



City Planning Commission
City of Cedar Rapids
101 First Street SE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401
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MINUTES
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING,
Thursday, September 19, 2013 @ 3:00 p.m.

Cedar Rapids City Hall Council Chambers, 101 First Street SE

Members Present: Scott Overland, Chair
Jim Halverson, Vice – Chair
Samantha Dahlby
Carletta Knox-Seymour
Richard Pankey
Allan Thoms
Mike Tertinger

Members Absent: Virginia Wilts

DSD Staff: Dave Houg, Plats & Zoning Conditions Coordinator
Vern Zakostecky, Planner

CD Staff: Betty Sheets, Administrative Assistant

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

Opening statements were presented stating the protocol of the meeting and the purpose of the City Planning Commission.

Roll call was answered with seven (7) Commissioners present and one (1) absent.

Commissioner Overland stated Commissioners have received the minutes from August 8, 2013 and August 15, 2013 and called for additions or corrections. Commissioner Overland stated with no additions or corrections, the minutes stand approved as written.

Commissioner Overland stated the agenda had one regular case and one new business item and called for any additions or corrections to the agenda. Commissioner Overland stated with no additions or corrections, the agenda stands approved as written.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Case Name: 2123, 2133, 2135 Mt. Vernon Road SE (Conditional Use)

Recommendation for a conditional use for construction of a 69 KV Electrical Substation in a R-3, Single Family Residential Zone District; also retaining walls/landscaping/earth berms to screen substation view from adjacent properties as requested by Alliant Energy (Applicant), Garret Karns, Sarah Vittetoe and Interstate Power & Light Co (Titleholders)

Case No: COND-004948-2013 Case Manager: Dave Houg

Mr. Houg, Development Services Department stated a request for a conditional use approval to place an electrical substation in a residential district with a total site area of 13.04 acres; .14 acres of existing houses and garages; substation pad and drive would be on .93 acre with proposed open area of 12.11 acres. Mr. Houg also showed a site plan, aerial view and several renderings. Mr. Houg stated that the substation would be 20 feet below, down the hill with lots of landscaping around the area.

Commissioner Overland called for questions of Mr. Houg.

Commissioner Pankey asked that if Mr. Houg would return to the aerial view to point out where the houses and garage were located.

Commissioner Tertinger asked if the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) had a chance to look at the houses that were going to be removed. Mr. Zakostecky stated that the applicant has been encouraged to contact the HPC prior to removing of the structures.

Commissioner Dalhby asked if there was any background information on the site selection of this location. Mr. Houg responded that the applicant was approved for this substation in 2004 and the difference is that they had acquired additional property and shifted the location of the substation.

Commissioner Overland called for a representative of the applicant.

Teresa Davis, Alliant Energy, 1001 Shaver Road NE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa and Isaac Hodgins, Shive-Hattery, 316 2nd Street SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Ms Davis stated that they had contacted the HPC to let them know that a request would be forthcoming to allow the HPC 6 months to review the properties for the demolition permit. Regarding the question on the background information, this substation is to serve the the southeast side of Cedar Rapids. They are retiring and consolidating three aging substations as a part of this project.

Commissioner Knox-Seymour asked why this particular area was selected. Ms. Davis stated due to the proximity to the transmission line that runs along Mt Vernon Road makes it easy and also the site is centrally located.

Commissioner Overland called for members of the public who wished to speak.

Vincent Wolrab, 2121 Mt Vernon Road SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Doris Ackerman, 1955 5th Avenue SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Bob Dixon, 2148 Mt Vernon Road SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; David Matejka, 2140 Mt Vernon Road SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Nora Ferguson, 2134 Mt Vernon Road, Cedar Rapids, Iowa stated the following reasons why they were against the substation in their neighborhood:

1. Health Concerns
2. Reduced Property Value of homes near substations
3. Unable to sell property and then homes are turned into rentals
4. Close to Homes
5. Noise factor
6. Suggestion Alliant place the substation in the City Property in the woods

7. Or consider using one of the three substation sites that are being retired
8. Would prefer not to have Alliant as a neighbor
9. Citizen's were not notified that the substation was to be built at this location until the conditional use signs were placed on the property
10. Invested and will invest a lot of money into their homes
11. Internet research shows that property values near a substation will go down

Commissioner Thoms stated that this is not the first substation in a residential area and asked Ms. Ackerman if she had any comparable that shows the value would be reduced by 50%. Ms. Ackerman stated that she does have any comparable.

Commissioner Overland asked that the applicant return to the podium to address the citizen concerns. Ms. Davis stated that she does not have any of the decibel information, substations typically produce a low humming sound, however this substation will be built 250 feet from the road and 20 feet below the road elevation, and thus Alliant is hoping that also with the natural landscaping all these efforts will help mask the noise.

