

OWATONNA PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES FOR JANUARY 9, 2024

The Owatonna Planning Commission met in regular session at 5:30 pm in the Charles S. Crandall Center – Chambers at City Hall with Chairperson Kelly Rooks conducting the meeting. Present at roll call were Commissioners Mark Meier, Rachel Springer-Gasner, Kelly Rooks, John Eickhoff, Mark Wilson, Nick Peake, and David Effertz. Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke and Administrative Technician Kristen Kopp were also present.

A motion was made by Effertz and seconded by Springer-Gasner to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of December 12, 2023. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion carried.

VAR -15, which is a request by Joel Stauffer on behalf of NewLife Community Church of Owatonna, INC. for a wall sign variance of 95 square feet in surface area where 32 square feet in surface area is the maximum square footage for a wall sign in Residential Districts, was presented by Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke. (Refer to report on file.) Public hearing opened at 5:33 pm. No comments were made regarding this request. Public hearing closed at 5:34 pm. Springer-Gasner said that it looks nice and it makes sense that the sign is bigger—it's a big building. A motion was made by Springer-Gasner and seconded by Wilson to recommend City Council approval of Application No. VAR-15 with the following conditions:

- 1) Any additional signs on the property will be required to submit a sign permit.

All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion carried.

The Commissioners discussed the 2050 Comprehensive Plan Draft Vision & Goals.

Vision Statement and Values: Eickhoff said he liked the “strategically located”—that’s key. Meier said he’d remove “where the extra mile takes you” as it infers that you have to drive. Kruschke said that’s a difficult one as it’s the community branding initiative that came out. Rooks said she feels it’s a little polarizing with “traditional” and “progressive” in the same sentence. She said she’s okay with it as is, but it seems like a daunting task. It’s something to strive for. Eickhoff said it also depends on how you interpret “progressive.”

Land Use Goals: Rooks asked what “regional destination community center” means. Kruschke said it would service more than the community, maybe hosting events there. Rooks wondered if it means we’d be fighting other towns for gym space. Boeke said regional also means more federal and state monies available. Effertz asked if these were ranked. Kruschke said he wouldn’t say they are ranked. Boeke said a lot of this was put in because of the feedback from the citizens. Number one in almost all the questionnaires was community center.

Transportation/Mobility: Kruschke said he’s a little leery of a new river crossing across the Straight River. One person had commented on this and they gleaned onto it. It was talked about maybe 30 to 50 years ago. Meier said it doesn’t really accomplish much. Kruschke said road maintenance and potholes were a big thing.

Parks and Trails: Eickhoff said there’s a comment about a park within every one-half mile and wondered if there were currently guidelines. Kruschke said his guess is that came out of the Park and Rec Master Plan. It’s an aspirational goal. Eickhoff asked about the parkland dedication ordinance. Kruschke said that if a developer comes in with a development, they’d have to give a

percentage to the City for parkland, or cash in lieu of parkland. Owatonna is one of few cities that does not have one of these ordinances and these ordinances are challenged frequently in the courts. We have to have a Park and Rec Masterplan and a Comp Plan in place. Owatonna is fortunate to have had a lot of people donate parkland in the past. Effertz said he likes to focus on safety. We want to make sure residents are safe when they're using trail systems. This also should be added to the parks.

Housing: Kruschke said we should have a goal of a five-year supply of lots. That will always be a moving target. Right now, we don't have a five-year supply of lots.

Economic Development: Kruschke said that they have a full-time incubator director, so that may come off the list.

City Services and Leadership: Kruschke said that Boards and Commissions continue to be hard to fill. They continue to hear how we add diversity to those boards. The Communications Hub refers to a welcome center and ties into the Community Center.

Eickhoff said overall this is a good plan. He said it will cost a lot and said that fiscal responsibility is key and something to watch. Kruschke said if anyone has comments, to email him by the end of the week.

Community Development Manager Kruschke provided updates on previous items. He said City Council has approved the requests from December. Anna Lee has completed a lot of the improvements on South Elm already and is making decent progress.

Community Development Manager Kruschke provided the year-end Building Reports. We did \$110 Million, which is a new record for the City. We only ended up issuing 21 single family houses with a few in process.

A motion was made by Meier to adjourn was seconded by Effertz at 6:00 pm. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Greg Kruschke  
Community Development Manager