

CRYSTAL PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Monday, February 9, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

Council Chambers, Crystal City Hall

A. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Crystal Planning Commission convened at 7 p.m. with the following members present:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Commissioner (Ward 1) Sears [2015 Secretary]	<input type="checkbox"/> Commissioner (Ward 2) [vacant]	<input type="checkbox"/> Commissioner (Ward 4) [vacant]
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Commissioner (Ward 1) Heigel [2015 Chair]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Commissioner (Ward 3) VonRueden	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Commissioner (Ward 4) Johnson [2015 Vice Chair]
<input type="checkbox"/> Commissioner (Ward 2) Erickson (absent)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X Commissioner (Ward 3) Buck	<input type="checkbox"/> Commissioner (At-Large) Strand (absent)

Also attending were staff members John Sutter, Stephanie Revering and Gail Van Krevelen and Council Liaison Jeff Kolb.

B. INTRODUCTIONS

- New City Council Liaison Jeff Kolb

Commissioner VonRueden introduced the 2015 City Council Liaison Jeff Kolb, who represents Ward 2, to the commissioners.

C. ANNUAL ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING – ELECTION OF OFFICERS *

- Chairperson – Commissioner Buck made a motion to nominate Commissioner Heigel as Chairperson, Commissioner Sears seconded the motion.

Passed unanimously.

- Vice-Chairperson – Commissioner Heigel made a motion to nominate Commissioner Johnson as Vice-Chairperson, Commissioner Sears seconded the motion.

Passed unanimously.

- Secretary – Commissioner Buck made a motion to nominate Commissioner Sears as Secretary, Commissioner VonRueden seconded the motion.

Passed unanimously.

Commissioner Sears thanked Commissioner VonRueden for his service.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Commissioner Sears and seconded by Commissioner Buck to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2014 regular meeting with no exceptions.

Motion carried.

E. PUBLIC HEARING

1. Consider Application 2015-1 to amend the Zoning Ordinance to add Impound Lots as a Conditional Use in the I-1 District

Planner Sutter said that North Suburban Towing is currently located on the east side of West Broadway, just south of the CPRR tracks. They currently take up about 2/3 of the back of the lot. They want to move from their current location because BNSF is considering putting a connector track that would run through the back of their property. This would divert east-bound trains south on the BN line through Robbinsdale, Golden Valley and Minneapolis and then east from there.

Mr. Sutter also stated this amendment could be prompted by many things and should be considered on its own merits and if it makes sense for the community. Impound lots have not been allowed in Crystal for many years but North Suburban is currently "grandfathered" in at their current location and could continue to operate in their current location indefinitely. NST has asked that the city add impound lots as a conditional use in the I-1 zoning district so that it can relocate elsewhere in Crystal. He indicated that North Suburban is looking at a new location similar in size which is just north of their current location. The other property currently meeting the lot size requirement would be the Kevitt Excavating site at 32nd and Pennsylvania. Another option would be to combine one or more parcels to make other lots of sufficient size.

Mr. Sutter said that a lot of inner suburbs don't allow them because they use a lot of property. Brooklyn Center, Robbinsdale and Golden Valley don't allow impound lots, Brooklyn Park and New Hope do with a CUP. He also mentioned that information from Brooklyn Center made it appear there was a substantial push by Minneapolis and St Paul to displace their impound lots for redevelopment. Mr. Sutter has been approached by an impound lot in Minneapolis that was looking for an alternate location. Mr. Sutter also said he wanted the commissioners to be aware that by changing the ordinance, there would be potential for other impound lots to locate in the city as well as NST.

Mr. Sutter said that the considerations on page 2 could be potential findings, you need to state your reasons but it's your call as to which set of reasons make sense to you and what ones you want to give for changing or not changing the ordinance. He also indicated that staff did not have a recommendation but the

police chief and city manager have an interest in making this happen because NST is an essential service for that portion of city government.

Commissioner Johnson asked where the 1-acre minimum lot size in the proposed amendment came from. Mr. Sutter said that was put in so there would be no small operations, it would be larger, professionally run businesses.

Commissioner Heigel asked what the size of the current site is and why there would be increased costs if there wasn't an impound lot in Crystal. Mr. Sutter said he was unsure but it was close in size to the proposed site, and deferred the question regarding increased costs to the police chief.

