

MINUTES OF THE ZONING COMMITTEE
Thursday, June 24, 2010 - 3:30 p.m.
City Council Chambers, 3rd Floor
City Hall and Court House
15 West Kellogg Boulevard

PRESENT: Alton, Donnelly-Cohen, Kramer, Nelson, Wencil, and Wickiser

STAFF: Samantha Langer, Patricia James, and Peter Warner

The meeting was chaired by Commissioner Kramer.

TransPark Inc - 10-502-292 - Conditional Use Permit for temporary parking lot, with variances from surface parking requirements and TN3 standards and conditions, 43 Water St E, NE of intersection of Water and Starkey

Patricia James presented the revised staff report with a recommendation of approval with conditions for the Conditional Use Permit & Variance. Patricia James also stated District 3 recommended denial, and there were 0 letters in support, and 1 letter in opposition.

At the inquiry of the Commissioners, Mr. Warner stated that Unocal Fuel Tank Yard was previously located on this site. Ms. James explained that there are issues with contamination, and a site plan review will be necessary to ensure that storm water run-off will be handled correctly. Ms. James stated that the West Side Flats Master Plan indicates the future land use of this site will be open space, storm water detention, and possibly a small community building. She is not sure exactly where each will be located, and she believes that ultimately the City would ensure that all contamination issues are addressed. Ms. James agreed that the bicycle parking spaces may not be necessary.

Steve Meyer, representing TransPark, explained that presently 50 to 75 cars park at this site for free. TransPark is interested in adding a pay box to this site, and paying rent to the City of Saint Paul until the West Side Flats begins development. In addition, they would also make sure to maintain the parking lot in terms of weeding and removing trash. He stated it would be a month to month agreement with the City and can be canceled at any time the City chooses. He explained that there is a storm water drain by the levee that the storm water flows towards. They have had preliminary discussions with staff regarding soil erosion barriers to keep sediment from flowing into the drain. He also stated that there had been a commercial parking lot with a gravel surface and pay box across the street from this site. In response to the District Council's concern regarding encouraging mass transit rather than surface parking, Mr. Meyer stated he doesn't think this is inconsistent with that goal. He stated that charging at this site could possibly deter people from driving and parking here, and using mass transit instead.

At the questions of the Commissioners, Mr. Meyer also agreed that the bicycle parking spaces may not be used very often, but he is not opposed to them. He stated he believes most of the people parking at the lot right now are County and City employees. Patricia James explained that the secure bicycle parking is part of the new ordinance and read the description from §63.210.

Gary Grabko, Parking Manager, Planning and Economic Development, stated other alternatives to this site wouldn't be beneficial. One is to continue allowing free parking at this site with no operator managing what is happening at the parking lot. Two, he suggested they could barricade the site, but it is difficult to monitor the lot and tow vehicles. He also explained it would be difficult to issue parking tickets, as a revenue opportunity for the City, because parking enforcement is limited in the area. Commissioner Kramer stated he believes that because it is HRA owned property they would be responsible for contacting the police to issue tickets and be available to cosign each ticket. Mr. Grabko stated

TransPark would charge reasonable rates, and it would be a small opportunity to raise revenue for the City.

At questions from the Commissioners, Mr. Grabko confirmed that there was previously a lot next to this site that cannot be used as a parking lot any longer. Mr. Grabko stated that the agreement between HRA and TransPark can be terminated for any reason within thirty days notice. Mr. Grabko stated the Temporary Parking Operation and Management Agreement states that TransPark would be responsible for the property.

No one spoke in support.

Gjerry Berquist, West Side Citizens Organization (WSCO), noted the letter submitted by WSCO should read Block 19, not Block 20 of the West Side Flats. Mr. Berquist explained Block 19 and 20 of the West Side Flats Plan approved by the City Council in 2001. He stated the West Side has been plagued with parking lots for a long time. Mr. Berquist also referred to West Side Flats Development Guidelines stating that surface parking lots, even on an interim basis, should follow design standards that will reduce the negative impacts of automobile storage in this pedestrian-oriented community. He is concerned with runoff and vehicles leaking fluids and believes design standards should be in place. Mr. Berquist is also concerned that the temporary status could potentially last several years, and they will be locked into a situation where the space will not be inviting to potential developers. He also stated that he doesn't believe that findings 5(a) and 5(c) in the staff report are met by this use. Mr. Berquist submitted development guidelines from the West Side Flats Plan for Block 19 and 20 and the citation for surface parking.

The public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Barbara Wencil moved approval of the Conditional Use Permit & Variance with the conditions recommended by staff and a revision to condition two, stating the Conditional Use Permit shall expire upon termination of the Temporary Parking Operation and Management Agreement or in two years, whichever occurs first. Commissioner Kathi Donnelly-Cohen seconded the motion.

Commissioner Alton stated that he is in favor of the staff recommendation and doesn't think a two year limitation needs to be attached to condition two. The HRA owns the property and has approved this agreement, and it may not be appropriate for the Zoning Committee to dictate the length of time.

The motion passed by a vote of 4-2-0.

Adopted Yeas - 4 Nays - 2 (Alton, Wickiser) Abstained - 0

Drafted by:

Samantha Langer
Recording Secretary

Submitted by:

Patricia James
Zoning Section

Approved by:

Richard Kramer
Chair