

CITY OF APPLE VALLEY
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
FEBRUARY 16, 2011

1. CALL TO ORDER

The City of Apple Valley Planning Commission meeting was called to order by Acting Chair Melander at 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Tom Melander, David Schindler, Ken Alwin, Tim Burke, Keith Diekmann and Paul Scanlan

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Community Development Director Bruce Nordquist, City Planner Tom Lovelace, Associate City Planner Margaret Dykes, City Attorney Sharon Hills, Assistant City Engineer David Bennett, and Department Assistant Barbara Wolff

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Acting Chair Melander asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Hearing none he called for a motion.

MOTION: Commissioner Alwin moved, seconded by Commissioner Burke, to approve the agenda. The motion carried 6-0.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 2, 2011

Acting Chair Melander asked if there were any changes to the minutes. Hearing none he called for a motion.

MOTION: Commissioner Burke moved, seconded by Commissioner Schindler, to recommend approval of the minutes of the February 2, 2011, meeting. The motion carried 6-0.

4. CONSENT ITEMS

--NONE--

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

--NONE--

6. LAND USE/ACTION ITEMS

--NONE--

7. OTHER BUSINESS

- A. Sketch plan – Apple Valley Transit Station (AVTS) Expansion – Request from Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) for site plan review/building permit authorization to expand the northbound and southbound platforms, expand the northbound station building, and modify landscape plans for the AVTS at 155th Street West and Cedar Avenue.**

Associate City Planner Margaret Dykes stated that the applicant is requesting a sketch plan review of expansion plans for the Apple Valley Transit Station at 155th Street West and Cedar Avenue. The property owner intends to submit a formal site plan review/building permit authorization request for the expansion of the northbound and southbound stations in the near future.

The sketch plan shows the expansion of the existing northbound Apple Valley Transit Station building, the construction of a covered passenger waiting area at the northbound station, and expansion of the loading platforms at both the north- and southbound stations. The proposed site and building changes would be done in conjunction with the Cedar Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) roadway construction work in 2011 and 2012. The applicant states the changes are necessary because of the growing need for various transit services, and to provide rider comfort and convenience.

The applicant is proposing the following changes:

Northbound station

- The existing covered passenger loading area will be fully enclosed and incorporated into the existing station building. The new station building will be approximately 2,900 sq. ft. (17'x170'). The new enclosed space will be constructed of glass in the same manner as the existing building. The applicant will need to verify materials used for the expanded station. The expanded station will accommodate the BRT buses, which will allow for level boarding.
- There will be a new covered passenger loading area for the express buses. The new covered area will have a flat roof as opposed to the existing "swoop" design; however, the design complements the existing station building as it appears to be composed of the same materials. The applicant will need to clarify the materials used. The covered passenger area is approximately 885 sq. ft. (15' x 59').
- A new uncovered platform loading area is shown as part of a recessed bus lane on Cedar Avenue. The uncovered platform area will also be used for MVTA express buses. It appears that colored stamped concrete will be used to delineate the platform area so that it is clear where the passenger loading will occur. The applicant will need to clarify the materials used for the platform.
- The roadway modifications and expanded platform will remove some landscaping, possibly 2-3 trees. The applicant will need to submit a revised landscaping plan as part of the formal review.
- A lighting plan will be needed to ensure there is adequate pedestrian-scale lighting in the area.

Southbound station

- There are no changes proposed to the existing station building or canopy.
- There is an extended uncovered platform loading area measuring 250' x 15'. This platform area is part of a proposed recessed bus lane on Cedar Avenue that will be used to accommodate MVTA express buses. The new platform will be incorporated into the pedestrian trail in the area, and it appears any sod will be removed for the hardscape. The applicant will need to submit a revised landscape plan as part of the formal review.
- The applicant will need to verify the materials used for the platform, but it appears to be colored stamped concrete.
- A lighting plan will be needed to ensure there is adequate pedestrian-scale lighting in the area.

Dykes asked for any comments or questions from the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Diekmann asked if the entrance to the strip mall at the southbound station will be lost.

Dykes replied yes.

Community Development Director Bruce Nordquist commented that Dakota County's widening and improvements project of Cedar Avenue removes the driveway.

Commissioner Alwin asked if this will encroach on the parking in the retail center of the southbound station.

Dykes replied no; there are easements that they will have to work within.

Commissioner Alwin said that when the Commission originally approved this there were concerns of loss of visual access and parking.

Dykes said it does not change the parking or the building at the southbound station so the visibility remains the same. She said it only changes the curblin of Cedar Avenue and widens the trail.

Hearing no additional questions from the Commission, Acting Chair Melander asked for the petitioner to come forward.

Beverly Miller, Director of the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA), stated that they're preparing for the first bus rapid transit (BRT) system in the state of Minnesota. The project is scheduled to open Fall 2012. She said the new accommodations will help to successfully implement BRT in coordination with the services MVTA already runs. It will be a multi-modal station including express service, local service, and BRT, all using the Apple Valley transit station. She said they are expanding the passenger waiting area and the physical space where loading and unloading occurs at the platform. They are planning for level boarding at the first and second bays as part of the BRT plan. The other modifications include a pull-in which primarily serves the motor coaches for the express riders to bring them in closer to the platform.

Ms. Miller said there are a variety of vehicles that they use, although the buses for the BRT have not been procured yet. The passenger waiting area will be further enclosed and the canopy area will be expanded for an added waiting area. She said that MVTA is making it convenient, with nice aesthetics, comfortable, and efficient for their riders.

