



**WATERTOWN PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, December 11, 2008 at 7:30 p.m.
Watertown City Hall, 309 Lewis Avenue South
City Council Chambers

Members Present: Commission Chair, Craig Anderstrom, Vice Chair, Robert Veilleux; Commissioners, Andrew Gillett, Kay Thul; Watertown Township Liaison, Neil Johnson

Members Absent: Commissioners, James Rivord, Chuck Salden, Donald Hendricks, Council Liaison, Dan Geiger

Staff: Senior Planner, Crystal Foust, David Mandt, City Administrator, Mark Kaltsas, Planning Consultant

Others Present: Jennifer Thompson, Pioneer Engineering, Gary Lally, Hoyt Properties, John McCain

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Anderstrom called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

VEILLUEX MOVED, SECONDED BY THUL TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS WRITTEN. ALL AYES, MOTION CARRIED.

3. RECOGNITION OF PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. November 13, 2008

THUL MOVED, SECONDED BY GILLETT, TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 13, 2008 MINUTES AS WRITTEN. ALL AYES, MOTION CARRIED.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Consideration of Text Amendment

HEART OF THE LUCE LINE TRAIL

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Staff presented the proposed text amendment requested from a resident Mr. Anthony Konst. At the October 9th, 2008 regular meeting, the Planning Commission heard the informal request for a text change amendment in the Municipal Code of Ordinances. The request was to change the requirements for driveway widths in residential districts to allow wider driveways. The request to change the text was not granted by the Planning Commission. A letter was sent to Mr. Konst regarding the driveway being too wide and not in compliance, but expressed interest in pursuing alternative remedies before removing the added portion of the driveway that makes the driveway too wide. Staff told Mr. Konst that his options are to either seek a variance or request a text amendment in the Zoning Code.

Staff has researched this issue in the past and has found that Watertown's driveway width requirement is comparable with many other cities. Watertown's requirement is a maximum of 24 feet at the property line and a maximum of 30 feet at the curb.

The Planning Department, Public Works Department and the City Engineer identified the following reasons for the driveway width restrictions:

- Wide driveways and increased hard surface coverage considerably increase the amount of storm water runoff and washes more particulate matter/pollutants flowing into the City's storm sewers.
- Public Works needs adequate room along the right-of-way to pile plowed snow during the winter. Wider driveways result in less room for snow storage.
- The replacement of driveway aprons for City projects is more costly when the aprons are wider. An example of this is in Landings development, where the City recently retro-fitted sidewalks and needed to replace driveway aprons.
- Allowing full-width driveways will result in increasing the amount of outdoor storage for recreational vehicles, unused cars, trailers, lawn mowers, grills, and etc. The City receives many complaints from residents about clutter in front yards and outdoor storage.
- It is important to have a uniform policy for enforcement purposes especially in different residential districts when it comes to driveways.
- As the City continues to grow it becomes more and more important to control access on all City streets.
- Overall, it is important for the City to control the amount of impervious surface that is created by new development or redevelopment. Although small increases on individual properties can seem insignificant, the cumulative effect can impact the ability of the city's existing storm water facilities to function properly.

Staff recommends to not amend the text in the Watertown Municipal Code and keep as currently written.

Dave Mandt, City Administrator stated the ordinance was approved in 2003 half way through the Wildflower development which is why some driveways are wider than others. The ordinance is self-policing.

Chair Anderstrom supports the staff recommendation and commented that the accumulation of run-off is a big factor and supports keeping the code as is.

GILLETT MOVED, SECONDED BY VEILLEUX TO RECOMMEND TO DENY THE REQUEST FOR A TEXT AMENDMENT IN THE CITY OF WATERTOWN MUNICIPAL CODE OF ORDINANCES. ALL AYES, MOTION CARRIED.

6. NEW BUSINESS

B. Sanctuary at Watertown

The Developers of the “Moe” property northeast of town are requesting sketch plan review for their project, now known as Sanctuary in Watertown, northeast of Forest Hills.

The property is part of the orderly annexation area and is included in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan update. The property is currently not annexed into the City, but the property owner may move forward with annexation concurrently as he moves through the development process.

Staff has been working with the Developer for approximately a year now on an appropriate land use and development to bring forward to the Planning Commission.

There is floodplain throughout along with several wetland complexes located on the property. The property is also heavily wood in certain areas with old growth Oak and Maple trees. These features along with rolling topography make the site very conducive to flexible and creative site planning.

