



**Saint Paul Planning Commission
City Hall Conference Center
15 Kellogg Boulevard West**

Minutes February 2, 2024

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, February 2, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present: Mmes.: Grill, Presley, Starling and Thomas
Messrs.: Holst, Hood, Johnson Becker, Martinson, Ochoa, Reilly, Risberg, Syed and Taghioff

Commissioners Absent: Mmes:
Messrs: Hackney, Houmas, Khadar, Moore, and Ortega

Also Present: Luis Pereira, April Cote, Melanie Zastrow, Spencer Miller-Johnson, Nellie Jerome, Yasmine Robinson, Anton Jerve, Emma Brown, Christina Hong and Stefan Hankerson; from Planning and Economic Development. YaYa Diatta from the Department of Safety and Inspections. Three members of the media were present. They were Frederick Melo; Pioneer Press, Jane McClure; Highland Villager and Katie Galioto; Star Tribune.

I. Approval of minutes for the January 19, 2024 Planning Commission Meeting

The minutes from the January 19, 2024 Planning Commission meeting were approved.

MOTION: Commissioner Holst moved to accept the January 19, 2024 Planning Commission minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martinson. The motion passed on a voice vote.

II. Chair Announcements

None.

III. Planning Director Announcements

Director Pereira announced the retirement of Peter Warner from the City Attorney’s Office and thanked him for his service.

IV. Public Hearing – Saint Paul Bicycle Plan (*Bill Dermody, 651/266-6617*)

A public hearing was held today. Thirty-five members of the public offered testimony on the proposed bicycle plan. They are:

Joshua Houdek representing the Sierra Club and resides at 2300 Myrtle Ave. #260, Saint Paul, MN 55114. Mr. Houdek spoke in favor of the bike plan and highlighted environmental benefits as well as safety features for increased and improved bicycle infrastructure.

Gary Meyer who resides at 150 Second St. NE #201, Minneapolis, MN 55413. Mr. Meyer spoke in support of the bicycle plan. Mr. Meyer highlighted the plan fails to address an area he feels is dangerous to children and riders of lesser abilities. He also expressed disappointment that the plan does not improve or add access to the Minnesota State Capitol building and Capitol grounds.

Owen Young residing at 4413 40th St. E., Minneapolis, MN 55406. Mr. Young spoke in favor of the bicycle plan. Mr. Young highlighted the benefits of off-street bikeways for riders of all abilities.

Katie Nicholson residing at 1585 Highland Parkway, Saint Paul, MN 55116. Mr. Nicholson spoke in favor of the bicycle plan and highlighted the safety benefits and offered suggestions to make bikeways even safer.

Scott Berger residing at 1452 Ashland Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104. Mr. Berger spoke in favor of the bicycle plan.

Brian Pierce residing at 447 Saint Clair Ave., St. Paul, MN 55102. Mr. Pierce asked that the city consider removing the bikeway section on Saint Clair Avenue. Mr. Pierce stated that there is a duplicate route on Grace Street. Grace Street is safer for all riders to begin. Saint Clair has seen an increase in activity with the events and goings on downtown as well as with the I35E interchange. Mr. Pierce highlighted that there is a route that comes up from the river and continues onto Snelling Ave on Grace St. with only three intersections where riders would encounter vehicle traffic. It's a flatter route as Saint Clair has large hills that he feels do not improve safety for younger riders. Mr. Pierce also highlighted the safety risks getting out of a car on Saint Clair Ave. with increased truck traffic from the interstate and West Seventh Street and feels that would become a bigger problem by reducing parking and adding bicycle infrastructure.

Luke Hanson residing at 1423 Eleanor Ave., St. Paul, MN 55116. Mr. Hanson spoke in support of the bicycle plan. Mr. Hanson spoke on what he feels will be the fiscal benefits of the bicycle plan to the city. Bicycles do not weigh the same as cars. Cars impact our roads in a negative way. Dedicating traffic ways to other modes of transportation can alleviate the impact to our roads and reduce maintenance costs.

James Slagers residing at 1153 Edmund Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104. Mr. Slagers spoke in favor of the bicycle plan. Especially the off street and protected bikeways. They increase safety and accessibility to all riders.

Joseph Mischeke residing at 1653 Hewitt Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104. Mr. Mischke spoke in favor of the bicycle plan.

Katherine Ducorn residing at 1142 Norbert Ln., St. Paul, MN 55116. Ms. Ducorn spoke in support of the bicycle plan.

