

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

DATE: May 23, 2016

TIME: 4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Chairperson Hahn, Commissioners Boettcher, M. Olson, L. Olson, Shortridge, Buelow, Porter and Ballard

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: City Planner Carlos Espinosa and City Planner Mark Moeller

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chairperson Hahn.

Approval of Minutes – April 25, 2016

The minutes from the Commission's meeting of April 25, 2016 were reviewed and upon motion by Commissioner M. Olson and second by Commissioner Boettcher were unanimously approved as submitted.

Public Hearing – Comprehensive Plan Amendment Request: Traditional Neighborhood to Downtown Fringe

Chairman Hahn noted that this request related to a petition from Kwik Trip Inc. to Re-zone the present YMCA property from R-2 to B-1 for a future Kwik Trip store. Given the request, two actions are required of the Commission. The first being consideration of an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan, the second, consideration of the actual rezoning request. The Comprehensive Plan Amendment will be heard first. As part of that process, he noted that the Commission would hear comments from the petitioner as well as YMCA representatives. This would be followed by Commission questions, at which point a public hearing would be opened. He again reminded those present that the Commission's role in these matters is advisory to Council. As such, following Council's receipt of Commission recommendations, it would hold additional hearings, prior to action.

At this point, Chairman Hahn called on a YMCA representative to provide comment.

Derrick Madsen, Executive Director of the YMCA, noted that the YMCA has existed for approximately 130 years as a charitable non-profit organization. Although the organization serves a number of purposes, the general umbrella of these, fall under health and wellness categories.

Mr. Madsen stated that the present Y facility has existed on its current site since approximately 1940. Since that time, the facility has grown in response to increased

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membership/programming. Although the facility has served to meet general membership needs, the current site is inadequate to support further growth. Additionally, increased neighborhood traffic flow, resulting primarily from interstate bridge has resulted in safety concerns. Given the previous, the Y is presently looking at alternatives, and has undertaken a capital campaign to begin raising money to construct a new facility within the near future. Mr. Madsen noted that although the sale of the building is not being actively promoted at this point, he has had discussion with persons to discuss ways in which the current building could be repurposed. From these discussions, Kwik Trip Inc. has expressed an interest in redeveloping the property. Given that its offer to the Y was a viable one. Both the Y and Kwik Trip were now approaching the City with the request to rezone the site for future commercial use. He noted that although the present site is zoned R-2, given its location at the base of the interstate bridge and traffic resulting from this, he felt that the block was no longer a true residential block and that the site was transitioning to more of a commercial focus. In concluding, he suggested that although the present Comprehensive Plan has identified the block for residential use, the interstate bridge has significantly affected it to a point where change is now warranted. With this, he encouraged the Commission to support modification to both the Comprehensive Plan and the zoning classification of the site to support future commercial use.

Hans Zietlow, representing Kwik Trip Inc, 1528 Oak Street, LaCrosse, WI, noted that his company had been approached by the Y with a proposal to acquire the property. Given consideration, Kwik Trip decided it was interested, thereby resulting in needed requests to modify the Comprehensive Plan and rezone the site. Mr. Zietlow noted that the current comprehensive plan calls for the total block to be used for traditional neighborhood purposes. Given neighborhood characteristics, he did not feel that this classification dovetailed with its intent. As such, the Comprehensive Plan will more than likely need to change to facilitate any form of reasonable use of the block. He further stated that whether Kwik Trip develops the site or not, a commercial oriented classification would be good for the site.

As related to a potential Kwik Trip facility, Mr. Zietlow noted that a number of perceived impacts resulting from sound and lighting would be addressed during the site plan phase of the project. In this, Kwik Trip would be more than willing to work with the City and neighborhood in resolving issues.

In concluding, Mr. Zietlow stated that a Kwik Tripe store would be a good use for the site.

Commissioner M. Olson stated that the current 1.75 acre Y site seemed to be quite large. Mr. Zietlow responded that a site of this size is actually small for new Kwik Trip prototypes.