Ms. Davis stated that in another neighborhood on E Avenue where Alliant built a Substation, the neighbors were not happy to have a substation in their area. After the substation was complete Alliant held a follow-up meeting with that neighborhood association and neighbors responded that they had no issues. In fact there was no traffic, landscaping is maintained and not a lot of activity at the substation after the construction was completed.

Commissioner Pankey asked if this would be similar to the substation built at 29th Street SE. Ms. Davis stated the substation would be the same size; however the structure would not be the same as that substation has a retaining wall around it and the structure is taller.

Commissioner Halverson asked if the trees would be small and younger trees. Ms. Davis stated that yes they planned to plant smaller younger trees that would mature over time.

Commissioner Knox-Seymour stated that it did not sound like Alliant had a meeting with the neighborhood. Ms. Davis stated that they did have a meeting on Tuesday of this week with the neighbors and they had similar questions and concerns. Ms. Davis stated she would contact her safety and health department to address the health concerns issue.

Commissioner Pankey asked if the chain link fence would be visible to the neighbors. Ms. Davis stated it would be visible to the south

Commissioner Knox-Seymour asked how many other places did Alliant consider before deciding on this location and why did they change the site. Ms. Davis stated that the original site had been purchased ten years ago and the reason it was decided to change the location was because of a ravine and Alliant would have had to build a 35-40 foot retaining wall and felt that was a safety concern.

Commissioner Overland asked if there were any more questions of the applicant. There were no more questions.

Commissioner Overland called for a motion to approve the conditional use. Commissioner Thoms made a motion to table the request for a conditional use for construction of a 69 KV Electrical Substation in a R-3, Single Family Residential Zone District until the next CPC

Meeting so that additional information could be provided such as the property values declining, noise decibel levels and the health reasons. Commissioner Knox-Seymour seconded the motion.

Commissioner Overland called for further discussion on the motion.

Commissioner Tertinger asked if we could also receive more information on whether the HPC had been contacted.

Commissioner Overland called for a vote on the motion. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed to table the request.

- **New Business**

1. Downtown Self Supporting Municipal Improvement District Expansion

Mr. Gunnerson, Community Development stated this is a petition by downtown land owners to be part of the Downtown Self Supporting Municipal Improvement District (SSMID). The expansion area is approximately 8 square blocks and between two existing SSMID districts, the Medical SSMID and the Downtown SSMID. This expansion would close the gap between the two districts. The petition is signed by 22 of the 59 owners which is 40%, more than the 25% required by state law. It represents 61% of the assessed value of taxable property in the expansion area. Mr. Gunnerson showed a map of the two existing districts and the area to be expanded into the Downtown SSMID. A SSMID district is a self taxing body that assesses property within the district and uses that assessment to pay for services above what the city provides for. The state code requires that the City Planning Commission review and make recommendation on the proposed expansion of the Downtown Self-Supporting Municipal Improvement District to the east, adding approximately 8 square blocks to the district. Final approval of the SSMID expansion will be voted on by City Council this fall.

Commissioner Overland called for questions of Mr. Gunnerson.

Commissioner Halverson will the new expanded area be asked to catch up on fees.

Commissioner Overland called for a representative of the applicant.

Doug Neumann, Economic Alliance, stated Economic Alliance's had been asked to take petitions to property owners and answer questions. Two and half of these blocks were planned to be part of the Medical SSMID, but the property owners would rather be in the Downtown SSMID. Working with the Mayor on the SSMID Commission appointments, one position has been left open until the new expansion area has been approved. Once approved a property owner from this new area will be appointed to the Commission so the property owner in the new Area are represented on the Commission. There is no provision by state law to make payment catch up.

Commissioner Overland called for questions of the applicant. No questions were asked.

Commissioner Overland called for members of the public who wished to speak. No member of the public wished to speak.

Commissioner Overland called for a motion to approve the Downtown Self Supporting Municipal Improvement District Expansion. Commissioner Halverson made a motion to approve the Downtown Self Supporting Municipal Improvement District Expansion. Commissioner Pankey seconded the motion.

Commissioner Overland called for discussion on the motion. No discussion was presented. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

- **Training Opportunities**

On October 16, 17, 18, 2013, Cedar Rapids is hosting the 2013 Iowa American Planning Association Conference. On October 16th there is a training session geared toward the City Planning Commission. Commissioners are encouraged to sign up for part or all of the conference and the City will pay for this training.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Betty Sheets, Administrative Assistant
Community Development