Amy Gage who resides at 1851 Selby Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104. Amy spoke in favor of the bicycle plan. Ms. Gage also wished to thank Jimmy Shoemaker of Public Works for the work and community engagement he used in designing the bicycle plan. She feels that alternate transportation modes are the way of the future.

KC Cox who resides at 1501 Carroll Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104. Spoke in favor of bikeways. She feels that they don't belong on the road with cars. Not everyone can ride a bicycle. She does not agree with trying to force people to give up their cars. Ms. Cox feels that focusing on this type of infrastructure leaves out people who can't ride a bicycle. She feels that more thought has to go into developing this infrastructure and that parking needs to be taken into consideration as well. People who are disabled or have other mobility issues and depend on vehicles need to be able to park to get to where they're going. She also questioned contributions of revenue by bicyclists. Why don't they have to be licensed and help to pay for the bikeways?

Patricia Hartmann who resides in St. Paul. Ms. Hartmann questioned some aspects of the plan and she expressed opposition to the Summit Ave Regional Trail project.

Tom Darling who resides at 445 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55102. Mr. Darling commented about the need to better estimate costs of these plans, and he also made comments about the need to send notice to everyone in the city who lives on or along a planned bikeway, in order for them to fully understand the impacts of the Plan.

Robin Clark who resides at 87 Prior Ave., St. Paul, MN 55102. Mr. Clark's testimony was not properly recorded due to a technical issue.

Andy Singer who resides at 2103 Berkeley Ave., St. Paul, MN. Mr. Singer spoke in favor of the bicycle plan overall. He stated that he appreciated that the city included the ideas and suggestions from members of the public. He suggested that a connection with the Capitol is also needed. He also feels that connections to the East Side are also needed. He highlighted several other areas that need improvement or inclusion in the plan.

Melissa Wenzel who resides at 349 Michigan St., St. Paul, MN 55102. Ms. Wenzel felt she could not speak in favor of the bicycle plan as a whole. She is an avid biker in Saint Paul. She spoke in favor of dedicated separate bicycle lanes.

Hugo Bruggeman who resides at 1923 Princeton Ave., St. Paul, MN. Mr. Bruggeman spoke in favor of the bicycle plan.

Dan Neifelt who resides at 1895 Ashland Ave., St. Paul, MN. Mr. Neifelt spoke in favor of the bicycle plan. Mr. Neifelt also highlighted areas that he feels are unsafe and the dangers that drivers pose to on street bike lanes. He also highlighted the environmental benefits that would be gained by a reduction of vehicles.

Nick Souhan who resides at 543 Michigan Ave., St. Paul, MN. Mr. Souhan spoke in favor of the bicycle plan. Mr. Souhan feels that there would be a significant economic impact if people could sell their cars and ride bicycles. Many who want to don't feel safe riding their bicycles in the city.

Sherry Johnson who resides at 820 Osceola Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105. Ms. Johnson spoke in favor of the bicycle plan. She feels that it builds on the 2015 bicycle plan. She highlighted that it focuses on ridership. She pointed out that it provides more safety for riders of lesser abilities. Ms. Johnson shared that she has a brother who uses a mobility scooter to get around. Having separated and raised bikeways not only benefits bicyclists of all ages and rider ability but will also benefit individuals who use mobility devices such as scooters. Commissioner Holst asked Ms. Johnson to share a few examples of how people utilize these types of infrastructure. We don't often think of them being used in other ways. Ms. Johnson responded by sharing that her brother is often forced into traffic lanes due to poorly maintained sidewalks that are unplowed, bumpy or in poor condition.

Tim Morehead who resides at 1932 Bayard Ave., St. Paul, MN 55116. Mr. Morehead spoke in opposition of the bicycle plan. His recommendation is to refer the plan back to Public Works. He feels that it lacks a cost benefit analysis. He stated that a lot of our existing infrastructure is under-utilized. We are losing parking and boulevard trees to bicycle infrastructure. He highlighted the effects of the plan in regard to parking on Hamline Ave. Businesses will lose parking as well as the residents who live on Hamline. He suggested the use of an abandoned CP Rail spur. He spoke in opposition of putting bicycles on busy streets. He highlighted that there is a lack of information regarding maintenance.

Michelle Mastead who resides at 762 Holly Ave. St. Paul, MN 55104. Ms. Mastead spoke in favor of the bicycle plan.