In response to a question from Commissioner M. Olson, Mr. Zietlow stated that the site would not include diesel fueling.

In response to a question from Commissioner Porter, Mr. Zietlow noted that Kwik Trip's preliminary analysis of the site indicates that a Kwik Trip retail store would be feasible here.

In response to a question from Commissioner Buelow, Mr. Zietlow stated that although access to the site could occur at all four sides of the block; he could not be specific as to whether access to all sides would be needed. This would be resolved with future planning.

Commissioner Boettcher noted that although he is a strong business supporter in the community and has supported various Kwik Trip expansion activities, he was not convinced that a full service fuel station at this location was appropriate. Part of his concerns related to safety issues.

There being no further questions of petitioners, Chairman Hahn called on staff to provide a summary of the staff report.

Carlos Espinosa, City Planner, reminded the Commission that consideration of this issue would involve two parts including the amendment of the City Comprehensive Plan from the traditional neighborhood classification to downtown fringe classification. If this request is approved, the Commission would move to the second hearing to consider amending the City Zoning Map from R-2 to B-1 designations.

In addressing the Comprehensive Plan Amendment request, Mr. Espinosa summarized the staff analysis as found on Exhibit A of the permanent minutes. From this analysis, it had been concluded that:

1. Given the subject property is adjacent to Downtown Fringe property (East) and is in a transition area at the foot of the interstate bridge, and because zoning and design standards will apply to future development facilitated by the re-designation, the requested amendment is consistent with policies and objectives of the City Comprehensive Plan.
2. Since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2007, a significant portion of the immediate area's residential character has been removed by the interstate bridge project. This has resulted in a property which is more suitable for transitional commercial development facilitated by Downtown Fringe designation. Thus, the amendment is being requested due to changes which have occurred since adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.
3. The potential for uses facilitated by the re-designation to impact the public health, safety, and welfare will be mitigated by appropriate zoning and design standards. Thus, the amendment will not have an undue (excessive) impact on the health, safety, or welfare of the community.

In consideration of the previous, Mr. Espinosa noted that three options are available to the Commission this afternoon. These include:

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1. Recommend approval of the request, adopting the analysis above as the findings of the Planning Commission.
2. Recommend denial of the request. If denial is recommended, specific reasons should be given. These reasons should relate to the analysis above or the general public health, safety, and welfare. In this case, the rezoning public hearing would be tabled.
3. Recommend tabling the request. In this case, the rezoning public hearing should also be tabled.

At this point, Chairman Hahn opened the public hearing calling to modify the City's Comprehensive Plan from traditional neighborhood to downtown fringe of the YMCA property. He asked that any person speaking provide their name and address.

Ken Mogren, 1830 Ralph Scharmer Drive, stated that he was both co-chair to the Y's effort to fundraise for a new facility plus co-chair of Winona Health. He encourages approval of the request.

Scott Turner, 375 West Fifth Street, submitted written comments (Exhibit B of permanent minutes) encouraging denial of the request.

Kathy Christenson, 275 Harriet Street, submitted written comments (Exhibit B of the permanent minutes) encouraging denial of the request. Along with her comments, she submitted a petition signed by 152 persons, and requesting Commission denial of the request.

Karin Sonneman, 54 Lois Lane, submitted written comments (Exhibit B of the permanent minutes) encouraging denial of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Alan Dunbar, 275 West Broadway, noted that he was opposed to the Comprehensive Plan Amendment and felt that rezoning of the site would be a bad precedent and that it could severely compromise the integrity of the Windom Park Historic District. He explained that he had purchased his property approximately a year ago and has plans to rehabilitate it. He did not feel that Kwik Trip was needed at this location because of noise and traffic. Although his wife is a member of the Y, he did not favor a new Y facility at the expense of the neighborhood.

Erika Thibodeaux, 249 East Lake Blvd, noted that although she was a Y member, she was fully against any land use reuse proposal that would result in the conversion of the site to a gas station.

