

**City of Columbus**  
**Regular Planning Commission Meeting**  
**March 20, 2013**

The March 20, 2013 regular meeting of the Planning Commission for the City of Columbus was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chair Barbara Hvass at the City Hall. Present were Commission members Andy Anderson, Myron Organ, Jesse Preiner, Jody Krebs, and Garth Sternberg; City Administrator Elizabeth Mursko, Engineer Larry Bohrer, Planner Dean Johnson, and Recording Secretary Karen Boland.

Also in attendance were Anoka County Engineer Douglas Fischer, City Council members Denny Peterson and Bill Krebs, Mayor Dave Povolny, Dick and Janice Stiers, Cathleen and Ed Cary, Mary Preiner and Pat Preiner.

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

*Motion* by Anderson to approve the Agenda as presented. Second by Krebs. Motion carried.

**APPROVAL - REGULAR PC MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 20, 2013**

*Motion* by Krebs to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2013 regular Planning Commission meeting as written. Second by Anderson. Motion carried.

**DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATION – QUAD 35 TRANSPORTATION**

City Engineer Larry Bohrer presented information gathered based on questions raised at the last meeting about the two possible road plans for the new alignment of County Road 54, such as extent and cost of right-of-way, estimated cost for comparative road alignments, and potential economic impact to the City as far as development potential. He presented the two road plans as B (a curvilinear alignment) and D (a straighter north/south alignment). (See attached)

Bohrer put together a table of right-of-way costs that is part of the agenda packet. He explained assumptions and calculations made. Based on field measurements, the assumption was made that the Stiers property will not need to be taken. Bohrer's measurements indicated the road can be run between Running Aces and the Stiers property, keeping the pylon sign and gravel road intact, and maintaining enough of a setback to the Stiers building to keep it in conformance.

At the last meeting Running Aces representatives voiced concerns about keeping their pylon sign, proximity of the road to the track itself, and keeping a gravel drive for their camera people. Planner Dean Johnson followed up with Bob Farinella of the track to understand their position clearly. Running Aces is willing to trade or donate their right-of-way on all three parcels it owns along the plan D proposed County 54 realignment, in exchange for vacating the 75-foot easement that the City required at the time of platting along their north parking lot line. With this easement swap with Running Aces, the right-of-way costs would be less for the straight roadway alignment (Plan D) than for the curved (Plan B). The amount of difference depends on what, if any, right-of-way payment Running Aces would require if the curved alignment is chosen.

Bohrer noted that the County cost estimates are based on a 4-lane divided road. The City is not sure a full four lanes will be required, no matter which alignment is chosen. Some parts of the

road may require four lanes, but others will likely be fine with two. Traffic projections indicate two lanes would be sufficient.

Lastly, Bohrer addressed the economic impact on development. He pointed out that the County has updated Plan B to avoid as much wetland as possible. The City would still be left with three irregularly-shaped parcels. With Plan D, the City would be left with one parcel of about 11 acres. As a point of reference, Bohrer said Gander Mountain uses about 10 acres. They return \$263,000 in total real-estate tax annually --combined City, County and School District. Bohrer also noted that direct access to City parcels from the County Road is probably not realistic. There would have to be some other access.

Preiner asked about access for existing property owners on County 54. Anoka County Engineer Doug Fischer said under Plan B they would have access to the new County Road 54. With Plan D, their driveways would be off the old County 54. They would need to go off the new road to the old road for access. Under County access policy if access is available on a lower system street, that's where the County expects the access to be. Old County 54 will become a City street with a cul-de-sac to the north.

Fischer addressed the fact that the County plan shows a 4-lane divided road. He said part of that could be a 2-lane road. He pointed out that the more accesses you allow onto a 2-lane road, the less traffic you can push through. The County's goal was to give the PC comparisons between Plans B and D. The differential between the two plans (B and D) will remain the same regardless of how many lanes are ultimately built. County analysis shows that with either alignment, construction costs are going to be relatively the same.

PC members expressed concern over a divided highway and access difficulties. Fischer agreed that access and safe traffic flow are important, but determining types of access is difficult without knowing how the area will be developed.

Preiner asked about costs to maintain the old road as a City road. Bohrer mentioned an extra snow-plowing cost and pointed out that as the area grows, local roads will be added under either plan, so there will be an increase in total local road mileage for maintenance.

Johnson outlined his discussion with Bob Farinella of Running Aces. He said Farinella was not worried about possible sign relocation as long as the sign is kept as close to the freeway as it is now, and he is not concerned about a road running close to the track. The track's main concern is to maintain a 12 to 15-foot gravel road to get cameramen around the track. Farinella said Running Aces prefers the straight alignment (Plan D).

There was discussion that all parties understand that the future land use of the properties and the amount of traffic will dictate placement of intersections, backage roads, and accesses. Many variables are not yet in place. The relocation of County 54 is not likely to happen until something happens at the racetrack or until the City sells and develops the property. Most likely, the right-of-way and the road built for access will be a requirement of the development. Preiner asked what would happen if Plan D is used and someone wanted to buy the large City parcel

immediately. Bohrer said access and intersection placement would become part of the development agreement. The preliminary plat would require County approval.

Anoka County Engineer Doug Fischer reiterated that the County can accept either road alignment scenario. The City is in the unique position of being able to choose the alignment. The County analysis of construction costs are very close for either alignment. The biggest disagreement he has with regard to the right-of-way impact involves the Stiers property. On a straight alignment (Plan D) he believes the County would be hard-pressed, from an engineering standpoint, to fit the new County road between the Stiers building and the racetrack. He believes the Stiers property is at very high risk of needing acquisition under Plan D. He said even when taking a strip of property, potential damage to the value of the property is considered in addition to raw land cost.

