

**Minnetonka Planning Commission
Minutes**

Dec. 2, 2021

1. Call to Order

Chair Sewall called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Commissioners Hanson, Henry, Maxwell, Waterman, Banks, and Sewall were present. Powers was absent.

Staff members present: City Planner Loren Gordon and Assistant City Planner Susan Thomas.

3. Approval of Agenda

Maxwell moved, second by Waterman, to approve the agenda as submitted with additional comments provided in the change memo dated Dec. 2, 2021.

Hanson, Henry, Maxwell, Waterman, Banks, and Sewall voted yes. Powers was absent. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes: Nov. 18, 2021

Banks moved, second by Henry, to approve the Nov. 18, 2021 meeting minutes as submitted.

Hanson, Henry, Maxwell, Waterman, Banks, and Sewall voted yes. Powers was absent. Motion carried.

5. Report from Staff

Gordon briefed the commission on land use applications considered by the city council at its meeting of Nov. 22, 2021:

- Adopted a resolution extending the approval for one year of a site and building plan for Chabad Center at 11021 Hillside Lane, 2327, 2333, 2339, and 2345 Hopkins Crossroad.

The next planning commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Dec. 16, 2021.

6. Report from Planning Commission Members: None

7. Public Hearings: Consent Agenda

No item was removed from the consent agenda for discussion or separate action.

Hanson moved, second by Waterman, to approve the item listed on the consent agenda as recommended in the staff report as follows:

A. Resolution approving a front yard setback for a garage addition at 5325 Minnetoga Terrace.

Adopt the resolution approving a front yard setback variance for a garage addition at 5325 Minnetoga Terrace.

Hanson, Henry, Maxwell, Waterman, Banks, and Sewall voted yes. Powers was absent. Motion carried, and the item on the consent agenda was approved as submitted.

Chair Sewall stated that an appeal of the planning commission's decision must be made in writing to the planning division within ten days.

8. Public Hearings

A. Items concerning Walser Nissan at 15906 Wayzata Blvd.

Chair Sewall introduced the proposal and called for the staff report.

Thomas reported. She recommended approval of the application based on the findings and subject to the conditions listed in the staff report.

Maxwell asked if the façade would be visible to the residents who live north of the site. Thomas answered in the negative. If it would be visible, then it would be very minor. The closest residence is located several hundred feet away from the paved surface of the parking lot. No comments were received from neighbors.

Chair Sewall confirmed with Thomas that the berm would not be touched.

David Phillips, the architect for the Walser Automotive Group and representing the applicant, stated that the staff summarized the project concisely. There would be no change to the grade of the site. The benefits would be a nicer showroom with more energy efficiency in the roof and glass façade, and there would be ADA upgrades. He was available for questions. He would appreciate the approval of the application.

Henry asked if solar panels would be utilized. Mr. Phillips stated that there would be new LED lighting, but the proposal would not include solar panels. Henry encouraged the applicant to look into solar panels. Mr. Phillips will suggest that to the Walser representatives.

The public hearing was opened. No testimony was submitted and the hearing was closed.

Banks moved, second by Waterman, to adopt the resolution approving a minor amendment to an existing master development plan, final site and building plans and a sign plan amendment for Walser Nissan at 15906 Wayzata Blvd.

Hanson, Henry, Maxwell, Waterman, Banks, and Sewall voted yes. Powers was absent. Motion carried.

9. Other Business

A. Concept plan for Minnetonka School District Vantage/Momentum Building at 5735 County Road 101.

Chair Sewall introduced the proposal and called for the staff report.

Gordon reported. Staff recommends that commissioners provide comments and feedback on key topics identified by staff and any other land-use-related items that commissioners deem appropriate. This discussion is intended to assist the applicant in the preparation of more detailed development plans.

Dave Maroney, the architect with ATS&R Architects, representing the applicant, gave an abbreviated version of the presentation that was given at the neighborhood meeting. He stated that:

- He thanked Gordon and Thomas for working with him.
- He provided the history of the very successful Vantage program. The Momentum program is new and would provide hands-on training in automotive repair, a design lab, and students building things.
- The building is three stories and would house 300 junior and senior students at a time. Three hundred would attend in the morning and 300 others in the afternoon.
- There would be five trips by a shuttle bus in the morning and afternoon that would transport students to and from the high school. Students may park in the parking lot at the site.
- The arrival times are staggered at Clear Springs Elementary. The Vantage/Momentum buses would operate prior to the buses reaching Clear Springs Elementary in the morning and afternoon.
- All vehicle access would occur at the controlled intersection at Hanus Road and Co. Rd. 101. The existing drive onto Covington Road would still remain for services, deliveries, and access to staff parking.
- Neighbors expressed concern for traffic and tree loss but felt comfortable after hearing how traffic would be handled and that additional landscaping would be added.
- Neighbors asked if a semaphore would be added at Covington Road. He explained that the proposal would not warrant the addition of a traffic light at this time.

- He explained the changes made to the original proposal.
- The proposal would meet all tree ordinance requirements.
- The building would fit into the site. The large pines would be saved on the corner.
- He reviewed the grading plan.
- There would be parking for 68 vehicles.
- A post-and-beam fence would screen the delivery area.
- Administrative offices would be located on the main floor.
- There would be classes held on the top two floors and three rooftop units.
- The lower level would provide room for educational areas.
- He pointed out the bus drop-off area.
- There would be a tornado shelter area.
- The building would be a quality building and have a nice appearance with a good mix of materials and lots of glass.
- He is excited to submit the application right after Jan. 1, 2022, break ground in late spring and be operational for the 2023-2024 school year.