Laurel Eschweiler, 207 Washington Street, stated that although she understood traffic issues at this location and didn't begrudge the Y's goal of creating a bigger and better facility, she did not support the commercial reuse of the Y property. As an option, she suggested that all parties take some time in reevaluating the issue to define a solution that better dovetails with the neighborhood.

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Dee Cipov, 474 Glenview Court, provided written comments (Exhibit B of the permanent minutes) in which she discouraged approval of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment. She noted that as a member of the Y for over 30 years, she does support the facilities philosophy of creating and maintaining strong and healthy minds and bodies. She encouraged reuse of the current structure in accordance with the traditional neighborhood concept as proposed by the Comprehensive Plan. She also questioned why such a plan could be so easily changed without more significant discussion.

Hans Madland, 710 Main Street, stated that he had been involved in the 2007 preparation of the Comprehensive Plan and felt that reuse of the present property under its traditional neighborhood designation was feasible. In his opinion, if this proposal is not approved, the Y will not automatically cease to exist. He encouraged the Y to consider other viable users and uses for the site.

Will Oberton, 121 Jay Bee Drive, noted that as co-chair of the Y's fundraising committee, he too had talked to a number of entities relative to a repurpose of the current Y building/site. Given those, no specific interest has come forward. He personally did not feel that reuse of the property under its current Comprehensive Plan and zoning classifications was feasible. As such, he requested Commission approval of both the Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Zone Change Request.

In response to a question from Chris Sanchez, City Board of Adjustment Member, Mr. Espinosa noted that as classified as a club, the construction of a new Y facility would require commercial zoning.

Ray Dretske, 255 Harriet Street, submitted written comments (Exhibit B of the permanent minutes) encouraging denial of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

David Christenson, 275 Harriet Street, submitted written comments (Exhibit B of the permanent minutes) encouraging denial of both the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map Amendments. He also encouraged that the Y conduct more professional and wider search for a developer who would be interested in repurposing the site for a use compatible with the neighborhood. Options might include condominiums or town homes.

Kendall Larson, Chair of the Winona Heritage Preservation Commission, generally outlined the purpose of the Commission and noted that the group is currently considering the creation of a new historic district in the Windom Park area. Given this, she noted that the Y, as identified through previous surveys, would be eligible for National Register designation. She felt this designation could be used to encourage reuse of the current building for a purpose permitted under the sites present comprehensive plan designation and zoning classification. Given the previous, she encouraged all to take a step backward and further evaluate what might be considered a best use for the site.

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Chris Welle, 227 Wilson Street, stated that he and his wife have resided at their current location for a number of years and are looking forward to be included within the proposed Windom Park Historic District. He explained that prior to moving to Winona, his family had resided in a historic district located along Minnehaha Parkway. That area did not include gas stations. He emphasized that he and his wife are actively involved in a number of activities throughout the community and felt that options to the present Kwik Trip proposal exist for the site. With this, he suggested that the requested Comprehensive Plan Amendment be denied.

Ruth Bures, 224 Lake Drive, suggested that the City has an adequate number of gas stations. She asked what would happen to all of these once all cars convert to electric.

Vicky Decker, 1620 Edgewood Road, stated that she is a member of both the Y and Winona Health Boards. She emphasized that the Y's decision in this matter had not been an easy one and realized that Windom Park is a City treasure. However, she realized that this was an opportunity for the Y to move from the site and to develop a new facility that better meets member needs. Given changes to the neighborhood, she did not feel that the blocks designation as a traditional neighborhood was appropriate. As such, she supported the requested Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Kevin Brady, representing 211 Huff Street, noted that he had presented an offer to purchase the current Y building for residential reuse. However, that offer was not considered. In his opinion, reuse of the building for multiple family residential purposes could be a viable alternative to the site.

