

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof a meeting of the Planning Commission in and for the City of Albany, Stearns County, Minnesota, was called to order by Chairman Jon Stueve at 6:30 o'clock in the evening on November 30, 2021, in the Council Room at 400 Railroad Avenue for the said City.

Other Planning Commission members present for the meeting were: Allison Dudek, Joseph Wedel, and Bill Scepaniak. Will Seiler arrived for the meeting at 7:00 PM. None was absent. Councilor Adam Rushmeyer, Liaison, was present for the meeting. Others present were Jon and Lori Siegle, 131 1st Street.

Chairman Jon Stueve called for any additions or corrections to the minutes of April 19, 2021, and hearing none declared them approved.

Pursuant to due notice, at 6:31 PM, Chairman Jon Stueve called the public hearing into session on a request by Jon Siegle, 131 1st Street, for a variance to relax the requirement of ten (10') feet between an existing detached accessory structure and the proposed construction of a garage (26' x 36') with breezeway attached to his home. A proper notice was published in the Star Post on November 10th and no written statements were received. Mr. Siegle appeared before the Commission to inform the Commission the proposed garage addition with a breezeway will be five (5) feet from an existing detached accessory structure due to an existing electrical service connected to his home. Mr. Siegle noted it would be difficult to relocate the electrical service and also didn't want to coverup an existing window on the south side of his home with the addition. Mr. Siegle also noted the exterior siding will be residential vinyl and the roof shingled to match the home. Chairman Jon Stueve closed the public hearing at 6:45 PM. After due discussion, a motion was made by Joseph Wedel and seconded by Bill Scepaniak to recommend to the council the request by Jon Siegle, 131 1st Street, for a variance to relax the requirement of ten (10') feet between an existing detached accessory structure and the proposed construction of a garage (26' x 36') with breezeway attached to his home be approved as follows:

1. Variance request is to construct an attached garage with breezeway to an existing principal structure (home) closer than 10' from an existing detached accessory structure. The garage doors facing the alley is greater than twenty (20) feet.
2. The variance request is consistent with the comprehensive plan in that it encourages new construction and increased property tax base.
3. The variance will not be detrimental to the public welfare.
4. The variance will allow homeowner to construct an attached garage and additional storage.
5. Due to an existing detached accessory structure, reconstructing a new foundation and moving the structure would be challenging.
6. Due to the character of the home, windows, electrical service, and gable roof, moving the garage addition to the east five (5) feet is prohibitive.
7. As per Section 80.10, Subd. 3(b-iii) driveway shall be hard surface (concrete, bituminous, pavers)
8. The variance is not sought solely for reasons of increased financial gain.
9. The exterior materials of the proposed garage and breezeway shall be residential vinyl and shingle roof to match the home.

All voted for the motion and it carried.

Mr. Schneider updated the Commission on the number of vacant residential and industrial lots in the city. Mr. Schneider noted residential expansion in the northwest area of the community can easily be done being existing utilities are readily available, but due to the high cost of construction materials at the present time, any expansion might be delayed a few years. Mr. Schneider noted eight (8) new homes were constructed in 2021 compared to three (3) in the year 2020.

Councilor Adam Rushmeyer informed the Commission of the following capital improvement projects:

1. 2021 Capital Improvements Map (future improvement projects)