Ted Madison who resides at 1116 Hyacinth Ave. E., St. Paul, MN 55106. Mr. Madison spoke in favor of the bicycle plan. Mr. Madison shared that he and his wife have reduced the number of vehicles that they own as well as reducing the number of trips that they would take with a car. He shared his experience being hit by car with the commissioners to highlight the importance of raised and separated bikeways.

Paul Fiesel who resides at 400 Daly St., St. Paul, MN. Mr. Fiesel spoke in favor of the bike plan. Mr. Fiesel spoke about safety and comfort in the new plan. He stated that the current biking infrastructure is mostly built for avid cyclists. Riders of lesser abilities do not feel safe in our current bike lanes. He highlighted Summit Ave and the way it makes a lot of bicyclists feel unsafe while biking.

Mary Morse-Marti who resides at 214 Exeter Pl., St. Paul, MN 55104. Ms. Morse-Marti spoke in favor of the plan. She has been a transportation cyclist since 1978 and is the founder of Hour Car. She stated how pleased she is to have listened to the testimony today. She feels the bicycle plan is very forward-thinking and inclusive. She encouraged the commissioners to not listen to those who are living in the past and are against the plan.

Ed Steinheur who resides at 312 Page St. W., St. Paul, MN 55105. Mr. Steinheuer spoke in favor of the plan. He gave a statistic of carbon emissions between cars and bicycles. He related comments that he has heard from parents and children alike. The bicycle plan reflects the way that young people wish to move forward.

Alex Wong who resides at 149 Stevens St. W., St. Paul, MN 55107. Mr. Wong spoke in favor of the bicycle plan. He is very excited about bikes. He bikes everywhere and owns a bike shop. He highlighted the benefits of riding a bicycle to the environment, our health and lowering costs by not having cars.

Jan Hohn who resides at 1190 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105. Ms. Hohn spoke in general favor of the bicycle plan. However, she spoke in opposition to the plan's inclusion of the Summit Ave. trail plan. Ms. Hohn cited studies that show that when there is a high number of conflict points on a raised bike path it makes those paths more dangerous. There are over 100 such points in the Summit Ave. Trail Plan.

Ms. Hohn also pointed out that eliminating these conflict points would dramatically change the character of Summit Ave. by eliminating access and parking. She pointed out that all of Summit Ave. is designated as a national historic district as well as two city historic districts. Ms. Hohn stated that raised bike paths should not be allowed period on Summit Ave. The Summit Ave. bike lanes should remain where they are on the roadway. She feels that the current lanes can be improved. These improvements include luminescent paint as well as widening the bike lane and narrowing the traffic lane for cars. She feels that this is also the safest option. Ms. Hohn also pointed out that the avid cyclists who cycle at high speeds would still use the traffic lane as they do now because children and more leisurely cyclists would be in the bike lane and would slow them down. She urged the commissioners and the city to instead consider connecting the Ayd Mill Road raised bike paths via Snelling and Jefferson avenues to create a connection to the river. She pointed out that the elevations would also be lower and make biking easier for bicyclists of all ages and abilities.

Zack Farrell who resides at 600 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55102. Mr. Farrell spoke in favor of the bicycle plan. He feels that raised paths are the best overall. They increase safety and make it easier to keep them clear of snow and ice in winter. He primarily highlighted the winter issues within traffic bike lanes and forcing motorists and cyclists to share the road. He also stated the benefits to the environment.

Christina Danielson who resides at 1710 Palace Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105. Ms. Danielson spoke in favor of the plan. She expressed how pleased she was by the support for the cyclists that was heard throughout the hearing. She wanted to speak more on behalf of pedestrians. She pointed out how the plan highlights how pedestrians will benefit from the separated bikeways by giving them space in the middle of large intersections to stop while crossing the street.

Chair Grill closed the hearing after asking three times if there was anyone else who wished to speak.

Commissioner Risberg moved that the public hearing be closed and be referred back to the Transportation Committee and to leave the public record open for comments until 4:30 pm. on Monday, February 5, 2024. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Reilly and passed unanimously on a voice vote.

V. Zoning Committee

Commissioner Taghioff gave the report for the Zoning Committee. The January 25, 2024 Zoning Committee was canceled. The Zoning Committee next meets on February 8, 2024.

VI. Transportation Committee

Commissioner Risberg gave the report for the committee. The committee had two items on its agenda. The committee received two presentations from Ann Weber from Public Works. She presented the Five-Year Transportation Plan as well as the regional solicitation projects. The committee next meets on February 26, 2024.