The Planning Commission should consider key issues when reviewing the sketch plan. The key issues are transportation, housing, natural resources preservation, park and trails, and utilities.

Road Alignment/Site Access

The street placement has been a significant issue since the first submittal to staff. The alignment of streets has been revised to include a second point of access into the east portion of the site along with a reduced number of driveway accesses off any one street as requested during the initial review.

The overall alignment of the interior roads appears to be aligned with natural topography. The proposed right-of-way is 60 feet and the proposed width is 30 feet back to back.

Access to this development is off of Mill Avenue. There are two accesses proposed.

Housing

The developer is proposing 110 lots on 186 gross acres, 64 net acres. After floodplain, wetlands, open space, county road corridor dedication, and existing right-of-way (ROW) are subtracted, there is approximately 64 developable acres. The net density of the property as proposed is calculated at 1.6 units/acre. (110 acres/64 units).

There are three lot sizes or types proposed:

- Estate lots: 15 ½-1 acre in size set in an area with rolling terrain, wetlands, and high quality woodlands. Proposed as large high-end custom designed homes on custom graded lots.
- Executive single family: 53 80'-85' wide lots, all overlooking or backing up to open space with wetlands, woodlands, or creeks.

- Villa Home: 40 65' wide cluster style on the east side of the property in an existing farm field. Located on flatter ground and proposed to be homeowner association maintained.

Parks and Trails

The overall amount of proposed open space would exceed the requirement for park dedication for this development. 50.1 upland acres are proposed, approximately 13 upland acres required. The plan has incorporated a large neighborhood park of approximately 6-8 acres along Mill Avenue as well as open space adjacent to Mill Avenue. Staff discussed future trail connections that would need to be made from Forest Hills as well as connectivity throughout the subdivision.

Utilities and Storm Water

Sewer

Utilities are available from the Forest Hills development to the southeast with the lift station required to service this development.

Storm Water

Storm water ponding will be designed in Sanctuary while minimizing adverse impacts on the natural resources.

County Road Corridor

After several months discussion and a detailed study, an alignment for a future north-south corridor on the east side of the City has been preliminarily determined and is designated as the local preferred alternative. 4.7 acres are being dedicated by the Developer for the 150 foot wide corridor to be used for a future county road. This corridor is proposed to be bermed and screened from adjacent lots.

The number and type of lots tend to be determined based on existing conditions ie. existing topography, slopes, natural features, woodlands, etc. The range of housing types appears to be appropriate given the different natural features on the site. These natural features range from dense wood areas with oaks and maples to open areas that are bean fields, wetlands, and creeks.

The villa lots do not meet the standard size for the R-1 zoning district. These lots could be permitted when developing as a PUD. The villa homes appear to be located in an area that is relatively open and in close proximity to the future county road corridor. This type of housing seems to be appropriate for the location. However, the size of lots may be too small given the market analysis and comprehensive plan goals for the City. The City has indicated that it has a surplus of small lots within the City. Because these lots are proposed to be association maintained and facilitate as its own separate community, staff recommends that a builder be selected with specific housing styles or the Developer go through site plan approval similar to a multi-family housing development. A study completed by Maxfield Research in 2007 shows a demand for this type of housing, but association maintained communities have not fared well in Watertown for detached products. According to the study for the Developer, their research has indicated that many property owners in the area with single-family homes are considering a housing type that offers a high level of privacy, but also no exterior upkeep or maintenance obligations. There has been success with this housing product type throughout the Twin Cities Metropolitan Region given the location and the market; however Watertown has always portrayed rural community characteristics that are different than the Twin Cities Metro Region. That is not to say that this product could not be marketable. More information regarding the type of proposed housing product will need to be provided to further review the plan.

The executive single-family homes with a width of 80-85 feet are very similar in size to existing residential subdivisions such as Wildflower, Kings Highlands, Whitetail Run, and Forest Hills. Staff has seen demand for larger lots ranging from ½ to ¾ acre lots in size. There may be an opportunity to provide some larger single family lots 125+ feet in width to accommodate those that would like a slightly larger lot than what is currently provided in the City. These larger lots will also be easier to custom grade and preserve more trees.

Staff also presented the recommendations made by the City Engineer regarding storm sewer, sanitary sewer, water, grading, and wetlands.

Chair Anderstrom expressed concern about one of the access points being in the floodplain. The development has significant amount of open space which was positive.

Commissioner Thul would like to see slightly larger lots than the proposed single family. The “executive single family homes” don’t seem very executive.

