

Mt. Vernon Planning and Zoning Commission
Minutes
March 9, 2022

The Planning and Zoning Commission returned to in-person meetings held at City Hall, 213 1st St. NW. For those individuals that were unable to attend or did not feel comfortable with in-person meetings, the city provided a Zoom Option. For those planning to attend via Zoom the following information was needed: Telephone#:312-626-6799, Meeting ID: 89315193453, Password: 979697. If assistance was needed before the meeting began the public could contact City Planner, Laura Eckles at 641-521-4110. The following Commission members were present: Trude Elliot, Joan Burge, Jacob Buster. Also in attendance: Applicant Mount Vernon Community School District Superintendent, Dr. Greg Batenhorst; Applicant's Engineer Representative, Loren Hoffman; and City Planner, Laura Eckles. Truman Jordan, Jay Willems, and Matt Nelson were remotely present. Chairperson, Truman Jordan, called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Approval of Agenda and January 12, 2022, minutes. These documents stand approved unless otherwise indicated by commission members.

Discussion and possible action on Mount Vernon Community School District Activities Complex Site Plan.

Eckles explained that city staff has reviewed the application and recommends approval of the Mount Vernon Community School District Activities Complex Site Plan with the condition that the applicant addresses all items in the City Engineer's Report. Eckles went through the city staff report and explained that the applicant has supplied all documentation required by the city code. Jordan referred to the City Engineer Report and asked whether the board of adjustment would have to review the site plan due to the minor boundary change and the proposed use. Eckles explained that both items Jordan was referring to had already been resolved and that the site plan would not have to go before the board of adjustment. Hoffman and Batenhorst gave an overview with background information on the project. Hoffman addressed key concerns that came up within primary meetings the school district had with abutting neighbors including traffic and parking, stormwater, pedestrian access, not in my back yard (NIMBY), and lighting. The applicant has held a meeting with residents in the adjacent neighborhood to address their concerns and needs. Jordan asked if there was a fence separating the trail from the field which Hoffman confirmed. Batenhorst explained that the hope for this activities complex will be for the public to use this space when activities are not scheduled. Willems asked the applicant whether there would be an impact on 13th Ave SW for Stonebrook residents regarding street parking. Batenhorst explained that the plan is to not allow parking on game nights in Stonebrook. Batenhorst also stated that a meeting for traffic flow in this area has been scheduled with city staff for later this month. Hoffman stated that there will be four 80-foot light poles and that unfortunately, these poles do not

meet the angle deflection that is required per the lighting ordinance, and to meet that requirement they would have to go to 90-foot poles. Hoffman explained that with the poles at 80 feet they have very minimal light spill with some readings of 2–3-foot candles on Cornell’s vacant property to the east. Hoffman reiterated that the MUSCO lighting representative stated that the neighboring residents to the west will have very low candela readings making it virtually dark at their property lines. Hoffman continued the explanation that as designed on those properties you would see 1,000 candelas which is the equivalent to a flashlight from a distance; for reference, Hoffman also stated that a car headlight is about 30,000 candelas. The worst reading is the property north of the field, but since this property will be about 12 feet above the field, that will decrease the candela. Hoffman explained that lighting technology has really improved over the years and with today’s technology they are able to focus light down rather than out. The current lighting ordinance is written based on an angle not considering evolved technology. Jordan asked Hoffman if he had a recommendation to update the city’s lighting ordinance to make it more in agreement with modern lighting technology. Jordan went on to explain that the ordinance is only 4-5 years old, but the goal was to minimize the glare up into the sky. Burge asked if it would be more efficient for the light poles to be lowered. Hoffman explained that if they did that it would be going against the code since they would have to angle the lights more which would impact the neighbors more. Elliot stated that there seems to be a need for more discussion about updating our lighting ordinance. Elliot went on to explain that when the commission developed the ordinance, they did not want light pollution in the sky. Hoffman went through the engineer’s report and agreed that each of these items could be addressed. Hoffman stated that there were no current plans to include trail lighting. Batenhorst added that there are no lights on the trails leading from Stonebrook and he was not sure how the neighbors would feel about having lighting that close to their homes. Jordan asked if the lights could face away from the neighbors, and Hoffman agreed that that could be a possibility. Jordan also stated that the city has done a good job placing lighting around trails that cannot benefit from street lighting.

Willems made a motion to recommend approval to city council of the Mount Vernon Community School District Activities Complex Site Plan with the condition that the applicant addresses all items in the City Engineer’s Report. Motion seconded by Elliot. Voting yes: Jordan, Willems, Elliot, Burge, Buster, and Nelson. Motion passes.

Meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m. on March 9, 2022.

Laura Eckles
City Planner