stated he thought about locating the application towards the front of the Vernacular Design Guidelines; however, since that placement would take away from the narrative, he would suggest locating it at the end.

Commissioner See agreed, noting a location at the end of the Vernacular Design Guidelines would also force the applicant to read through the information before getting to the actual application.

Mr. Petit explained it will take time to simplify the formatting, but first they need to come up with a story on why the City is doing this, focusing on the survey, and presenting architectural images. The Guidelines feed off the idea that having fewer elements (materials, colors) on the building is a component of better design. Expanding along that line and surrounding the theme of restraint is to pursue simplicity, which is the narrative of the story and builds on the idea of pursuing better design. He noted four images were in the survey. The two images with two to three materials were highly received. The two images with 11 materials were not well received.

Mr. Petit stated the Guidelines then go into the idea of color, which is critical in calming design and using restraint. Mr. Petit displayed a building image, noting the clarity of the shop, address, name, and door all point to restraint.

Mr. Petit stated with composition, it is a bit more complicated and contains an idea of the building having a base, middle, and top design with the base holding the building to the ground. Another option is form-based design, similar to building blocks of different colors that create building design with no logic.

Commissioner Keating asked whether 'composition' is the right word. Mr. Petit stated 'composition' is not a bad word but he would be open to a better descriptor.

Mr. Petit explained the need for logic to the building, a hierarchy (where is the front door), color with restraint, and inherent simplicity. Those are the four overarching items that result in restraint. He commented on quality construction, noting the classic cheap veneer brick results in an acute outside corner. Those are the things that reveal quality. He stated for the City, it is a matter of how far you go.

Commissioner See asked Mr. Petit whether, in his work as an architect, he preferred to have as many questions answered as possible. Mr. Petit stated he worked with a good firm so these issues didn't come up because good architects are doing good work. However, the fees are low at 3%, it's a grind, and the talented folks cannot exist in that realm.

Commissioner See stated that is why the City is creating this document, to give guidance and assure good design. Mr. Petit stated there is no question on the architecture licensing exam related to good design. Ergo, the architect graduates are not necessarily good in that realm; but that is why he is here, to determine how the City can become the line of defense.

Mr. Petit continued presentation of the Vernacular Design Guidelines and described other issues with poor design and materials that end up looking bad over time. He stated if these issues can be conquered, it will greatly help the City down the road.

Commissioner Keating asked if a builder wants to construct in downtown and the City agrees, does that mean a Planning Commissioner has to watch the construction to make sure the guidelines and requirements are being followed. Mr. Petit stated he has been through some 'switch and bait' problems but ultimately, drawings are submitted for review and with these buildings everything should be on the drawing before construction starts. Then it is beholding on someone to make sure those plans are followed as approved.

Chair Adams stated that would be the responsibility of the City's Building Inspector. Mr. Petit agreed. Chair Adams stated when he built his house, he noticed that the material specified for trim was not being installed and while the City does the best it can, the Building Inspector may not catch something like that.

City Administrator Weske stated if money is on the line (i.e., escrow), then you are more assured the developer will play by the rules.

Mr. Petit stated EFIS (stucco like exterior finish) is the least expensive construction material and comes out of modern architecture so it became a major material but depending on how windows are placed, it can look cheap and two dimensional without depth. To counter that, restrictions can be place to require windows and doors to be inset.

Mr. Petit referenced page 11 that dealt with the issue of height. He stated the issue of height merits a good discussion because when you look at Long Lake, east and west, anything can go anywhere, though housing would not go on the ground floor. He found it interesting that what defines the area is not the use but, rather, height. As long as the setbacks are met and height is set, then density will happen by default as well as parking.

Mr. Petit displayed a map with a line around the downtown area, noting what will be constructed is retail, then office, then multi-family housing so it is a matter of how they are layered and there is no reason they wouldn't fit anywhere within the downtown area depending on height. Mr. Petit stated on Daniels Street, you could even make a case for a six-story building. He explained that it will be controlled by setbacks, parking requirement, and height.

Mr. Petit reviewed examples of different heights, noting it takes into consideration how buildings are really constructed including insulation and parapet to assure the height is a real number and eliminates variance requests to add another foot or so. He stated with multi-family and condos, it requires housing to be moved off the ground level, possibly replaced by parking.

