

**City of Gem Lake  
Planning Commission Meeting – March 8, 2022  
Meeting Minutes**

Planning Commissioner Chairman Don Cummings called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Commission Members Stephanie Farrell, Art Pratt and Joshua Patrick were present. Derrick Wippich was absent. Also present: Planning and Zoning Director Evan Monson, City Attorney Patrick Kelly, Mayor Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Steve Sabraski of LandForm Company and residents Brent and Emily Messing.

**March 8, 2022 Agenda**

Patrick introduced a motion to approve the agenda for today’s meeting. Farrell seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.

**Minutes**

Pratt introduced a motion to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2022 Planning Commission Meeting. Patrick seconded the motion. Three in favor, Farrell abstained due to not being present at this meeting. Motion carried.

**Public Hearing**

**Conditional Use Permit for a Detached Garage Structure at 3984 Scheuneman Road**

Monson reviewed a report on the request by Brent and Emily Messing build a large, detached garage on their property. He stated that the structure complied with setback and height requirements for this type of building. However, the building would have a 1900 square footprint, with a 600 square foot porch area, considerably larger than the 1000 square foot structure allowed without a CUP. He pointed out that the structure would be situated in a manner that presented few or no visual issues with neighbors and was nearly identical to a structure on the property next door. Monson detailed three other garages in the city that had been approved in the last few years with footprints larger than 1000 square feet, and similar circumstances. He then detailed a list of conditions that could be placed on approval for this structure and other options the Planning Commission had in dealing with this request, such as denying it.

Cummings introduced a motion to open a public hearing on this matter at 7:09 p.m. Pratt seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.

Cummings pointed out that the public hearing had been properly noticed in the White Bear Press. He then asked for public comment on the request. Brent Messing, the applicant provided more information on his intended use for the building. He said it would function as a home office, due to his job being primarily remote working conditions. He also planned to use the structure for storage. He said he would not be using the building for an additional residence on the property, or as a rental unit. Over time he planned to use similar siding on another nearby garage structure to add to the visual appeal. He had no plans at present to bring a driveway up to the structure.

Patrick introduced a motion to close the public hearing at 7:22 p.m. Pratt seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.

The Planning Commission then discussed the CUP request. Pratt felt the impact of this structure would be minimal due to proper height, setbacks, and the fact that a similar structure existed next door. Patrick commented on the fact that neighbors had no objections to the project.

Pratt introduced a motion to recommend approval of the CUP request with 5 of the 6 conditions suggested by Evan Monson. #3 of the Monson suggestions would be eliminated in favor of a statement about permitted uses for the garage. The motion was seconded by Patrick. All in favor, motion carried. Here are the recommended conditions for the CUP:

1. The applicant is permitted to build the proposed detached accessory structure according to the plans submitted to the city and reviewed with this request.

2. The applicant is required to acquire a building permit from the city for the proposed structure and to submit a grading and erosion control plan to city staff for review prior to issuance of a building permit, so as to ensure drainage issues are mitigated.
3. The applicant would not be allowed to turn this structure into a secondary residence on the property and would remodel the existing nearby shed to match the siding of the new garage within one year of garage completion.
4. Any connections of the proposed accessory structure to city utilities would adhere to applicable city requirements.
5. The applicant is required to adhere to all applicable local, State or Federal regulations.
6. The applicant is required to acquire any other applicable local, State or Federal permits for this request.

## **New Business**

### **Luther Cadillac Project Request and Anticipated Re-application**

An application for a new car dealership that spanned two cities (Gem Lake and Vadnais Heights) was approved in 2019. Due to the pandemic and other factors, the project had to be put on hold for a period of time. Luther Cadillac now wishes to restart the project with slightly revised plans. The project involved a car dealership and large parking lot. The building would be entirely in Vadnais Heights. The north end of the parking lot would be in Gem Lake.

Revised plans were shown to the Planning Commission by Steve Sabraski of Land Form Company, who is managing the construction planning. The new plans show a smaller sales building that is set back further from Highway 61 and the access road. The parking lot is essentially the same, although revisions allowed for the elimination of the retaining wall and the installation of more landscape screening on the north end of the project.

Commission members asked several questions but generally regarded the plans as essentially the same as those approved three years ago for that portion of the project that is in Gem Lake. Sabraski added that Vadnais Heights had already approved the revisions and that Luther was ready to start in March or whenever Gem Lake could provide their official stamp of approval. He added that watershed approval had already been obtained. The application will be sent into the city in the coming week. It will be the subject of a public hearing on April 12, with council discussion and potential approval on April 19.

### **2020 Gem Lake Comprehensive Plan**

A final draft of the Gem Lake Comprehensive Plan was submitted to the Metropolitan Council approximately one year ago, following a public hearing. In December of 2021, a letter was received back from the Metropolitan Council asking for additional changes. The consultant working on this project for the City, did not feel the changes were significant and could be completed fairly quickly. One or two of the requested changes involved the City's engineering firm. SEH is currently seeking clarification from the Metropolitan Council on one or two of the requests for revision.

Once the final version is re-submitted to the Metropolitan Council, Artig-Swomley and Cummings discussed having a joint informational meeting on the plan. This informational meeting could be part of the April or May City Council meeting. April is preferred if the timing can be managed. Artig-Swomley said she would get in touch with the consultant who helped write the plan and see if he is available on April 19

### **Future Meetings**

City Council Meeting, April 12, 2022 at Heritage Hall. This meeting will include a public hearing on the Luther Cadillac application.

### **Adjournment**

Being there no further business, following a motion from Patrick, seconded by Farrell, the meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted, Gretchen Artig-Swomley*