

**Minnetonka Planning Commission  
Minutes**

**Sept. 28, 2023**

**1. Call to Order**

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

**2. Roll Call**

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

Staff members present: Assistant City Planner Susan Thomas and Planner Drew Ingvalson.

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

**4. Approval of Minutes:** Sept. 7, 2023

***Banks moved, second by Maxwell, to approve the Sept. 7, 2023 meeting minutes as submitted.***

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

**5. Report from Staff**

Thomas briefed the commission on land use applications considered by the city council at its meeting on Sept. 18, 2023:

- Adopted an ordinance rezoning the properties at 5432 Rowland Road and 5501 Baker Road from R-1 to R-2 low-density residential.
- Adopted a resolution approving the preliminary plat of Ridgedale 11<sup>th</sup> Addition at 12431 Wayzata Blvd.

The fire department and city open house is scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. on Oct. 10, 2023.

The next planning commission meeting is scheduled to be held Oct. 12, 2023.

**6. Report from Planning Commission Members:** None

**7. Public Hearings: Consent Agenda**

No items were removed from the consent agenda for discussion or separate action.

***Henry moved, second by Powers, to approve the items listed on the consent agenda as recommended in the respective staff reports as follows:***

**A. Expansion permit for a second-story addition at 2492 Bantas Point Road.**

Adopt the resolution approving a second-story addition at 2492 Bantas Point Road.

**B. Conditional use permit for EKA Sports at 15314 Minnetonka Industrial Road.**

Recommend that the city council adopt the resolution for EKA Sports at 15314 Minnetonka Industrial Road.

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

**8. Public Hearings**

**A. Items concerning Xcel Energy replacing existing electrical poles.**

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

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

Henry asked if the city's height restriction for utility poles should be changed to match the national electrical safety code. Ingvalson explained that this is the first instance of a variance being needed for this type of situation. Staff will research the issue.

In response to Waterman's question, Ingvalson explained that the city may require a new utility line to be buried in a newly developed residential area. An existing utility pole is typically allowed to be replaced. Thomas added that the city works with a utility company to have existing above-ground-utility lines located on a street undergoing reconstruction be buried at the same time as a street improvement project is completed.

Powers confirmed with Ingvalson that no trees would be removed.

Michelle Swanson, Xcel Energy community and local government relations manager, representing the applicant, stated that:

- The proposal would improve reliability for residents and businesses.
- She appreciates all of the work staff put into reviewing the complex application.
- Xcel Energy agrees with the staff report and presentation.
- She is available for questions.

Chris Berglund, Xcel Energy senior land rights agent, representing the applicant, stated that:

- Xcel hires a company to inspect the poles each year.
- The poles that would be replaced were installed in the 1950s. Seventy-five years is the end of a utility pole's life expectancy.
- There are some poles that were replaced recently enough not to need replacing at this time.
- The life expectancy for the new poles is also 75 years.
- A distribution line typically carries under 13,800 volts. Transmission lines carry 69,000 volts. A transmission line would need a large amount of space for it to cool if buried underground. If a buried line would fail, then a trench would have to be dug until the failure location would be found. The location of a failure for an above-ground line can be visibly located and fixed easily. Nothing could be located above a buried transmission line. A fifty-foot-wide-vacant area would extend the length of a buried transmission line. The cost would be five to six times greater to bury a transmission line.
- Xcel already has the easement to replace the pole in Purgatory Park. No resident wants the pole located in their yard.
- Restoration would be done after replacing the poles.
- The replacement poles would be roughly the same size as the existing poles.
- Two square laminate poles would be utilized at the intersection of County Road 101 and Excelsior Blvd. to hold all of the guide wires inside the structure.
- There is a spreadsheet of all of the proposed replacement poles in the staff report.
- The poles currently located on sidewalks would be moved off of the sidewalk.
- The wetland banking credit would be utilized in Sibley County as described in the agenda packet.

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

Powers noticed that the Target by Ridgedale had a power outage for four hours and all of the chilled foods had to be destroyed. He supports Xcel's ability to provide reliable service to its customers. He supports the reasonable request. He appreciates Xcel offering wetland credits.

Maxwell appreciates the preventative maintenance of the infrastructure that will improve reliability for customers. She does not want a situation where poles would only be replaced after being downed from a storm and customers would not have electricity for an indefinite period of time. She supports the proposal.

Waterman supports the proposal. He appreciates all of the technical information provided. Xcel and staff have already done so much work on the proposal. The height difference of some of the poles would not be noticeable.

Banks agrees with commissioners. He supports the proposal. He appreciates all of the information provided by the applicant. He likes that the replacements would be done within three to four months. He believes that the poles are at the end of their life. The project would improve reliability for Xcel customers.

Henry appreciates the well-thought-out proposal. He supports the proposal.

Chair Sewall supports the proposal. He appreciates that the same footprints would be utilized to decrease construction time and minimize tree loss. He appreciates the applicant providing all of the technical information.

***Powers moved, second by Banks, to recommend that the city council adopt the resolution approving the request for pole additions and replacements along the existing 0734 Xcel Energy electrical line.***

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

This item is scheduled to be reviewed by the city council at its meeting held on Oct. 16, 2023.

## 9. Adjournment

***Banks moved, second by Henry, to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.***

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lois T. Mason  
Planning Secretary