VII. Comprehensive & Neighborhood Planning Committee

Spencer Miller Johnson: City Planner presented to the commission on the East Grand Avenue Overlay District. Spencer gave some background information on Grand Avenue and zoning code standards. He highlighted in his presentation the Kenton House building. The area was rezoned from B2 to T3, a traditional neighborhood-urban mixed use district. The project also required a conditional use permit

and three variances. These were required because the project conflicted with the zoning code and the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The overall purpose of the zoning study was to align the East Grand Ave. overlay with the comprehensive plan. Another purpose was to respond to the Summit Hill Association's interest in analyzing the East Grand Avenue Overlay District. The proposed text amendments are to: generalize the intent statement, remove obsolete parking regulations and replace development constraints with context-sensitive, pedestrian-oriented building design frontage standards. These will include step backs, an established building line and frontage elements.

Spencer shared a timeline with the commissioners for the proposed amendments. The timeline includes today's Planning Commission presentation. The amendments are being offered for public review during February and March. The advisory committee is meeting on February 12. Spencer shared that a proposed public hearing date in front of the Planning Commission would take place on March 29, 2024 and then be referred to the Comprehensive & Neighborhood Planning Committee in April and a recommendation from the committee to the Planning Commission on April 24, 2024. With the intent that the amendments have their second reading by the City Council in May and full adoption in June.

It is currently the Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee's recommendation that the Planning Commission release the East Grand Avenue Overlay District for public review and set a public hearing date of March 29, 2024.

Commissioner Taghioff gave the commissioners some background information regarding Grand Avenue and the Summit Hill Association and spoke in favor of the proposed amendments and highlighted their importance for the future for what is appropriate for Grand Avenue.

MOTION: Commissioner Holst made a motion to release the East Grand Avenue Overlay District for public review and to set a public hearing date of March 29, 2024. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martinson. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Planning Director Pereira stepping in for Principal City Planner Bill Dermody gave a presentation to the Commission on a proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment in regard to the Heights. Director Pereira gave some background on the issue requiring the consideration of a master plan amendment. The Metropolitan Council has brought it to staff attention the need to amend the master plan before it would be comfortable in granting a sewer access permit for the Heights. The proposed amendment would follow the typical process of a comprehensive plan amendment. This would include a public hearing with a proposed hearing date of March 15, 2024.

Commissioner Starling asked if there were any development proposals that are contingent on this amendment? Director Pereira responded the entirety of the site is contingent on this sewer access permit. Currently we have an active housing master developer on the site. It is important to not disrupt the development timeline and to get through this process in as timely a matter as possible.

Commissioner Houmas asked why this is an issue when sewers are a municipal responsibility and if it has anything to do with geothermal? Director Pereira gave him the background that sewers are both local and regional responsibility (i.e., the Metropolitan Council) and responded that he doesn't believe this has anything to do with geothermal energy potential here.

Commissioner Holst commented that the comprehensive plan amendment is more to update the plan to reflect the work that we've already done.

MOTION: Commissioner Holst made a motion to release the proposed comprehensive plan amendment for public comment and to set a public hearing date of March 15, 2024. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Houmas and passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Commissioner Holst stated that the Comprehensive & Neighborhood Planning Committee's next meeting is scheduled for February 14, 2024.

VIII. Communications-Nominations Committee

2024 Planning Commission Annual Meeting. Director Pereira introduced Nellie Jerome and Stefan Hankerson to the commission. Nellie and Stefan are responsible for the completion of the 2023 Annual Report. Director Pereira gave a short presentation of the annual report to include background of the Planning Commission and its subcommittees and what their responsibilities and functions are.

The report included information on what projects were in process and had been completed throughout the city. The report details what they were, where they were and is broken down by city ward. The report also highlights zoning studies, small area plans, master planned site development, as well as various transportation plans.

Director Pereira announced that there is a planned gathering on February 15 to thank and celebrate former Planning Commission Chair Luis Rangel Morales.

Director Pereira gave the commission a look at back the Planning Team workplan and the progress that was made throughout the previous year. He shared with the commissioners the 2024 work plan. The current work plan also details what work is moving forward and the progress being made on ongoing projects.

IX. Task Force/Liaison Reports

None.

X. Old Business

None.

XII. New Business

None.

XIII Adjournment

11:00 a.m.

Karoline Finlay, Planning Commission Secretary
Planning and Economic Development Department,
City of Saint Paul

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved February 16, 2024
(Date)



Luis Pereira
Planning Director



Mauricio Ochoa
Planning Commission Secretary