Les Hittner, 1340 Conrad Drive, encouraged approval of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment. As reflected in the staff report, significant land use changes have occurred northerly of Fourth Street with the construction of the new highway bridge. In his opinion, these changes do impact the site to a point where reuse options, other than those allowed under current land use designations, may be limited. Although he has heard the argument that a gas station should not provide a focal point for this entrance into the City, many cities have gas stations at their entrance. He further explained that if all work together, reasonable buffer options could be developed to the Windom Park neighborhood.

Willy Dickenson, 817 Springbrook Drive, noted that he concurred with Mr. Hittner's comments and supported the change to the Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Nathan Woodworth stated that as a board member to the Y, he encouraged all to think of what is best for the community. He noted that although the Y's current position to leave the site is based upon sound rationale, it, along with the community, needs to come to a consensus in defining what will happen with the old.

Taft Roberts, 222 West Wabasha Street, submitted written comments (Exhibit B of permanent minutes) and stated that as a resident of his neighborhood for 16 years, he

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has enjoyed the quality of the neighborhood and has done the best he can to keep up his property. He reminded those present that the current Comprehensive Plan for the City did identify both short and long term goals for it. Through the plan, the block on which the Y is presently located was rightfully designated as a traditional neighborhood. Additionally, given historic preservation goals of the plan, both the YMCA building and the adjacent house are well built brick buildings that echo the historic architecture of downtown Winona. In his opinion, these buildings should be preserved and repurposed to enhance the character of downtown Winona and in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. In summary, he discouraged approval requested Comprehensive Plan Amendment and rezone requests.

Joe Sherman, 825 Springbrook Drive, noted that as a lifelong member of the Y, he has been involved in its activities for a number of decades. As a former board member, Mr. Sherman stated that a number of years ago, the Y board had looked at ways to modernize and expand the current facility. However, it was decided that the present site was not of adequate size to facilitate future expansion. Given this, consideration is currently being given to construction of a new facility at a different location. He encouraged approval of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment request and further requested that the City act quickly in order to assist the Y in deciding its future fate.

Anne Plummer, 222 West Wabasha, read a written statement as found on Exhibit B of the permanent minutes from Catherine and Gregory Schmidt, recommending denial of the request to amend the Comprehensive Plan.

Grace Welle, 227 Wilson, emphasized that in purchasing her house, she choose to buy a home in the pending Windom Park Historic District. In her opinion, this district is a drawing card to the community which would be severely compromised with the potential construction of a 24 hour gas station at the Y property. She noted that although she has heard discussion regarding the potential traffic impacts of the bridge at the Y site, construction of a full service gas station on it would only complicate traffic flow. In short, she felt that there were a number of options available for reuse of the site over that being proposed. With this, she recommended denial of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Kathy Turner, 375 West Fifth Street, read a written letter (Exhibit B of the permanent minutes) from John and Marlene Mulrooney requesting denial of Comprehensive Plan and Zone Change Amendments.

Bill Crozier, 464 Wilson Street, presented written comments as found on Exhibit B of the permanent minutes. In these, he explained that the YMCA is currently located in one of the oldest neighborhoods in the City. As such, he felt that the construction of a Kwik Trip store at the present Y site would result in a "marked distraction and a severe detriment to the vista we believe will be offered by the new bridge and the proposed river park below". With this, he recommended that the City not approve Comprehensive Plan and Zone Change Amendments.

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Jennifer Anderson, PHD, provided written comments (Exhibit B of permanent minutes). In these, she noted that as a faculty member of the GO Science Department at Winona State University, she specializes in light and light pollution. She noted that although Winona is not yet large enough to have completely lost its connection with the "dark sky", if 24 hour a day businesses are permitted, the night skies will be impacted. She encouraged the Commission to consider this in making its decision.

Tess Kruger, 301 West Broadway Street, presented written comments as attached to Exhibit B of the permanent minutes. In these, although she noted that Kwik Trip had acknowledged that diesel fuel would not be sold at the site, she was concerned that once the Comprehensive Plan and Zone Change are made, the decision to do that could be implemented by Kwik Trip. In noting the risk of air quality factors related to the burning of diesel fuel, she urged the Commission to deny requests for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map.

