

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
PLANNING COMMISSION
LITTLE CANADA, MINNESOTA**

AUGUST 8, 2019

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof a regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Little Canada, Minnesota was held on the 8th day of August, 2019 in the Council Chambers of the City Center located at 515 Little Canada Road in said City.

Chair Bill Buesing called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and the following members of the Planning Commission were present at roll call:

PLANNING COMMISSION:	Mr. Bill Buesing Mr. Chris Kwapick Ms. Taelor Johnson Ms. Dawn Kulousek Ms. Nicole Westadt Mr. Eric Thorson
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ABSENT:	Mr. Nick Schwalbach
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ALSO PRESENT:	Ms. Heidi Heller, City Clerk
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MINUTES	The July 11, 2019 Planning Commission meeting minutes were approved as submitted.
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VARIANCE AT 3354 RICE STREET; APPLICANT: CARIBOU COFFEE/ALLIANT ENGINEERING	The City Clerk explained that Caribou Coffee at 3354 Rice Street is seeking variances to allow additional signage on their property due to the re-alignment of the I-694 and Rice Street bridge, and Country Drive. She stated the property is on the corner of Rice Street and Country Drive with two street frontages. She stated that Ramsey County purchased and removed the former Vadnais Inn that was adjacent on the north side, and Caribou was able to acquire some excess land from the County that will allow for a parking lot expansion. She explained that there is currently wall signage only on the west elevation, along with a 15-foot tall free-standing pylon sign at the corner of Rice Street and Country Drive. She noted that there are also four directional signs for the drive-thru lane entrance, height limit and menu board, and all of the existing signage meets the City Code requirements.
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The City Clerk explained that once the I-694/Rice Street reconstruction project is complete, this property will be a stand-alone parcel entirely surrounded by roadway, and adjacent to a round-a-bout that completely

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changes access for the site. She reported that the Rice Street access will be removed and there will be a new right-in, entrance-only access on the north side of the property. She stated that due to the complete change of the area's roads into round-a-bouts, Caribou is concerned about customers figuring out how to access their site.

The City Clerk explained that the total amount of signage allowed is 15% of the front building face, and two sides of the building can be counted for corner lots. She stated that based on two building faces, this property is allowed a total of 317.25 square feet of signage. She noted that the sign code allows counting two building faces for properties with frontage on two streets, but has no allowances for a property that has four sides of street frontage since it so seldom occurs. She explained that the applicant has requested a variance to allow wall signage on all four sides of the building since the roadway will surround the site and all sides of the building will be highly visible. She noted there is currently a 61.3 square foot wall sign on the west side facing Rice Street, and the applicant is proposing the same wall sign on all four sides of the building for a total of 245.2 square feet.

The City Clerk reported that the applicant is also proposing to install a new 15-foot tall, 84 square feet, free-standing pylon sign along Rice Street, a little further north than the existing pylon sign, and Caribou is requesting to also keep the existing pylon sign. She explained that Staff has been working with Caribou and communicated to them that City Staff does not recommend a second pylon sign, especially along the same corridor. She stated that as an alternative, Caribou requested they be allowed to keep the existing pylon sign in place until the completion of the Rice Street and I-694 construction which should be done by Fall 2020. She noted that Caribou intends to install the new signage in the next couple of months and feels that keeping the existing pylon in place will help customers learn where to turn during the roadway changes.

The City Clerk reported that the applicant is also requesting five more small informational signs in order to direct traffic at the entrance and exits. She noted there are currently four small signs in the drive-thru lane which will remain. She explained that the City Council can approve additional directional signs, so a variance is not needed for these. She explained that the Commission is being asked to consider how many sides of the building should be allowed to have wall signage, the total amount of signage allowed for the property and if a second pylon sign should be allowed. She noted that the additional issue to consider would be if a second pylon is not recommended, could the current pylon remain until Fall 2020.

Buesing asked how much signage would be there with four wall signs and the new pylon sign. Johnson stated the total would be 329.2 square feet.

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The City Clerk stated that since the Zoning Code does not give direction for properties with more than two street frontages, City Staff would suggest that if the Commission is supportive of more signage, they consider an alternate amount of total allowed signage, such as 400 square feet.

Emily Heuring, Caribou Coffee, stated that this location has been a very good store for them and it is larger so it also has community rooms. She noted that the road construction has been very tough on them, and sales are down 50% which will likely continue through at least the end of the year. She explained that round-a-bouts require a learning curve for drivers. She stated that they are planning for site work to begin after Labor Day, and it will be at least October 1 for the new signage installation. Thorson stated both pylon signs could potentially be up at the same time for about one year.

Johnson clarified that Caribou would prefer to have both pylon signs. Ms. Heuring stated that was correct as they feel the existing sign would help customers know to turn on to Country Drive Connection. Buesing asked how much square footage of signage there would be with both pylon signs, and suggested that the existing sign remain for now and a final decision could be made by the Council in a year. The City Clerk showed a photo looking northbound on Rice Street of the existing pylon sign, and explained that the new pylon would be in line with the current sign along Rice Street, and essentially behind it as you are looking north. Buesing stated that after seeing this photo, he now feels the signage on the four sides of the building is more important than the pylon signs. Johnson pointed out that the current pylon location would only be helpful if a customer could turn left from southbound Rice Street to Country Drive Connection, but there will be a median preventing that. She stated that in her opinion, a variance is appropriate for this property and noted that this situation is extremely unique.

The City Clerk stated that staff agrees that the property will become very unique after the road reconstruction project is complete, and none of the changes were created by the landowner. She explained that southbound Rice Street customers will need to know there is a Caribou and where they are going prior to entering the round-a-bout, because if they miss the right turn in the round-a-bout, they will not be able to get to Caribou without going further down Rice Street and turning around. She reported that Staff does support increased signage on this property, but not the second pylon sign. She stated that staff is recommending that signage be allowed on four sides of the building, up to a total of 400 square feet, and that the existing pylon sign can remain through construction but must be removed by September 30, 2020.

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Westadt moved approval of a Variance at 3354 Rice Street to allow wall signage on four sides of the building with a total of 400 square feet of signage on the property, subject to the following condition:

- The free-standing sign must comply with the provisions of Zoning Code Ch. 903.110.E.5.c Freestanding Signs;

And allow the existing pylon sign at the southwest corner to remain until September 30, 2020.

Motion seconded by Kulousek.

Motion carried 6 – 0.

**COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN UPDATE**

The City Clerk explained that the Comprehensive Plan is not yet complete. She explained that the turnover of several key staff and the city engineer has slowed down the process. She noted that staff had begun working with the Metropolitan Council earlier this year for assistance.

**SCHEDULE
PLANNING
COMMISSION
WORKSHOP**

The City Clerk explained that staff is requesting the Planning Commission call for a workshop to be held immediately following the September 12, 2019 regular meeting. She stated that City Staff wants to work with the Planning Commission on a plan to complete the Comprehensive Plan, and have the Commission be more involved in the process.

Buesing moved approval of calling for a Workshop immediately following the September 12, 2019 regular Planning Commission meeting.

Motion seconded by Johnson.

Motion carried 6 - 0

ADJOURN

There being no further business, Buesing adjourned the meeting at 7:05p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Heller
City Clerk