Township Liaison Neil Johnson stated that busing is a problem without contiguous rounds.

Overall the Planning Commissioners like the variation in size, large to small, and the villa homes appealing to empty-nesters.

Chair Anderstrom liked that there was a reintroduction of some of the PUD plats that offer intimate settings and uniqueness. Several plats have fallen through that were approved. The single family lots allows for creative housing styles and the smaller lots allow for preserving more open space. There is an added benefit to live in villa homes because of maintenance homeowners association.

Mr. Gary Lally told the Planning Commission that he conducted a neighborhood meeting. The immediate neighborhood to the east between the two “finger” connecting to Oxford Avenue has been involved in several meetings. There is the possibly of doing some land swaps, but more discussion to come. The County road corridor separates the housing to the east with two large estate lots. Mr. Lally stated that he wanted to create a development this is unique and not something that that the City has. Just about every home has a view of either wetlands, creek, park, woods. When the housing market comes back he will partner with some 1st class builders/

THUL MOVED, SECONDED BY GILLETT TO RECOMMEND THE DEVELOPER MOVE TOWARDS THE PREPARATION OF A PRELIMINARY PLAT WITH THE ADVISORY COMMENTS MADE BY STAFF ALONG WITH LETTER FROM TERRAMARK AND CITY ENGINEER AND PLANNING COMMISSION/CITY COUNCIL. ALL AYES, MOTION CARRIED.

C. Outdoor Wood-Burning Furnaces

The City has received an inquiry from a resident regarding the construction of an outdoor wood-burning furnace device. Currently, the City Code does not address outdoor wood-burning furnaces as permitted accessory structures in City limits. Staff researched other cities’ requirements and ordinances, and compiled a list of cities that have ordinances either allowing or banning the use of

these furnaces. A decision is needed whether or not to allow this type of use through the creation of an ordinance. An outdoor wood-burning furnace is a permanent outdoor structure, approximately the size of a shed, which is used to heat the home. Staff displayed pictures of these furnaces.

The advantages of outdoor wood-burning furnaces include providing a cost-effective alternative for heating homes. People might enjoy the wood stove's ambiance, and the smell of wood burning in the wintertime. Although an indoor fireplace serves essentially the same purpose as an outdoor furnace, an outdoor wood-burning furnace keeps smoke and soot from entering the home or living space, which may be better for those with allergies. In addition to these benefits, and according to a source with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), "stove models made since 1988 are about three times cleaner than older ones and require less wood," (Espinoza, 2008) exhibit C).

The most obvious disadvantage of outdoor wood-burning furnaces is that they cause air pollution particularly around their immediate vicinity, and the smoke they emit could be carried by the wind to settle in other parts of a neighborhood, city or another region. This smoke contains toxic particulate matter which may result in adverse health effects. Lastly, other cities have shared with staff the difficulty in ensuring that only wood is used as fuel in the stoves, resulting in complaints about unreasonable odors from other residents.

From a zoning standpoint, as it pertains to site-placement, wood stoves would warrant classification as an accessory structure much like a shed. In the 2030 Comprehensive Plan we note that City strives to achieve excellent air quality. Examples of ordinances are in the packet that both permit and ban outdoor wood-burning furnaces.

Staff is not in favor of allowing outdoor wood-burning furnaces within City limits due to the possible adverse health effects, aesthetics and complaints likely to arise with their use.

Commissioner Veilleux stated that he is in favor of allowing them for properties 5 acres or greater and we currently don't have that type of lot in the City limits.

Chair Anderstrom pointed out that one other advantage that was not mentioned was the insurance rate is less if the wood burning furnace is outside verses inside. Chair Anderstrom asked why can't we (society) get back to wood burning like it was.

Township Liaison Johnson suggested not to allow them anywhere in the City limits. There is one in Watertown Township and they get complaints all the time about this furnace.

VEILLEUX MOVED, SECONDED BY THUL TO RECOMMEND THE CREATION OF AN ORDINANCE TO BAN WOOD BURNING FURNANCES IN THE CITY LIMITS. ALL AYES, MOTION CARRIED.

7. COMMISSIONERS REPORT

NONE

8. STAFF REPORT

A. Clarification of minutes on October 9, 2008.

Rivord moved, seconded by Gillett for the motion regarding a text amendment.

9. ADJOURN

**VEILLEUX MOVED, SECONDED BY THUL, TO ADJOURN THE PLANNING
COMMISSION MEETING AT 9:15 PM**

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Anderstrom
Chair

Crystal Foust
Senior Planner