

application date is April 17<sup>th</sup> for the first cut. There are several vacancies on the planning commission and she encourages present commissioners to recommend friends or colleagues that would be helpful on the commission. the application is on line at:

<https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/mayors-office/committees-boards-and-commissions>

### **III. Planning Director's Announcements**

Donna Drummond announced that the Great River Gathering is on May 12, 2016 and the theme is Design for Equity. If there are Planning Commissioners who would like to attend and sit together let me know and I'll make sure that they assign seats together at the dinner. Also, in the news the City is selling the Penfield Apartment project, which has turned out to be a very good investment for the City. Besides repaying the initial investment sources for the project the City has made a profit of about seven million dollars (\$7,000,000.00).

### **IV. PUBLIC HEARING: District 1 Community Plan – Item from the Neighborhood Planning Committee. (*Bill Dermody, 651/266-6617*)**

First Vice Chair Reveal announced that the Saint Paul Planning Commission was holding a public hearing on the District 1 Community Plan. Notice of the public hearing was published in the Legal Ledger on March 17, 2016, and was mailed to the citywide Early Notification System list and other interested parties.

Bill Dermody, PED staff person spoke about the process. The District 1 Community Plan was put together by the District Council with the help of a consultant over the course of a couple of years. They had broad public outreach. The document was sent to staff in late 2015, at which time there was a thorough multi-department staff review. The plan was reviewed by the Neighborhood Planning Committee and the Planning Commission, then it was released for public hearing and in the last few weeks it has been reviewed by (HPC) Heritage Preservation Committee and by the Transportation Committee. Testimony will be forwarded to the Neighborhood Planning Committee – it would then come back to the Planning Commission and on to City Council presumably in May.

First Vice Chair Reveal read the rules of procedure for the public hearing.

The following people spoke.

1. Tom Dimond, 2119 Skyway Drive, Saint Paul, MN 55119. He stated that the Saint Paul's Highwood Development policies were recertified by the Planning Commission and City Council in 2009. In 2011, the Great River Passage was developed.  
Policy G1 – The wooded areas in Highwood, especially along the fragile bluff line, should be preserved and protected.  
Policy G6 – The City and/or the County should institute a plan for acquiring additional open space in the bluff area. Platted, but non-existent streets could provide the basis for a trail system for non-motorized use.  
Policy G7 – Battle Creek – Battle Creek Park and Pigs Eye Lake should be tied to the neighborhood through an open space and trail system. Access to Pigs Eye Lake by trail should be developed.

Policy G8 – In the event Totem Town becomes available for alternative uses, it should be designated as open space with appropriate areas set aside as undeveloped natural areas representative of the region’s ecosystem. These policies and regulations are the result of a multi-year planning process and partnership between the District 1 Community Council, the Highwood Task Force, the Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development and Public Works, Ramsey County, and the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District.

Mr. Dimond encourages in the proposed plan under the Land Use section to amend LU4.4 to conform with the adopted area plan for Totem Town. Mr. Dimond suggests that the language should read: *LU4.4 – Ramsey County has determined the current use of Totem Town will be discontinued. Saint Paul and Ramsey County Parks Departments should facilitate an open process to implement the City Council approved plan to retain this property in public ownership as open space and natural areas representative of the region’s ecosystem.*

In the adopted Highwood Area Plan, the City Council cites the importance of conserving and protecting natural and scenic resources within the Mississippi river Critical Area. The City Council goes on to say they support Ramsey County’s acquisition program, but share the neighborhood’s frustration that acquisition has slowed. In this case, we have natural and scenic resources that are publicly owned. The 80 acres at Totem Town should be retained as public property for the benefit and enjoyment of the public.

Mr. Dimond also suggests two other amendments. Under Environmental & Recreational Resources section: *ENV5.1 Should include Pine Creek and Ogden Creek.*

*ENV9.1 – Should read Construct crossings of Highway 61 and the railroad facilities near Lower Afton Road and near Henry Park as shown in the Bicycle and Pedestrian River Access Plan to connect to Pig’s Eye natural area and riverfront.*

Mr. Dimond submitted a very detailed packet of comments/suggestions.

