



## HOUSING AND LAND USE SPECIAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 | 6:30pm | Zoom

### Committee Members:

Mike Moore (Chair)  
Jack Fei  
Drew Nelson  
Tim Schmidt  
Mike Sonn  
Ross Gregerson  
Gene Johnson  
Colin Fesser

Cathy Plessner  
Patty Hartman  
Meg Arnosti  
Ann Dolan  
Kensey Lipstreuer  
Elizabeth Wefel  
Saura Jost  
Marc Manderscheid

Tom Dietsche  
Kathy McGuire  
Kate Baxter-Kauf  
Wendy Merrell  
Evan Hall  
Art Punyko  
Julie Kaupa  
Cindy Radtke

### Presenters:

Jeremy Exley, Applicant  
Shelley Santine, Architect  
Eric Whiteis, Development Partner

**Guests:** Approx. 72 guests

**Staff:** Alexa Golemo

## MINUTES

*The Zoom meeting reached its 100 person limit, causing the chair of the committee to be unable to log on. The meeting was delayed while Alexa and Mike Moore attempted to solve the problem.*

I. Approval of February 2021 Agenda (*Addition/Deletion of agenda items*)

No additions or deletions.

II. Approval of January 2021 Minutes

Motion to approve minutes by Drew Nelson. Seconded Dave Pasiuk. Motion passes 22-0 with 1 abstention. Minutes approved.

III. 235 Cleveland Avenue South, Application to Board of Zoning Appeals

Jeremy Exley spoke and shared his slides about the project. Roxy cleaners chose this developer. Plan is to clean up the site with the MPCA. Plan is for 2 commercial spaces, 23 housing units. 23 parking spaces. Plan is to fit in aesthetically. Larger units rather than micro units. One and two bedrooms plus a den. Lift planned for parking area is being considered and would double the number of spaces. LED lights, solar, EV station. Not planning to build and sell. Not targeted towards students. Main floor in concrete. 50 feet compares to 40 foot allowed for RT1 nearby. Maybe gym, drop-off drycleaner, boutique, office. Rezoning to T2 would allow larger Floor Area Ratio.

Scott Hand: 2129 Lincoln. Good presentation. We should not give so many variances. We can work to change the laws instead.



Kajad: Kay. What if you made some units larger for families. One per floor? Co housing? 2 bedrooms and a bath, shared dining. Accommodate the handicapped who might share with a college student. What is the life span of this building? Would like a larger than 6-foot setback so we don't lose so much green.

Jeremy Exley. City wants no setback on these corner buildings.

Todd Curtis, 2023 Sargent. 1. 55 feet is too high. We have zoning for a reason. 2. Parking is a significant issue. Would remove commercial to provide more parking. 3. Students will be occupying these units.

Jeremy Exley: Understood about the height. Could go to 50 feet with no variance. It is more expensive to build that way. Cameras will allow surveillance and control.

Eric Beck: Only filed for LLC in December for this project. Friends and associates may be tilting the conversation on Facebook to try to sway the comments. Do we need an outside environmental impact study to make sure the site is actually cleaned up? Especially because of the children and parents at the school. What is the risk during excavation and clean up?

Jeremy Exley: New LLC for this project. Has another building on Marshall and has 2 other houses in the neighborhood. Have not looked at Mac Grove Facebook and have not asked associates to weigh in. Cleanup: superfund and engineering firm are already involved. MPCA is overseeing the cleanup.

Jason Bergum: Height is excessive. 1. How close will this be to Regina's Candies? 2. What is your feeling about how it will fit? This is on the top of the hill and will stick out.

J.E. The building will have a 6' setback from Regina's. Fitting in is subjective. The City wants more density. Land will be put to a better and higher use.

Thomas Widkowski. Variance would set a precedent. Why do we need 5 stories? Neighborhood will suffer to foot the bill.

J.E. Don't want you to feel like you are footing the bill. Addressing the comprehensive plan and what the neighborhood needs.

Shelly Santine, architect for the project. Elevator makes all units accessible. All designed with 3 foot doors and wider hallways ("Universal Design"). Setback 6 feet on first floor, 8 feet on second floor, or 14 feet away from Regina's. Building steps back as it goes up.

Kateri: 2093 Stanford. Advocates for housing in my neighborhood. Concerns at the beginning turn out to be not so serious. St. Paul needs housing and we should welcome new neighbors. Parking is not a concern on Cleveland or St. Clair, even with bike lanes. We expect less traffic after Covid.

Garth and Melanie Mortenson. We are not excited about this project. Moved here from big and noisy cities, escaped to St. Paul, which has a small town charm. We don't want more big buildings, and change it too much from what it is. There are other ways of getting more housing besides a 5 story building.



Emilie: Supports this proposal. From the neighborhood. Older buildings can be limiting. Pro Pharmacy closed in 2016 and was vacant for a while until Tae Kuon Do. No bathrooms, other problems with older buildings. I lived in Minneapolis also. Residents of condos and apartments are just as valuable as homeowners.

Michael Raiter. 2080 St. Clair. Issue are the size. 40 percent over FAR. 30 Percent over height limit. Parking impact is serious and could cause problems. Would like to see info on the traffic. Study. There will be a lot of extra traffic. Would like renderings of the setbacks. We need more housing, but we don't need such big buildings.