Mr. Petit displayed a slide depicting a rooftop garden that allows opportunity for an organic and fun design and use, but it may add another floor that can be setback from the building

edge. City Administrator Weske stated rooftop bars on a commercial business is another opportunity. Mr. Petit agreed and stated this design element (rooftop garden or use) would make the city more organic, lively, and visually fun.

Chair Adams mentioned several rooftop locations that would have lake views and create more economic opportunity for the business. Mr. Petit stated rooftop use would have minimal impact in design but create maximum impact in value.

Mr. Petit explained why the application is problematic because it becomes too complicated and suggested if the applicant requests no variances, then the City's focus should be design and not setbacks or parking because they are being met. He reviewed a draft worksheet the applicant would complete when a variance is not requested. Mr. Petit stated he believes the marketplace will dictate how the interior of the building is laid out. He noted the developer goes to a lot of expense and risk so if a variance is not requested, he would rather they spend their funds on good design and follow the rules.

City Administrator Weske stated that sounds like it would not be a big issue, noting the drainage plans are requested because Code requires them to go before West Metro.

Chair Adams stated he is supportive of going in this direction but noted that even though colors are given, who decides what is dark brown. Mr. Petit agreed it is subjective and explained the Zoning Ordinance and Design Standards always respond to the last bad thing. He is hoping the City can come at it in a different way.

Mr. Petit displayed images of colored front building elevations and described what makes the design appear flat and unappealing. He also described design elements that make the building appear solid, of quality.

Commissioner See asked if the pictures can be separated into good and bad building design rather than having them intermixed on one page. Mr. Petit stated that is a fair question. Commissioner See stated she wants to be optimistic that the applicant will want this type of guidance and thinks that separating the good and bad design images will be easier to understand.

Commissioner Keating stated it is the job of the Planning Commission to decide what is good and bad design. He noted he generally agreed with the points raised by Mr. Petit but is not so sure that should be influencing how the City looks at it to decide what is good design in Long Lake.

Chair Adams stated he likes the way the Vernacular Design Guidelines are laid out, finding it logical and directing what is good and bad design. He preferred that over a list of what is yes and a list of what is no. He agreed design is important and described the downtown Wells Fargo building that uses building materials to give a sense of being solid with longevity.

Mr. Petit continued to describe the design elements contained in the buildings pictured, noting how some over exaggerated use of building materials draw your eye to the wrong places.

Commissioner Hughes referenced a picture of the Cheesecake Factory and asked how their bad design works so well as they are hugely successful. Mr. Petit stated the Cheesecake Factory is looking for an exaggerated design but the question is what if everyone used that type of design. He stated he has no idea how Cheesecake Factory came up with this design as the building contains many different elements, five window types, arches, and wings.

Commissioner See stated the Cheesecake Factory's architecture design is loud and attracts attention but that may not be considered good design.

Mr. Petit stated with signage it is no different in design elements than the building and should be kept simple and easily read when driving by. City Administrator Weske stated the sign regulations can be written differently once the Vernacular Design Guidelines are in place as most are not wanting back lighting so it can move away from brightly lit signs.

Commissioner Hughes noted with an awning sign, it may not be easily viewed during the winter seasons. Mr. Petit stated those are the kinds of things you need to think through.

Mr. Petit presented a picture of a building that contained many signs with different type faces and colors of lettering, noting that red lettering is difficult to read as it tends to fill in when viewed. Chair Adams described a sign that was almost the same color as the background, making it difficult to read during the day. Mr. Petit stated script signs can also be difficult to read, noting the message is the critical piece.

Mr. Petit stated the Commissioners need to own the Vernacular Design Guidelines and be the disciples. It has to be understandable so the Planning Commissioners can be part of the conversation and defend it. He stated the question is where this goes in the City's documents, how is the material disseminated to assure the applicant sees this story and appreciates it. He loaned copies of *The Language of Design* for their review and stated he wants everyone to understand the language of design, noting the law has given the Planning Commission the power to design buildings down to the brick and mortar color so he feels they need to better know how to talk design.

