**MINUTES OF THE ZONING COMMITTEE**
**Thursday, October 31, 2024 - 3:30 p.m.**
**City Council Chambers, 3rd Floor**
**City Hall and Court House**
**15 West Kellogg Boulevard**

PRESENT: Grill, Hood, Syed, and Taghioff
EXCUSED: Ochoa and Starling
STAFF: Chris Hong, Bill Dermody, Samantha Langer, and Dan Stahley

The meeting was chaired by Commissioner Taghioff.

**10 River Park Plaza Comprehensive Plan Amendment - 24-082-486 - Amend the West Side Flats Comprehensive Plan addendum to change the land use from mixed residential to office/light industrial., 10 River Park Plaza, NE corner of Fillmore Avenue E and River Park Plaza**

Chris Hong presented the staff report with a recommendation of approval for the Comprehensive Plan Amendment. She said District 3 requested a lay over, and there was 1 letter in support, and 2 letters in opposition.

In response to Commissioner Grill, Ms. Hong said that District 3 requested a layover because they felt they were not properly informed and didn't have enough time to meet regarding this application.

Chair Taghioff said he has never seen a Comprehensive Plan Amendment come before this Committee. It would have usually gone before the Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee and is curious why it is before the Zoning Committee and how it aligns with our mandates.

Mr. Dermody said it is before the Zoning Committee because it is directly tied to a rezoning application that will be heard before this Committee and has many of the same issues.

Chair Taghioff asked if it mattered that the rezoning has been postponed or does it make sense to hear both applications together.

Ms. Hong said they originally thought that this application and the rezoning could be heard at the same time, but we need to have the Comprehensive Plan Amendment approved by the Met Council before we can do the rezoning.

Chair Taghioff said this seems more of a policy question of amending a Comprehensive Plan and usually those plans are a mix of community input and District Councils are involved in crafting these plans. He asked how the District Council was engaged and what the normal order of operations is for this type of application.

Ms. Hong said that public notice is usually 10 days for a normal zoning application and for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment it is 30 days. They are given a bit more time to engage with their community. The applicant has reached out to the District Council and they did receive an ENS (Early Notification System) notice from the city within two days of receiving the application.

Chair Taghioff asked if we were to approve this today and it would go through Planning Commission, what is the timeline for this to be approved by the Met Council to the point where we could consider the rezoning.

Ms. Hong said the Met Council would be an average of six weeks, but if it qualifies for an administrative approval, it would be less time than that, but they weren't very specific.

Tim Prinsen, Newmark, 100 South 5th Street, Minneapolis, is representing the owner of the property 10 River Park Plaza. He said Sara Investments in Madison, WI purchased the building in 2018 and during their entire ownership they have had a relationship with Pier Foundry, their neighbor who is interested in purchasing the area in question. During that period, they have utilized that area for storage and other things. There's been significant changes to how office buildings are used today and after discussion, it finally made sense to try and move forward with this process. He said he is available to answer any questions about the project.

Tonya Bauer, Saint Paul Port Authority, 400 Wabasha Street, Saint Paul, said they fully support this amendment to the City of Saint Paul's 2040 Comprehensive Plan related to the West Side Master Flats Plan Addendum to the Comprehensive Plan. The amendment aligns with the City's overall Comprehensive Plan in areas such as promoting job retention and creation, ensuring adaptable land use, and supporting well-paying jobs, maximizing surface parking in industrial areas, and facilitating transitions between different land uses. We find it in alignment with the West Side's Master Plan goals of developing under utilized spaces into creating job opportunities in retaining and growing industrial jobs and tax base and supporting a diverse land use economic sustainability. We think this is in alignment with the overall comprehensive land use strategies such as creating a buffer zone between a general district over to a light industrial and into the residential zoning nearby. In addition, we think it will enhance landscaping aesthetics and be a higher and better use for this parcel. The Saint Paul Port Authority fully supports this amendment as an addendum to help bolster business expansion and positive economic development opportunities.

Monica Bravo, West Side Community Organization, 209 Page Street, Saint Paul, said the applicant met with the District 3 Planning Council Board of Directors on Monday, October 28. After that meeting a letter was submitted to the Zoning Committee to express their opposition. Ms. Bravo read the letter (see attached).