Mike Aaron, engineer with SRF Consulting Group, mentioned that the reason for the recessed bays is for the BRT buses to get past the MCI buses which are there for up to five minutes at a time. He said they have also lengthened the fence in the median to prevent people from walking mid-block across the street.

Bill Hickey, architect with Collaborative Design Group, stated that the plan encloses the open area under the swoop and uses the same materials to make a seamless design. He said they are adding a canopy to accommodate the outside platform at the extension.

Commissioner Burke asked if they made sure it will be sparrow proof.

Mr. Hickey stated there are a lot of enclosed places.

Acting Chair Melander commented that it is quite a successful station. He asked what the capacity will be with the latest expansion.

Ms. Miller said that the parking capacity is pretty full. She said they will be doing another study within the next two years for park-n-ride space and needs. They will decide if they need another location within the

City or expand where they are or a combination of both. She said the plan takes them only to opening day in 2012. She said that the BRT plan is a 20-year plan that will hopefully bring another surge of ridership, although MVTA does not want to overbuild. She said they have also expanded BRT stations to 35W and a station in Lakeville.

Acting Chair Melander asked for clarification that provisions were originally made to add more parking levels to the ramp in the future.

Ms. Miller confirmed that two more parking levels can be added to the existing ramp.

Commissioner Diekmann asked if the BRT system will go from Apple Valley, make stops along Cedar Avenue, and end at the Mall of America (MOA).

Ms. Miller said that is correct.

Commissioner Diekmann asked if they have any time studies on how long it would take to get Downtown from Apple Valley on the express bus versus on BRT to the MOA and then light-rail to Downtown.

Ms. Miller said the times would be competitive, although it will be faster on the express service than to take the transfer at 28th Street.

Commissioner Diekmann asked if the long-term plan for the BRT is to go from Apple Valley all the way to Downtown.

Ms. Miller said initially they were planning just to the MOA, although in this plan, they are adding more express service. She stated that their designation is express service doing express and BRT doing station-to-station and stops in between with transfers. She said she is not sure if they will take BRT Downtown or build in more express service. Last year, Dakota County undertook an Implementation Plan Update and studied all the service and riders. MVTA is also doing an Environmental Assessment for the service. Together the plans will be reviewed by the MVTA Board, the Dakota County Board, the County Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), and the Metropolitan Council. There is a lot of service planned in the Cedar Corridor but it is a question of funding. She said they would like to see BRT frequencies around 15 minutes throughout the day.

Commissioner Diekmann asked what the percentage of people is who take the express service from Apple Valley to Downtown versus those taking transfers.

Ms. Miller said easily 98%. She said the express service is the bulk of the riders at the Apple Valley transit station, but the plan with the BRT service is for people to be able to move between systems more easily and go to other destinations.

Commissioner Burke asked how the height of the platform could be decided on when the buses haven't been chosen yet.

Ms. Miller said that it was a matter of pursuing what they could when the funds were available. Since modifications will be made to the platform, the height is set. The bus will need to match.

Commissioner Scanlan asked if MVTA is proposing a design, with this remodel, that will fit into future growth and needs.

Tom Bright, facilities manager at MVTA, said the redesign is using all of the space in the best way possible, and multi-modal way, given the constraints of the site.

Mr. Hickey said there is a carrying capacity that is appropriate for the site and its constraints. He said this capacity is built out and should handle the foreseeable on this site, up to and including if the ramp should be expanded at this location.

Acting Chair Melander said that during the first approval process there were concerns about the impact on the retail center at the southbound terminal. He asked if the tenants have voiced further concerns.

Nordquist said there have not been any calls of use conflicts or concerns of interference with the businesses, although they do not want more right-of-way taken, which this plan does meet that objective.

Acting Chair Melander said it is a good sign if there have not been any complaints.

Dykes said the building and the canopy at the southbound station are not changing. The only change would be to the curblin on Cedar Avenue and the trail. She said there will not be an impact on parking or visibility.

Acting Chair Melander said he is glad to see the station flourishing.

Dykes said the petitioner will come back in the near future for formal review.

Acting Chair Melander said it's a great looking design. He thanked the MVTA representatives for their time and proposal.

B. Review of the Upcoming Schedule and other Updates.

Community Development Director Bruce Nordquist stated that the annual business meeting is approaching on March 2nd. He said that the Planning Commission Officers are selected at that time: Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. Also, the three-year terms of commissioners, Dave Schindler, Keith Diekmann, and the vacant position will expire on March 1, 2011. He stated that the vacancy is scheduled to be filled on March 24, 2011, by the City Council. Nordquist asked the Planning Commission if they would like to vote for Officers on March 2nd or delay the vote to the April 6th Planning Commission meeting when the newly selected member would be joining the Commission.

Acting Chair Melander asked for comments from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Burke stated that he will be absent from the March 2nd meeting.

Commissioner Schindler said it doesn't matter to him either way.

Acting Chair Melander stated that he would be surprised if the new member would be selected for an officer position or know the Commission members to vote for offices.

Commissioner Schindler suggested moving the vote to the meeting on April 6th.

Commissioner Burke said he is in favor of moving the vote to April 6th.

Acting Chair Melander seeing nods of agreement from the Commission stated that the vote for officers will be postponed to the April 6th Planning Commission meeting.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further comments from the Planning Staff or Planning Commission, Acting Chair Melander asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Commissioner Schindler moved, seconded by Commissioner Diekmann, to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 p.m. The motion carried 6-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Barbara L. Wolff, Planning Department Assistant

Approved by the Apple Valley Planning Commission on _____.