

**City of Gem Lake
Planning Commission Meeting – August 14, 2024
Meeting Minutes**

Planning Commission Chair Joshua Patrick called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Commission Members Art Pratt, Don Cummings, and Stephanie Farrell were present. Not present was Commission Member Derek Wippich. Also present: City Planner Evan Monson, City Attorney Kevin Beck, Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence, Phillips Architects & Contractors President David Phillips, and Krunch Dumpster Compacting President Joe Huth.

August 14, 2024

A motion was introduced by Commissioner Pratt to accept the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Farrell. Motion carried 4-0.

Minutes

A motion was introduced by Commissioner Pratt, seconded by Commission Chair Patrick to approve the July 9, 2024, Planning Commission Meeting minutes. Motion carried 4-0.

Public Hearings

Zoning Requests – Barnett Kia (Zoning Compliance Request, Lot Line Adjustment Request, Zoning Amendment Request)

Commission Chair Patrick introduced a motion to open the public hearing on the matter at 7:01 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Pratt. Motion carried 4-0.

City Planner Evan Monson summarized the requests. At 3610 Highway 61, Barnett Companies is looking to remove their existing building (31,865 SF) and build a new one (34,060 SF) on the north side of their property. The building would be an upgraded version of their existing one, including spaces for a carwash, service garage, sales floor, vehicle delivery, and administration. The existing building is proposed to remain until the new building is constructed, and then would be removed. Phasing and sequencing plans would be put in place to remain operational during construction.

The property to the north, 3700, is also owned by Barnett Properties. Both properties are within the City’s Gateway District and are within the Neighborhood Center Sub-Zone. The applicant’s proposed building type would not be consistent with the building types currently in the Gateway District, while the proposed use is currently listed as a nonconforming use in the zone.

This request requires three separate applications for review and approval:

1. **A lot line adjustment application.** Barnett Properties owns both subject properties and is requesting a lot line adjustment to the north, to align with the parking lot entrances. The city has reviewed lot line adjustments through the ‘Minor Subdivision’ process.
2. **A zoning ordinance amendment application.** The Gateway District does not currently permit Automotive Dealerships, the applicant is requesting to allow Automotive Dealerships as a permitted use. The applicant is also proposing a new building type.
3. **A zoning compliance permit application.** This permit is required for redevelopment projects within the Gateway District.

Lot Line Adjustment

The applicant is requesting to adjust the lot line to accommodate the entrance from Highway 61. The subject lot (south/on the right) is currently 5.16 acres, and the abutting lot (north/on the left) is 4.17 acres. The proposed lot line would result in the subject lot being 5.56 acres and the abutting lot being 3.96 acres. The requested lot line adjustment is consistent with the requirements listed in Ord. No. 131.

Zoning Ordinance Amendment

The applicant is proposing a new building type template as “Figure 15a Automotive Dealership” within Section 9.6 of Ord. No. 131. Proposed language was submitted for the new building type template to determine if the proposed language is appropriate.

The proposed building type template can be used for new or redevelopment of other sites in the Gateway District, such as the Ford dealership across Highway 61 or the 3700 Highway 61 property also owned by the applicant. The proposed designs from the applicant show a decrease in impervious surface coverage, an increase in landscaping, new lighting, and a modern building compared to the current site; the proposed building template would require other automotive dealerships to adhere to the same standards.

Zoning Compliance Request

Contingent on the approval of the lot line adjustment and ordinance amendment, the applicant is requesting a Zoning Compliance Permit to allow for construction of a new automotive dealership building. This request for a Zoning Compliance Permit is consistent with the requirements in Ord. No. 131. The applicant must submit a complete development plan prior to the receipt of any building permits.

Staff Comments

The project plans were forwarded to staff and other agencies for comments prior to the August Planning Commission meeting. City Planner Evan Monson shared that Ramsey County is currently reviewing the plans, MnDOT is currently reviewing the plans, VLAWMO needs to review stormwater management plans, White Bear Lake Fire Department had comments, City Building Official is currently reviewing the plans, and City Engineer is currently reviewing the plans.

Commission Member Cummings invited Phillips Architects & Contractors President David Phillips to comment on the request. Mr. Phillips shared that currently the site exists as a legal nonconforming use and Barnett Kia would like to turn it into a legal conforming use. The demolition of the current building and construction of a brand-new building located slightly behind the already existing one to create better access for customers. This new facility would increase the property value on the site and would be better for the community. The new facility would create more jobs than are currently available.

Commission Member Cummings shared that he thought it was a very productive informal review when it was first proposed back in the Fall of 2023. Commission Member Cummings wants to make sure that any changes being made to the current ordinance creates language that can be the standard for all existing dealerships in Gem Lake and at the same time not allowing the possibility of new dealerships requesting to be constructed.

Commission Chair Patrick introduced a motion to close the public hearing on the matter at 7:36 p.m., seconded by Commission Member Farrell, Motion carried 4-0.

City Planner Evan Monson recommends the Planning Commission table all three (3) items for further review by the City Engineer, City Building Inspector, and other contacted agencies and revisit the discussion at the September 10 Planning Commission meeting and forward to the City Council at that point.

Commission Member Pratt introduced a motion to table all three (3) requests for further review by staff and to extend the request an additional sixty (60) days in the event there is no quorum at the September Planning Commission Meeting, seconded by Commission Chair Patrick. Motion carried 4-0.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

While there is no public comment period listed on the agenda, Commission Member Cummings stated that there is someone in attendance that wanted to give the Commission a short summary of what they will be hopefully reviewing during the September Planning Commission meeting. Krunch Dumpster Compacting President Joe Huth gave a short summary of what he will be presenting to the Commission during the September meeting. Mr. Huth is hoping to obtain a piece of land in the gateway district to put in a new business and is ready to conform to all city ordinance requirements and regulations. The Commission is looking forward to hearing more about it at the September Planning Commission Meeting.

Open Items for Commission Members to Bring Up

Commission Chair Patrick shared with the Commission that he has decided to run for City Council. This will leave a spot open on the Commission, specifically the Commission Chair position.

Future Meetings

City Council Meeting, Tuesday, August 20, 2024, at Heritage Hall, and Planning Commission Meeting, Tuesday, September 10, 2024, at Heritage Hall.

Attendance Inquiry

Commissioner Chair Patrick surveyed the Commission to see if any of the members would have any issues attending the September 10, 2024, meeting. At this time all those in attendance have no conflict.

Adjournment

There being no further business, following a motion from Commissioner Pratt, seconded by Commission Chair Patrick, the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Melissa Lawrence