Mr. Petit suggested the City provide the Commissioners with tools such as a subscription of *Architect Minnesota* so they become more familiar with what is going on with design as it is not static. He stated to make a difference, the Commissioners need to jump in, get involved at a deeper level, and embrace design as this will make a difference.

Chair Adams stated it appears the Planning Commission has some homework. Mr. Petit agreed and asked the Commissioners to imagine being able to decipher this information and determine if it can be understood and defended or what should be changed or added.

Commissioner Miner stated all may have a different opinion on what works and asked if the goal is to distinguish in writing what the City is looking for, which would make more sense than jumping back and forth.

Commissioner See agreed and suggested it show what the City likes and what it will not even consider. Mr. Petit stated he is not sure these photos are the best available. Commissioner See stated if the photos are grouped, it will be easier to see what is common amongst them and what type of design is supported by the City.

Chair Adams relayed a comment he received that applicants prefer receiving this type of direction because it lets them know up front what the City will support.

Mr. Petit asked the Planning Commission to review the information provided and be ready at the next meeting to ask questions

Chair Adams thanked Mr. Petit for the presentation and stated he looks forward to reading the material.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

**Council Liaison Report** – Council member Skjaret noted he has been spending a lot of time in eastern Kansas for work and is always looking for a good restaurant. He read a big article about a new mall opening in east Des Moines that had all the major restaurants. He stated he looked at the new mall and found it was a mirror image of a mall in Kansas. He agreed that some buildings contain too much in the way of design elements.

Council member Skjaret presented highlights from the last six weeks including the recently approved increase in water and sewer rates; longer-term agreement with the Orono Baseball Association including access to the concession stand and in exchange they will make capital improvements into the ballpark; clean water initiative that includes lake cleanup; receipt of a grant to install a CD3 machine at Nelson Lakeside Park to clean boats; appointment of Alicia Larson to the Park Board; approval for the Orono Lions to put up a Frisbee course at Nelson Lakeside Park; staff negotiation of a crushing contract with Eureka Construction with the funds going towards park improvements; report from Hennepin County Board Chair Jan Callison on their activity and challenges being faced; recognition of first responders who responded to a health event on March 21<sup>st</sup>. He stated the City Council will recognize retiring firefighters next month.

**Commission Member Business** – Chair Adams commented on the collaborative clean water initiative cooperative agreement with the Long Lake Waters Association that is currently waiting for one participant, the City of Orono, who has a lot of shoreline and watershed that feeds Long Lake. Chair Adams encouraged Commissioners to e-mail members and attend the upcoming meeting at Orono City Hall to encourage support of this project.

Chair Adams stated it would be nice if the County installed landscaping for the houses with a highway in front of them. City Administrator Weske stated there is a landscaping committee with a meeting coming up. He explained the zoning law allows 6-foot privacy fences at the side and back but only a 3.5-foot high fence in the front. The City has decided to waive the \$500 variance application fee for those homeowners who want a 6-foot privacy fence in their front yard.

Commissioner Keating asked if there is a plan for landscaping. Chair Adams stated the landscaping committee is working on phase 1 (downtown) with planting of diverse shade trees as well as a signage plan. The only money the County has in the budget for landscaping between the lake and Luce Line Trail is around the settling pond.

Councilmember Skjaret stated his understanding that everything removed was within the County's right-of-way. Chair Adams stated he believes everything removed was not within the County's right-of-way.

**Staff Business** – City Administrator Weske stated staff is still waiting on the final plat application for the 1070 W Wayzata Boulevard lot, which is difficult as water and sewer extensions are involved.

Commissioner Miner stated he and Commissioner Keating are on the Comprehensive Plan Task Force and it is their goal to make it more simplistic as the Plan currently goes beyond what the Metropolitan Council requires and that will also make it easier for the Planning Commission's use. He encouraged Commissioners to provide comments if they have any.

Chair Adams stated he thinks the Vernacular Design Guidelines should be in the Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Miner agreed and noted it should at least make mention of it.

Commissioner Keating stated he thinks another survey will be sent this week.

**ADJOURN**

*Commissioner See moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:59 p.m. Commissioner Keating seconded. Ayes: all.*

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Weske  
City Administrator