In further explanation of his concerns near the Stiers property, Fischer said the 2-lane rural road needs 120 feet of right-of-way. It is likely turn lanes will be needed in that area as well. One scenario from the County shows some pedestrian feature such as a sidewalk or trail. If there is dense development in the area, most cities want that type of feature and they are harder to put in after the fact. PC members said they were not interested in sidewalks or trails.

PC members compared numbers for the two plans if the Stiers property needs to be acquired. Johnson pointed out that since the road will most likely be development-driven, right-of-way costs will be saved in either scenario, because developers would bear the right-of-way costs on City-owned parcels.

Sternberg asked about the old County road. The City either keeps it up or obliterates it. Fischer pointed out that if the City doesn't maintain it, access must be provided to property owners onto the new road. The cost for each lot to put in an access to the new road would have to be considered. Damage to those existing parcels would have to be appraised.

Krebs asked when traffic analysis starts and who bears the cost. Fischer said it can be done at any time. The way this area is currently zoned, if the City builds to maximum zoning potential, a lot of traffic will be generated. A 4-lane road with access spaced farther apart would be needed. Traffic can be mitigated through development decisions. If the City thinks this is a big issue, a full-blown traffic and access management study could be done right away, with the cost shared by both the City and County. Traffic analysis usually occurs when a big developer makes a proposal. Then the developer bears the cost.

Krebs asked how many driveways are allowed on a County road. Fischer said every parcel is entitled to access to a public road. If the County road is the only access to a parcel, it may be restricted to right in/right out, but access must be provided. The hope is that this area would develop with some primary accesses and feeder streets to serve all those properties. Krebs asked if shared driveways are possible. Fischer said shopping centers, for instance, might have cross easements. That would be something the City would require in a development agreement.

The Stiers property was brought up again. Preiner asked Fischer what he thought about the Stiers property if the track vacates its need for the gravel road. Fischer said that may help to fit everything in.

Fischer was asked about the speed limit on the new County road. The County doesn't set speed limits. Since the speed limit is 50 now, it will stay 50 unless a speed-zone study shows a need for something different. After development, the City may want to ask the County to have MN DOT do a speed-zone study. The City would set the speed on old 54.

PC members did not feel ready to make a recommendation without more information.

*Motion* by Preiner that staff gather information from Running Aces about whether they would be willing to give up the gravel access road, whether they are willing to trade or donate right-of-way costs on either road alignment, and how close they are willing to have the road and the road right-of-way come near the track. This information could be presented in person or in writing at the April 3, 2013 PC meeting. Second by Anderson. Motion carried.

### **PUBLIC OPEN FORUM**

Dick Stiers clarified that when the building was built on his property, Rice Creek required a watershed plan. All water from the building goes into the parking lot and to the west side of the building. If the road right-of-way comes within ten feet of that building, there needs to be some consideration as to what will happen with that water. If water is run onto the County right-of-way there will have to be some sort of agreement. There is a considerable amount of water. He added that when the City bought the property that 54 will run next to or through, one of the justifications was to help realign 54. He said that seems to have gone out the window, which results in a possibly severe effect on his property.

City Council member Bill Krebs expressed concern about the left turns into the property. He said he has previously addressed with the County that he is unhappy with the access limitations and speed limits. This is a prime spot for City growth and 50 mph is too fast. He suggested getting rid of the old West Freeway Drive and somehow doing a swap with the landowners for the right-of-ways. He thinks the County has to realize that some big tax revenue can come off this property. He doesn't think the County should take all the entrances off of Lake Drive, and then take them off of a new 54 too. He suggested the PC ask the County Engineer more questions about these things.

Anderson asked CC member Denny Peterson to comment on the City's purpose in purchasing the City land in question. Peterson said the main purpose was that the owners didn't want to separate the land; they wanted to sell the whole block. The City bought it so it could be separated for development. The second reason it was purchased was to save money when doing Hornsby.

Stiers said that at last month's meeting, Bohrer reported specifically that one of the reasons for the land purchase was to realign County 54. Bohrer agreed that by this land purchase, it made it easier for the City to control all four quadrants where some right-of-way was required for all four quadrants. The shape of the road alignment was not discussed at that time. Whether the road ends up straight or curved, the land purchase met the objective of providing right-of-way.

## **CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

Mursko reported that at the end of 2012 the City Council looked at sheriff department and police coverage in the City. They decided to put together a Police Task Force. Mursko asked if any PC members would be willing to participate. The PC meetings could then be used as a forum. Scheduled presentations would be offered. Others could also be invited to be on the task force. PC members who choose not to be involved in the task force need not stay for presentations. The CC's objective is to explore alternative ways for Columbus to deliver law enforcement services. Anderson, Preiner, Hvass and Krebs said they would be willing to listen to presentations.

The PC has two applications coming up. One is scheduled for hearing at the April 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. The other will be heard the second meeting in April or the first meeting in May.

## **PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS' REPORT**

### **KREBS COMMENT**

Krebs and her family attended the Wildlife Science Center fundraiser last month. There were birds and animals to observe, and sled dog rides. It was a very nice event.

### **ANDERSON COMMENT**

Anderson wanted to go on record complimenting Anoka County Engineer Doug Fischer, City Planner Johnson, and City Engineer Bohrer on their presentations. They were all very informative.

### **HVASS COMMENT**

Hvass complimented Mursko on the new agenda format.

### **ATTENDANCE - NEXT CC MEETING**

Sternberg is scheduled to attend the City Council meeting on March 27, 2013.

*Motion* by Krebs to adjourn. Second by Sternberg. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 9:26 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Karen Boland, Recording Secretary