2. Betsy Leach, Executive Director of District 1 Community Council, 2105 ½ Old Hudson Road, Saint Paul, MN 55119. Ms. Leach clarified some information previously presented to the Planning Commission, which is that the last time there was a public process on Boys Totem Town it was in 1990, the recertification of the guidelines not the plan in 2009 consisted of a phone call between city staff and herself. With that said she will be speaking specifically about the process by which they developed the community plan here today. It is important to understand the constraints under which they were working. They have one of the smallest operating budgets of all the district councils, which means that they have had less than one FTE conducting their work. In recent years this has improved, but they still do not have any staff members working more than part time.

So they have to be creative in how they developed this plan. they listened to ALL people in the neighborhood; they also used all the data about their neighborhood that they could find. They incorporated community visioning into their on-going work, taking every opportunity to listen to people whenever and wherever they met them, in their storefront office, at social gatherings, at a variety of community meetings held by other organizations, in chance encounters and so on. In addition they conducted surveys via their neighborhood newspaper and online, held meetings specifically about issues covered in the plan and about sites that were, would be, or should be under development.

They worked over several years in this way and then began to compile the various elements of the plan. The final refinements of the draft were a joint effort, but largely guided by Paul Sawyer. The draft was presented to the community in a couple of meetings, took feedback from those meetings and incorporated it then addressed comments by City reviewers.

They feel that the District 1 Community Plan reflects the best thinking and dreaming of the very diverse voices that call their neighborhoods home. It provides them and the City with a realistic and inclusive roadmap for the future. Ms. Leach submitted written comments.

3. Paul Sawyer, President of the District 1 Community Council, resides at 1346 Point Douglas Road South, Saint Paul, MN 55119. Mr. Sawyer focused his comments on a few areas of the plan. Much of the content and the spirit of the Gold Line Station Area Plans have been incorporated into their community plan. Those plans chart an exciting path forward into the future of their district where the current problems of poor walkability, limited neighborhood-walkable corridors and nodes surrounding stations that will connect them to the rest of the region. The entire Land Use chapter of their plan helps strategize how to make this future a reality.

One concern is about a change that was made at the committee level to policy LU1.4. They understand market conditions will dictate when and how the Sun Ray site is redeveloped, and they expect the City to play an active role in promoting that redevelopment and pursuing the most optimum use of the new T4 zoning. The concern is that the language added removes any role for the City to play in the future redevelopment.

Another concern that is in reference to policy LU4.4. It looks like Ramsey County will no longer be operating the Boys Totem Town site within a few years. That facility and associated site is of significant importance to our community. Due to the nature of the size and potential uses of the site, they requested a development moratorium so that the community could weigh in on current values, hopes, and concerns about the future of the site. Removing the language about the moratorium opens up the potential of a change on the site that could be devastating to the community. They strongly ask to restore the original language to LU4.4.

The Housing chapter attempts to address many housing issues in their district where 55% of the renters are cost-burdened and paying a higher median rent than the city as a whole. The Environmental and Recreational resources chapter celebrates the tremendous natural assets that define much of our district and works to ensure that their green space and recreational services are able to be enjoyed by everyone within the community. The Transportation chapter is a reformatting of the district's Transportation Plan and comprehensively addresses every mode moving in their district, and provides a robust plan to help their residents shift from the automobile preference built into their district while it was developed in the 1960s and 1970s to less expensive, healthier modes to ease the crippling transportation costs many of their residents face. Mr. Sawyer looks forward to the adoption of the plan. Mr. Sawyer submitted written comments.

**MOTION:** *Commissioner Shively moved to close the public hearing, leave the record open for written testimony until 4:30 p.m. on Monday, April 4, 2016, and to refer the matter back to the Neighborhood Planning Committee for review and recommendation. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*