Waterman appreciated the presentation. In response to his question, Mr. Maroney stated that the school district does currently use shuttle buses. There would be an additional 20 or more unused parking spaces available north of the district office. There would be room for up to 200 additional students as the program grows. There may also be future expansion space available at the Pagel Center.

Banks appreciated the great presentation. He asked how garbage and service trucks would access the service yard. Mr. Maroney pointed out the receiving area, access point, and traffic pattern.

Maxwell asked if a cut-out could be made to save vehicles from traveling through the site. Mr. Maroney understood her reasoning and explained how the concept plan was decided on to provide stacking for the parent-drop-off area, maintain the elevations, and keep current functioning traffic patterns the same.

Hanson applauded the change to preserve more trees but asked if saving more trees caused the removal of something that would help the site be better prepared for the future. Mr. Maroney explained how the previous proposal was changed so that the concept plan would save a significant group of trees, provide vehicle access and reshape the building to be a little more efficient and better. He is a fan of collaborative activities. He appreciates the city caring about the trees and creating an ordinance that is so clear. He is proud of the concept plan. The neighbors like it. The only offset is the reduction in the number of parking stalls.

Henry appreciated Mr. Maroney's collaborative efforts. In response to Henry's question, Mr. Maroney explained that the school district plans on not renewing the Baker Road lease. The TSP building would be used.

Henry noted the current shortage of machinists and trades workers in the labor market. He suggested providing training for machinists. Mr. Maroney said that would be a possibility.

In response to Henry's question, Mr. Maroney stated that the Minnetonka School District received an Energy Star rating and uses 100 percent renewable energy. He will share Henry's request to include solar panels with the applicant.

Chair Sewall asked how many students would be anticipated to drive rather than use the shuttle bus. Mr. Maroney stated that the school board is invested in accommodating the shuttle bus traffic. The limitations of the site may dictate how many vehicles may park there. Mr. Maroney noted that the site would have an underground storm chamber under the parking lot to handle stormwater management.

Chair Sewall invited comments from the public. No one chose to speak.

Henry stated that:

- He likes the proposal. It would be a really great use of the property.
- The school district has done its homework planning for the circulation of traffic.
- He appreciates that the concept plan would save twice as many trees and meet all tree preservation ordinance requirements.
- The view of the building from Co. Rd. 101 appears uninspiring. It would be nice to include more windows and add an architectural feature.

Maxwell stated that:

- This is one of the most detailed concept plans the commission has reviewed. She appreciated all of the work already completed on the concept plan including meeting the requirements of the new, stricter tree preservation ordinance. She was excited to hear that the new tree protection ordinance gave Mr. Maroney the opportunity to come up with a good solution to meet the requirements and preserve more trees for the future as well as an improvement for the site.
- She likes the shape of the building and the flow through the site. The building may be a little uninspired, but she was confident it would be improved.
- She likes the traffic access located on the north side rather than Covington Road.
- She would like to see more information on the traffic demand for the current program, how many students currently take the shuttle bus, and how many drive themselves or are dropped off.
- She is very impressed with the concept plan.

Banks stated that:

- He appreciates the great presentation.
- His only concern would be the amount of traffic that would travel through the elementary school's parking lot. The concept plan's access would be a better location than Covington Road.
- He would like detail added to the west side of the building. It could be a beautiful building in that location.

Hanson stated that:

- He appreciates the staff and Mr. Maroney working with commissioners.
- The proposal would be a great use of the space.
- He is excited to see the program grow and thrive.
- He would support the building being able to accommodate 60 years of growth.
- The proposed building looks too much like an office building.
- He would like to see landscaping and traffic way-finding signs included in an application.
- He hopes to see Mr. Maroney back in early 2022.

Waterman stated that:

- He agrees with commissioners. The concept plan would be a great use of the site.
- He appreciates the applicant working with neighbors and changing the previous plan to meet tree preservation ordinance requirements.
- He was a little concerned that the school district would outgrow the space too quickly.
- He was concerned that there would not be enough parking spaces but would be interested in more data about how it would work.
- He likes the placement and mass of the building.
- He would love to see landscaping included in the next plan.
- He would like more windows added to the side of the building facing Co. Rd. 101.
- The concept plan looks good.

Chair Sewall stated that:

- He agrees that the location is great for the program. The school district is lucky that the parcel is there and available.
- He was glad that the concept plan moved the building and so many trees would be saved.

- He was not totally sure about the parking. He would appreciate some information on the parking demand for the existing program being included in the application.
- He encouraged landscaping to be added to the site along Co. Rd. 101.
- He understood saving money on the appearance of the building for it to be used instead on educating students.
- He likes the concept plan.
- Great feedback was received at the neighborhood meeting.
- He hopes a formal application will be submitted soon.

Chair Sewall noted that this item is scheduled to be heard by the city council on Dec. 20, 2021. He wished the applicant luck.

10. Adjournment

Waterman moved, second by Maxwell, to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

By: _____
Lois T. Mason
Planning Secretary