Preston Lawing, 351 West Broadway, presented written comments as attached to Exhibit B of the permanent minutes. He emphasized that although he fully supports the Y's mission, he did not support the current proposal to convert the YMCA property to a full service gas station. As part of the Windom Park Neighborhood, he felt that such a change could negatively impact the neighborhood. He encouraged the Commission to vote against both the Comprehensive Plan Amendment and the Rezoning Request for the YMCA site.

Laurel Eschweiler, 207 Washington Street, requested that the Commission not recommend approval of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Zone Change Request as submitted by Kwik Trip.

Sandra Murnane, 315 West Broadway, submitted written comments (Exhibit B of permanent minutes) stating that she and her husband reside across the street from Windom Park and felt that potential impacts from the construction of a full service gas station at the YMCA site would have negative impacts on her property and would not be appropriate to the neighborhood. She suggested that a consideration be given to retaining the site as green space and encouraged the Commission not to approve proposed amendments.

Erin Gervais, 25000 Echodale Road, noted that she is the current Board Chair at the YMCA. As noted in the staff's report, the site has been impacted by a number of factors since it was initially constructed. Given these, she felt that support should be given to the requested Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Zone Change.

John McCauley noted that he owns the home that is located adjacent to Kwik Trip site. Given the approval of Comprehensive Plan and Zone Change requests, he felt that a Kwik Trip store at this location would be fully incompatible with the multiple family residential use of his property.

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Dave Echelard, 203 West Wabasha, emphasized that the present Comprehensive Plan was developed only following considerable thought and discussion by many community individuals. If approved, the current request to modify the Comprehensive Plan would severely compromise that effort. In his opinion, the change was not warranted and reasonable reuse opportunities exist under the sites current Comprehensive Plan designation.

Tim Goergen, 305 Winona Street, presented written comments as included on Exhibit B of the permanent minutes. In these, he discouraged approval of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Rezoning request.

Margaret & Ray Kiihne, 121 West Broadway, submitted written comments as included on Exhibit B of the permanent minutes. In these, she suggested that approval of requested amendments could set a bad precedent to the historic neighborhood and would result in decreased property value and increased traffic and noise. Given these, she requested Commission denial of Comprehensive Plan and Rezoning Amendments.

John Finn, 352 West Fourth Street, noted that the Windom Park Neighborhood has experienced an influx of new and younger families who support the historic integrity offered by the area. In light of this, approval of requested amendments could result in negative influences which discourage this movement. As such, he requested that requested amendments not be approved.

Rich MacDonald, WSU, submitted written comments as found on Exhibit B of the permanent minutes. In these, he suggested that the current situation is a community opportunity that all citizens should embrace with the best ideas to promote Winona rather than leave the area to a 24 hour business. He emphasized that although he has nothing against any particular merchants' interest in the property, consideration should be given to how uses relate to the surrounding neighborhood. He encouraged the City to not act too quickly in making its decision.

There being no further comments, the public hearing was closed by Chairman Hahn.

In response to a question from Commissioner Shortridge, Mr. Espinosa noted that staff would be willing to more fully define property value and general economic impacts resulting from approval of the request. Should that be decided, the Commission would table action this afternoon.

Commissioner Buelow suggested that approval of Kwik Trip's request could further exasperate pedestrian/vehicle conflicts in this part of the City. In his opinion, much more discussion was needed before the Commission could act on the request.

Chairman Hahn emphasized that, given its mission; all would like the Y to succeed and most realized that a future move is inevitable. Although he understood the argument that immediate neighborhood, particular to the north, has changed with bridge

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construction, he felt that a decision on the site at this time was more reactive than proactive. He personally would rather wait to make a decision on the request until the unified development code is complete. Additionally, since he couldn't envision Kwik Trip's future use of the property, he felt that traffic nightmares could result.