Robert Craft, Land Use Organizer, West Side Community Organization, 209 Page Street, Saint Paul, spoke in opposition. He has been a West Side resident for 37 years and active in the West Side Community Organization for the past seven years. He is angry that the continued bureaucratic processes of the City of Saint Paul and the Port Authority continue to essentially engage in land theft from this community. This Commission has an opportunity to correct the processes that you engage in and give adequate community participation in your decisions. When he spoke with city staff, they said that the District Council has no legal standing under statute, but you are ignoring the spirit of the Master Plan as well as our developmental scorecard if you continue these kinds of practices.

Mr. Prinsen responded to testimony. He addressed the timeline associated with their engagement with West Side Community Organization (WSCO). They submitted the application

on September 25, 2024, and on October 3, 2024, they contacted WSCO with the application and supporting materials. On October 4, he emailed Monica and Bob about attending a meeting with WSCO on October 28, which they did last Monday. On October 8, he followed up with Monica about questions about the scorecard. They met internally and went through the scorecard and in our opinion, the scorecard is focused on new construction or development regarding multifamily or mixed-use and consequently many of our responses would have been not applicable. On October 9 and October 14, he tried to contact Monica with confusion they were having with the scorecard. On October 28, they attended the WSCO meeting and gave a presentation about the foundry. He does not believe any significant questions were asked directly about the rezoning, building scale, the buffer between I2 and T3M or other project specific aspects. He said today they received a letter from the Friends of the Mississippi River that mirrors the WSCO letter and asking for a delay. The schedule he provided shows they have in earnest done everything that they have been asked to do regarding outreach to WSCO and engaging with them. He said this is the first of eight public meetings, three about this and five more with regard to the rezoning of this project. The area in question that we are talking about is roughly 2.9 acres. What will remain, should this be rezoned, is 16.3 acres of additional T3M zoning that sits at 10 River Park. He said the other part of the West Side Flats Master Plan talks about employment center stating this from the 2015 plan; “the goal for existing industrial businesses within well paying jobs, high tax base, and related economic benefit is to retain and grow operations.” In addition to that, it says the city and Port Authority will continue to work to retain these valuable businesses that make up such a key part of the economic fabric of Saint Paul.

In response to Chair Taghioff, Mr. Prinsen said he only has land use information that deals with what Sara Investments currently owns. It is roughly 19.3 acres and it is zoned T3M. Should this 3 acre parcel be rezoned to IT there would still be 16.3 acres directly adjacent that is T3M.

The public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Hood moved approval of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Commissioner Syed seconded the motion.

Commissioner Grill said she is appreciative of all the work that WSCO has gone through and the efforts that they make and while she is very sympathetic to the need for additional time for the community, she is also sympathetic to the applicant. Knowing that there was more notice than we sometimes have for these projects, 30 days instead of 10 days, it makes it hard for her to vote against the recommended approval. There does need to be continued dialogue between the city and District Councils because there are people unhappy with the process right now, but there are also structures that we must follow as the Zoning Committee and Planning Commission.

Chair Taghioff said he sees one principle identified from the Comprehensive Plan, which is this integrating of a broad mix of complementary land uses throughout the neighborhoods that seems to be a very narrow and surgical analysis of the intent of the Comprehensive Plan. He didn’t hear clarity around why this specific change in the intent of that area versus the project that is probably guiding the zoning. As a Comprehensive Plan Amendment he is unclear at this point being asked to support something when he doesn’t understand what it achieves from a

Comprehensive Planning perspective. He said changing this parcel from its current usage as residential to industrial essentially takes us away from a Comprehensive Planning goal. He also shares some concerns about the process, but there was a 30 day notice. It seems there will be multiple opportunities over the next few months for more community engagement.

Mr. Dermody said with Comprehensive Plan Amendments it's sometimes difficult to evaluate them for conformance with the Comprehensive Plan because you're amending the plan. It's naturally going to be different than the exact details of the Comprehensive Plan. It is much more specific than a typical Comprehensive Plan issue. Our other Master Plans are not Comprehensive Plan Addenda. This is the only one that we have adopted as an addendum of the Comprehensive Plan. If this had not been a Comprehensive Plan Addendum, it would have been approved administratively as a Master Plan and then we would just have been able to move forward with the rezoning.

The motion passed by a vote of 3-1-0.

Adopted Yeas - 3 Nays - 1 (Taghioff) Abstained - 0

| Drafted by: | Submitted by: | Approved by: |
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| Samantha Langer | Christina Hong | Simon Taghioff |
| Recording Secretary | City Planner | Chair |