

**Minnetonka Planning Commission
Minutes**

Nov. 3, 2022

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call

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

Staff members present: City Planner Loren Gordon and Planner Drew Ingvalson.

3. Approval of Agenda: The agenda was approved as submitted.

4. Approval of Minutes: Oct. 20, 2022

Banks moved, second by Waterman, to approve the Oct. 20, 2022 meeting minutes as submitted.

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

5. Report from Staff

Gordon briefed the commission on land use applications considered by the city council at its meeting on Oct. 24, 2022:

- Introduced a solar energy systems ordinance amendment.
- Adopted a resolution approving preliminary and final plats for Dunibar Court, a five-lot subdivision at 17809 Ridgewood Road.
- Adopted a resolution approving a conditional use permit for a detached accessory dwelling unit at 3274 and 3305 Fairchild Ave.

6. Report from Planning Commission Members

Powers encouraged everyone to vote.

7. Public Hearings: Consent Agenda

No item was removed from the consent agenda for discussion.

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

- A. Side yard setback variance for a garage addition at 14327 Glenridge Road.**

Adopt the attached resolution, which approves a side yard setback variance for a garage addition at 14327 Glenridge Road.

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

8. Public Hearings

A. Solar energy systems ordinance update.

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

Ingvalson reported. He recommended approval of the application based on the findings listed in the staff report.

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

Powers confirmed with Ingvalson that the proposed ordinance would prohibit solar panels larger than two square feet in size from being located in a front yard.

Banks asked if a variance to locate solar panels larger than two square feet in a front yard could be requested. Ingvalson answered affirmatively.

Henry shared that the sustainability commission felt that the front yard would be a logical place to locate solar panels if the rest of the property is shaded. A variance could be approved in that situation.

Waterman confirmed with Ingvalson that the same size restrictions would be applied to solar panels as any detached-accessory structure. He felt that is wise.

Waterman asked what complaints and problems other cities have received regarding solar panels. Ingvalson answered that glare was a common issue and the panels not being operational or inappropriately operated was reported infrequently. The proposed ordinance has provisions to prevent glare from reaching neighboring properties and provides consequences to deal with inoperable or inappropriately operated solar panels. Some cities mentioned receiving a small number of complaints regarding the aesthetics of solar panels, but aesthetics is subjective to individual tastes. The proposed ordinance does not have regulations regarding aesthetics.

Henry confirmed with Ingvalson that there is no size restriction regarding solar panels located on rooftops. Ingvalson explained that the proposed ordinance does not have specific regulations for panels that move to follow the sun. Moving solar panels would need to meet glare regulations.

Henry confirmed with Ingvalson that solar panels would have to meet state building code requirements.

In response to Chair Sewall's question, Ingvalson explained that Minnesota's climate is not as bad as one would think to facilitate the operation of solar panels. Extreme heat, as well as extreme cold, may impact the function of solar panels. As long as sunshine reaches the panels, snow will melt fairly quickly.

Banks confirmed with Ingvalson an error on page 4 of the staff report that needs to be changed from "Solar energy collector devices, less than one . . ." to "Solar energy collector devices, less than two . . ."

Banks confirmed with Ingvalson that there is no limit to the number of solar panels no larger than two feet square in size that a residential property could have in the front yard. Ingvalson noted that that scenario would not be very practical to generate solar power to a residence.

Waterman noted that there might be situations where solar panels could utilize unused parking areas. Chair Sewall agreed. The property owner may choose to use the parking space for solar panels. Ingvalson explained that the intent of the proposed ordinance is to maintain minimum parking requirements and preserve drive aisles for emergency vehicles.

Henry encouraged everyone to visit the sustainability page of the city's website at minnetonkamn.gov/our-city/sustainable-minnetonka. A list of solar providers is provided on the site.

Chair Sewall confirmed with Ingvalson that if staff receives a complaint about a glare problem after solar panels have been installed, staff will visit the site and require it to be fixed if needed.

Chair Sewall appreciates staff's work on the update to the solar ordinance. He felt that ordinances should be reviewed regularly to make tuques as technology and practices change and to give the public the opportunity to provide input.

Henry moved, second by Powers, to recommend that the city council adopt the proposed ordinance changes regarding solar energy systems.

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

9. Adjournment

Banks moved, second by Waterman, to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

By:

Lois T. Mason
Planning Secretary