Commissioner Porter recognized that since construction of the bridge, patterns of immediate neighborhood use have changed. He further noted that the Comprehensive Plan was approved in 2007 which, by its self, may imply modifications in certain areas.

Commissioner Ballard stated that traffic patterns, affecting the Y site have occurred since the original bridge was constructed. Additionally, it is only a matter of time before the current building will be vacated.

Commissioner M. Olson emphasized that although all in the community support the Y and its mission, the current Kwik Trip proposal was less than desirable at this location. As such, she suggested that Kwik Trip look at an alternative site and suggested that the City acquire a portion of this site. At this point, she had more concerns than anything and was not at all supportive of approving the Comprehensive Plan Amendment as it would not support general welfare goals of the community.

Commissioner Boettcher noted the same concerns as Commissioner M. Olson. Although he had no problem with the Y expanding at a new location, allowing the site to be reused for something like a full service gas station could result in safety and liability issues. Impacts on the adjoining historic district should also be considered. In conclusion, he felt that approval of this afternoon's request could negatively compromise the neighborhood.

In response to a question from Chairman Hahn, Chris Hood, City Attorney, reviewed action items available to the Commission this afternoon. These include:

1. Recommend approval of the request to Council. In this case, the Commission would need to adopt the staff's analysis as findings.
2. Recommend denial of the request to City Council. If implemented, the Commission would need to provide specific reasons for the denial. These reasons could relate to the staff's analysis or to general public health, safety, and welfare concerns. Should this action be recommended, the Commission's second hearing of this matter relating to the zone change request, would need to be tabled.
3. Finally, the Commission could table requests pending the development of additional information to be brought back to the Commission at a later date.

Mr. Hood again reminded the Commission that actions such as those being considered this afternoon are subject to Minnesota State Statutes Chapter 15.99 which requires that land use decisions be made generally within 60 days from their accepted application date.

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In addressing another question, Mr. Hood noted that any future development of the site could be subject to a development agreement between the City and future developer.

Following further discussion, it was moved by Commissioner M. Olson to recommend denial of the request from Kwik Trip Inc to amend the Comprehensive Plan designation of the YMCA property from traditional neighborhood to downtown fringe for the following reasons:

- If approved, the change could negatively impact the public welfare of the immediate neighborhood.
- If approved, the modification would support certain reuse activities that would only contribute to pedestrian and vehicular flows and safety concerns occurring adjacent to the site.
- Reclassification of the current traditional neighborhood designation is not justified.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Boettcher.

Upon discussion, Commissioner Porter stated that he disagreed with the motion in that, in his opinion, the neighborhood has changed enough to warrant a reclassification of the site.

In response to Commissioner Porter's comments, both Commissioner's M. Olson and Shortridge noted that although actions related to the Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Zone Change are independent; the Comprehensive Plan Amendment would open the door to favorable consideration of the zoning request.

Commissioner M. Olson further noted that she would prefer to hold off on the consideration of any form of land use plan amendment until such time that the City has completed the development of its Unified Development Code. She suggested that this might be something that could be discussed during the next Unified Development Code meeting.

In a call for the question, the vote of the Commission was as follows: ayes: Commissioner Boettcher, M. Olson, Buelow, and Shortridge, nays: Commissioners Porter, Ballard, and Hahn, abstaining: none. (Note: Given his earlier departure from the meeting, Commissioner L. Olson was not in attendance to act on the motion.)

Chairman Hahn noted that given the previous action, as well as earlier direction from the City Attorney, it would be necessary to table the Commission's second public hearing relating to Kwik Trip Inc.'s rezoning request of the YMCA site. It was then moved and seconded to table Kwik Trips rezoning request of the YMCA site until such time that Council has considered and approved the Comprehensive Plan Amendment. When the question was called, the vote of the Commission was unanimous to approve the motion.

Commissioner Hahn stated that given the time, he suggested that the final item on the Commission's agenda this afternoon be carried to the next meeting. This item related to a discussion of levee park connector bicycle routes.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark K. Moeller". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Mark Moeller
City Planner