2. 2021 Lake Avenue/Church Avenue Improvement update: (from 3rd Street to 6th Street, 3rd Street, 4th Street, 5th Street (each between Lake Avenue and Forest Avenue), Church Avenue (from 2nd Street to 5th Street), and trunk storm sewer replacement west of 7th Street and north of Shamrock Lane. Mr. Rushmeyer noted final bituminous wear course to be completed in June 2022.
3. 2022 Midland Avenue (from 1st Street to 6th Street), and 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Streets (between Railroad Avenue and Midland Avenue, and adjacent Alleys. Mr. Rushmeyer noted if project moves forward bidding is expected in January 2022.
4. 2022 1st Street and Railroad Avenue (TH 238) intersection improvements and 8th Street and Shamrock Lane Sidewalk Improvements. Mr. Rushmeyer noted the intersection design is 90% complete and MnDOT will provide the city with their final comments and recommendations within the next week or so. Mr. Wedel recommended the crosswalk and curb location of the “island” where pedestrians cross on 1st Street be pushed to the north to improve pedestrian safety and allow semi-trucks adequate turning radius north on Railroad Avenue. Mr. Stueve noted the best traffic improvement to the intersection which he’s recommended in the past is a roundabout, but understands the challenges with abutting properties and lack of adequate right of way. Mr. Rushmeyer noted he will mention to the city engineer the board comments at the next council meeting. Mr. Rushmeyer also noted if project moves forward bidding is expected in January 2022.
5. 2022 Golf View Drive Lift Station Improvements. Mr. Schneider noted new pumps, electrical panel and other equipment will replace equipment originally installed in 1983.
6. 2023 County Road 54 resurfacing east end of the city beginning near Par Drive. Commission member Will Seiler arrived for the meeting at 7:00 PM.
7. 2024 County Road 157 reconstruction beginning at the intersection of 8th Street and Railroad Avenue. Mr. Rushmeyer noted the council recommended a new sidewalk on the north side of the road beginning on 9th Street and ending at the Lake Wobegon Trail crossing near 14th Street on CR 157 which will include storm sewer improvements.

Mr. Schneider informed the Commission Albany Area Schools (AHS) is interested in redevelopment of the former hospital/clinic site (5+/- acres) at 300 3rd Avenue. Mr. Schneider noted no final action has been taken by the school district board, but consideration is being discussed by a task force committee to remodel the building for preschool programming, kindergarten, and early childhood for the purpose of creating additional space at the Albany and Avon Elementary buildings.

Mr. Schneider informed the Commission the proposed buildable area of the city owned vacant lot adjacent to 1st Street and Railroad Avenue intersection is 18,945 sq.ft. Mr. Schneider noted a few local developers have shown an interest to redevelop the property for commercial use that would include apartments on the 2nd floor. Ms. Dudek noted off-street parking may be an issue being on-street parking on the east and south side of the property probably will be prohibited due to the reconstruction of the abutting intersection. Mr. Schneider noted the lot may be sold in the future as surplus property; whereas the Commission will need to recommend to the council it be sold as such. Mr. Schneider also noted the vacant lot will be used for a construction material staging area for the proposed 2022 Capital Improvement project.

Mr. Schneider noted the five-year term of Chairman Jon Stueve expires at the end of the year. Mr. Wedel noted Mr. Stueve is a valuable board member with several years of municipal experience being employed by the City of Cold Spring as the Public Works Director and encouraged Mr. Stueve to accept the appointment for another five years on the board. Mr. Stueve informed the board he would accept the reappointment if approved by the council.

Mr. Schneider provided the commission with the following board term ending dates on the city’s Economic Development Authority (EDA): Mayor Tom Kasner (2021), Councilor John R. Harlander (2022), Jon Stueve, Planning Commission (2023), Paul Wellenstein, public member (2024), and Bill Scepaniak (2025).

Mr. Schneider informed the Commission the 2020 population of the city is 2,780 as per the State Demographer's office, an increase of 219 from the estimated population in 2010 of 2,561.

Mr. Schneider informed the Commission the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) conducted a speed study at the request by the council on County Road #157 (Railroad Avenue), between the junction of TH #238 and 14th Street. Mr. Schneider noted the results of the said Study were completed earlier in the year and speed limit signs were relocated to new locations by Stearns County Highway Department which actually increased the speed in the area where the resident requested the speed limit lowered west of 12th Street.

Mr. Schneider noted Mid MN Code Enforcement, the city's contracted building official company, has been sold to another company effective January 1, 2022, but was told there will be little or no changes in the fee schedule. Mr. Schneider noted additional information will be provided at the next Planning Commission meeting regarding this change.

Chairman Jon Stueve adjourned the meeting at 7:20 PM.

Tom Schneider
Clerk/Adm.