J.E. We have some work to do to find common ground. Traffic study is not done yet. I have 3 kids, K, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grader. Thinks this is an improvement over the cleaners. Renderings are coming. Will send updates to Alexa. We do not want enemies. We think it will make the neighborhood more vibrant.

Tyler Giles: Represents 225 Cleveland City of Life Church. Celebrate the project. Wants the height and density, improve the corner. Size is reasonable. In agreement with variance requests.

Patrick Rhone. 1358 Summit. Data shows there is not a demand for this kind of housing. The Grove and the Harper are less than half full. You could make a smaller building and fill it up. For a project on Marshall you argued against these same kinds of variances, April 2, 2020. For 1609 Marshall. Why the change for this project?

J.E. T2 to T3 zoning change. They were different situations.

Jenny and Kris Krol. 2101 Princeton. What is your story? Did you know from the beginning you would need variances? How risky is this project for you?

J.E. My story: Strategic purpose. In November came up with an agreement with a contingency period. Exploring our options before moving forward with a purchase agreement. We could walk away if we run into a brick wall, but we hope not to. It is risky. We don't know about the site cleanup. Supply is limited. Interest rates are changing. We don't have a crystal ball for what will happen in 2 years.

Kelly Harmon Schmidt. 2203 Sargent Ave. 55 foot building is 30 percent over, which is significant. Rest of the neighborhood is all residential. I am concerned that this cannot blend in. This area is so cute. We need to support smarter density. Downtown, light rail, but not in the middle of this neighborhood. Could the architecture be cute as a button?

J.E. Going to have to figure out height. We will make the architecture as good as we can. Brick base, dark colors, looks historic Grand Avenue brownstone. Black wrought iron balconies.

Committee Member Discussion:

Kathy McGuire: Reviewing comprehensive plan: Neighborhood nodes page 39. Transition and scale to surrounding land uses. Pedestrian safety. Today was parked at St. Clair and Snelling woman with a baby stroller was almost hit today. Street is completely parked up. Development with high job density. Cities have made the mistake of not concentrating density in the right places.

Art Punyko: When will we hear back on traffic study?

J.E. Further down the road. March 8 meeting with the. Next step is city to review the variance site plan review. Plan is in the \$2000 range. Hard to have affordable units. Hopefully in the future.



Saura Jost. Generally supports the development. Is the variance in order to offset the cleanup? Would 3 stories be enough to offset? Affordability: how does cleanup affect the price of the rents? What type of chemicals are there? From previous gas stations as well as dry cleaners?

J.E. Gas station petroleum was cleared. Only dry cleaner chemical. Parking is the real driver of FAR and Height. Need to have a concrete main floor with pillars and a concrete cover.

Mark Manderscheid: The only issue is whether to grant a variance. One standard is a practical difficulty having to do with the property itself. Economic difficulties are not a reason. If rules can be bent for people with power, that leaves people out. You should get the property re-zoned but we should not grant a variance. Rules matter.

Colin Fesser: Talk about solar and universal design is exciting. Comp plan says it is in a neighborhood node, designated for increased density. B2 has requirement about rear setback. 7 stall limit should not apply? Will walk up unit be accessible without a step up?

J.E. Will look into rear B2 setback. Walk up may not be accessible.

Cindy Radtke. Faith communities bring up environmental care and welcoming and inclusiveness. Affordable housing. Nodes are important for concentrating density. Problem is that zoning code is very restrictive.

Drew Nelson. Students are our neighbors.

Kate Baxter-Kauf. Zoning rules are important but so are criteria. Think variances are justified in this case. Criteria are met in this case.

Jack Fei. Big concern is that it seems rushed. Hold off to get more neighborhood buy-in. St. Paul is in the middle of a parking minimum study, due in a month or two. Don't rush in. Would vote yes, regardless of the rules, this is a good project.

Wendy Merrell. \$2000 is not affordable. We have plenty of housing coming with the Highland development. Will vote no.

Motion: (See below)

Kate Baxter-Kauf: Approve ALL variances: parking, height, FAR.

Drew Nelson: Second

Evan Hall: Agrees it is rushed. Disappointed not to see renderings, site plans, etc. Still supports.

Tom Dietsche: wants clarification of setbacks. Not in line with zoning code.

J.E. Using Pinnacle Engineering.

Marc Manderscheid: Concern with zoning code 66.431 interpretation is important to the setbacks. Troubled by not knowing how to interpret this part of the code.

Colin Fesser also has concern about how to interpret this part of the B2 code as well as section E. Expect that there may also need to be a variance for the rear.



Discussion about whether to hold a vote or not. Board of Zoning Appeals will figure out the interpretation. We need to think of what is right for the neighborhood.

***\*\* The Housing and Land Use Committee of the Macalester-Groveland Community Council recommends approval of the parking variance of 13.9 parking spaces, height variance of 14.8', and variance for an FAR of 2.8 for the property at 235 Cleveland Avenue South (Kate Baxter-Kauf, Drew Nelson). \*\****

Final Vote: Vote: 12 aye, 10 nay with 1 abstention. Motion passes.

V. Adjourned 9:11 pm.

Minutes submitted by Meg Arnosti.