

City of Rockville Planning Commission Minutes
August 23, 2005 Time: 7:00 p.m.
Place: John Clark Elem. School Media Ctr.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Bechtold at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Present: Chair Jerry Bechtold, Toni Honer, Linda Peck, Dale Borgmann, Dan Hansen. Absent: Kathleen Stanger. Also present: Vern Ahles (liaison with City Council).

Staff: Rena Weber (City Administrator), Judy Neu (Administrative Assistant).

Don Merten remembered:

Jerry asked that we have a moment of silence to remember and honor Don Merten who so admirably served Rockville Township, the City of Rockville and his community. Don passed away August 11th. He was a special member of this Planning Commission and his insights and gentle manner will be sorely missed. Following the moment of silence, Jerry gave a short history of Don's amazing contributions throughout his life.

Approval of Agenda/Amendments: Moved and seconded that the agenda/amendments be approved with the following **addition** requested by Jerry: **further discussion on signs. Passed.**

Approval of Minutes of 08/09/05 and Amended Minutes of 07/26/05: Moved, seconded and passed to dispense reading of these minutes. Moved and seconded that the Minutes of 08/09/05 be approved as presented. These minutes include the amendments made as regards the 07/26/05 Minutes. **Approved.** Moved and seconded that the Minutes as Amended for 07/26/05 be approved. **Passed.**

New Business:

a) Public Hearing: Longnecker request for a Variance from Fence Requirements.

The Public Hearing was opened at 7:04 p.m. Douglas Longnecker (8520 White Oak Road) was present. The request is for **approval** of an **eight (8) foot high fence** that has been constructed in the side yard setback in the R-1 District. Under Section 10: FENCES (Subdivision 3 Fence Regulations A. Residential District) in Rockville's Subdivision Ordinance, "Fences **may not exceed six (6) feet** above adjacent-ground grade. Mr. Longnecker went over the reasons for the fence being constructed which involve privacy issues for members of his family with physical and mental health pressures. Included in the Planning Commission's packet of information was a letter signed by twelve (12) neighbors expressing support for this variance. No other people were present to testify. It was moved and seconded that the **Public Hearing be closed** at 7:10 p.m... **Passed.** Rena read through the **Finding of Fact Supporting/Denying a Variance. Each of the 6 items received unanimous Yes votes.** Reasons supplied by Commission members included the following: 1) the fence is attractive and fits the neighborhood; 2) the height

of the house and its location on the parcel means an eight (8) foot fence vs. a six (6) foot fence is appropriate; 3) the health, safety and welfare issues for the Longnecker family are of special importance and the situation is quite unique. **Moved and seconded that the Planning Commission recommend approval by the City Council of the Longnecker request for a Variance from Fence Requirements. Passed Unanimously.**

Old Business:

- a) **Skaja RV Use-RI Shoreland:** Brief discussion of this situation. The cabin on the site is hitched to the grinder station. Both RVs use water from the cabin. Because the situation involves shoreland, it was thought meeting with Stearns County shoreland staff would be a wise step. **Moved and seconded that Rena Weber (City Administrator) and Jerry Bechtold (Chair Planning Commission) set up a meeting with Stearns County staff and together come up with solutions/recommendations that are enforceable as regards this situation. These solutions would be implemented in the spring/summer of 2006. Passed Unanimously.**
- b) **Screening Definition/Fencing:** Additional information was made available: 1) Toni had communicated with St. Augusta; 2) Linda supplied copies of ordinances from the Cities of Afton and Plymouth... Both gave brief summaries to the other members. Jerry stated that fences put up internally at businesses can pose problems if a fire emergency occurs. Much discussion followed on the difficulties of mandating specific fencing/screening requirements because “one size does not fit all.” In addition liability concerns should be left up to the individual business to address and are best not undertaken by the City. **The Commission members reached consensus on the following points as regards the fencing/screening issue for the present:**
- 1) Businesses should be encouraged to keep their outdoor storage neat and clean. Businesses should have some plan to control weeds on their property.
 - 2) Any fences and visual screening used should fit the specific location of the business: its closeness to major roads; its arrangement on the parcel; its closeness to residential areas; etc.
 - 3) Fencing on a particular site should have some uniformity
 - 4) Security and the decisions to use security fencing should be up to the business.
 - 5) The Planning Commission should continue yearly inspections as a reminder to businesses to implement some of these recommendations. This would also be a time to share other concerns either the Commission or particular business might have. Let’s keep things positive.

The Planning Commission recommends that the information we have gathered on fencing/screening along with the five points listed above be given to MDG, INC. to consider and address as they work on updating our zoning ordinance.

Additions to the Agenda: Signs Jerry went through a brief history of how the Franklin Billboard sign was allowed on Vern Salzl’s property. The cost for local

businesses to use this billboard space is too high for the businesses. Originally there were five local businesses using the space and sharing the cost but now there are only three. Bruce Conrad presented some concerns from the Business Association: 1) signage of some sort is needed at the western end and eastern end of the City along TH 23. The Business Association would like to see “Welcome to Rockville” signs on granite blocks vs. large billboard type signs. 2) Possible locations for such signage might be near the Racquet Ball Club (Where?) at the eastern line of the present City and somewhere between the two holding pond areas on the western edge of town just after Freedom Auto. 3) Also helpful would be some attractive smaller signs listing downtown businesses, etc. along Broadway. This would have to be working out with MNDOT; 4) The 400 Club has expressed interest in some sort of sign along TH 23 heading east prior to Co.Rd. 6 that directs people to their establishment. At present there is only signage going west – just prior to reaching Co.Rd. 6 on the right side of TH 23. **The Planning Commission is concerned about helping the local businesses with appropriate signage options. The Commission, however, does not want to encourage or allow any additional large billboards to be constructed along the new section of TH23. However, there is pressure mounting from billboard companies to allow more billboards along this section.** The Commission will continue to work on this issue and welcomes further input from the Business Association and MNDOT.

Other items discussed: 1) horse ownership in R-1 District; 2) on-site inspections: Bauerly’s, Hansen’s and Klein’s. Rena will arrange for us to visit these places on September 14, 2005.

Adjournment: It was moved and seconded that the **meeting be adjourned at 8:18 p.m. Passed.**

Chairman: _____

Rec. Sec. _____