Commissioner Sears questioned why it was undesirable to have impound lots since they pay taxes and were a viable business. Mr. Sutter said that he felt the city's longstanding rationale was that the areas would redevelop with businesses with more employment.

Commissioner VonRueden asked if the amendments were an addition to the current code and what the reasoning for requiring it about an active railroad. Mr. Sutter indicated that it would be an addition to the code and by requiring impound lots to be located next to an active freight railroad, it limits the sites they can locate to.

Commissioner Heigel questioned the screening of the property. Mr. Sutter said it would depend on the location and whether the screening is satisfactory to the city council.

Police Chief Stephanie Revering spoke to the commissioners and said that they had a great working relationship with North Suburban Towing. She explained there would be increased costs for the city if the impound lot was not located in Crystal because mileage fees and response times would increase.

Steve Mueller, owner of North Suburban Towing, said he's been in Crystal for 42 years. He indicated that the current site is 1.2 acres, the site they are considering is 1.1 acres. He also said they generally have 50-60 forfeitures on the lot, they run a clean operation, and don't have a thievery problem.

Dave Oyaas, employee of North Suburban Towing, said the company found out about the railroad's plans in October. The railroad said they could be expected to receive anywhere from 60 days to 2 years notice to move. Because of the size of the business, in order to keep it viable, they want to find a new location so there is no gap in service. He said the company has 2 locations, Crystal and Dayton. They service 9 police departments, 7 of which utilize the Crystal location.

Commissioner VonRueden questioned whether the railroad has acquired the property already. Mr. Oyaas said they hadn't, but the railroad has not been forthcoming with information and there has been a lot of surveying being done on the property. When asked, he said that the company employs 22 people.

Mr. Oyaas also indicated the company is considering screening the site with opaque aluminum fencing which would be more private and wouldn't rust.

Commissioner Sears asked how fast they could relocate the company. Mr. Oyaas said they could move the cars in a weekend, but getting the CUP and redeveloping and fencing the property would be more time consuming.

Moved by Commissioner VonRueden and seconded by Commissioner Buck to recommend approval of Application 2015-1 to amend the Zoning Ordinance to add Impound Lots as a Conditional Use in the I-1 District for the 4 reasons stated in the staff report and with the 10 conditions as outlined in the proposed ordinance.

Motion carried.

Mr. Sutter said that the first reading of the amendment would be at the council meeting on Tuesday, February 17th at 7 pm in the council chambers.

Commissioner Sears indicated that based on a meeting he recently attended, the railroad stated that they are behind on their 2015 schedule and it could have an effect on how quickly they would approach NST.

Commissioner Buck asked if the railroad would be taking the boating company and Thomas Auto Body. Mr. Sutter stated it was just speculation at this point, but it appeared there would a partial or total take of the Midwest Mastercraft property and a total take of the Thomas Auto Body property.

Commissioner VonRueden inquired if the railroad must negotiate to buy the properties or do they have eminent domain rights. Mr. Sutter stated they do have eminent domain and there is really no oversight from other government agencies. There are some federal permitting and environmental requirements only.

F. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. City Council actions on previous Planning Commission items:
 - December 16, 2014: Approved a rear setback variance for 4717 Florida
 - January 6, 2015: Approved shifting the rear lot line between 4939 Vera Cruz and 4938 Welcome

Planner Sutter indicated that the city still has not received the necessary mortgage releases to shift the lot line between 4939 Vera Cruz and 4938 Welcome.

2. Staff preview of likely agenda items for Monday, March 9, 2015 meeting

Mr. Sutter stated there was nothing at this time but North Suburban Towing may submit a CUP.

3. Quarterly Development Status Report

Commissioner VonRueden questioned the status of the Gaulke property. Mr. Sutter said that the city has received a revised version of the plat and the builder plans to leave the existing lot with the house and do a complete renovation, but probably won't start until mid-spring.

Mr. Sutter also informed the commissioners that he would be the replacement for retiring Community Development Director Patrick Peters, and that the city is recruiting for a new city planner who may be on hand for the April meeting.

G. OPEN FORUM

No one spoke before the commission.

H. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Commissioner Buck and seconded by Commissioner Sears to adjourn.

Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.