

OWATONNA PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES FOR DECEMBER 10, 2024

The Owatonna Planning Commission met in regular session at 5:30 p.m. in the Crandall Center – Chambers with Chairperson Kelly Rooks conducting the meeting. Present at roll call were Commissioners Kelly Rooks, Rachel Springer-Gasner, John Eickhoff, Nick Peake, and Dave Effertz. Commissioner Mark Meier was absent. Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke and Senior Administrative Technician Kristen Kopp were also present.

A motion was made by Springer-Gasner and seconded by Peake to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of October 8, 2024. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion carried.

Application No. RZ-9, which is a request by Anna Lee on behalf of the Lee Foundation to rezone property from R-1, Single Family Residential, to R-6, High Density Residential District, for the purposes of providing group housing for the property located at 545 Florence Avenue NW, was presented by Community Development Manager Greg Kruschke. (Refer to report on file.) Public hearing opened at 5:34 pm. Anna Lee thanked the Commissioners for taking time to hear her request and appreciates their consideration. The Lee Foundation has been in existence since 2014 and Dr. Lee has been in manufacturing in Owatonna for the last 27 years and wanted to pay Owatonna back. His idea is to have the foundation focus on enriching the culture and education of students. She said they are immigrants and have benefited from all of the education they've got from the state. They want to get young people educated and trained. Owatonna is a great city, but affordable housing has been lagging. She said the workers have to have a good living standard and affordable housing is precious and a challenge. When this West Hills building was available, the Lee Foundation put forth the initiative to use the building for workforce housing. The building has 20 rooms, a commercial kitchen, and up-to-code bathrooms. The goal is for low-income housing or working with a staffing agency who provides manufacturing jobs. Dr. Lee said they've lived in Owatonna since 1996 and brought their family here. He said the Foundation has a scholarship for students. They purchased this building in Covid time. They've talked with some of the people who lived there when it was a treatment center. He said they have put in a lot of effort to fix up the building to get it ready. A motion was made by Effertz and seconded by Wilson to recommend City Council approval of the rezoning property from R-1, Single Family Residential, to R-6, High Density Residential District, for the property located at 545 Florence Avenue NW. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion carried.

Kruschke said that there is a Notify Me sign-up for the Vine Street Parking Lot that will text or email to let people know when the lots will be plowed. The goal is to open it up a little more—they shouldn't have to close the lot one night a week unnecessarily. Springer-Gasner said it looks great, but she's heard complaints about the stall sizes being small. Wilson asked if the app would be expanded to other lots. Kruschke said this is a test and they will see how it goes.

A motion was made by Springer-Gasner to adjourn and seconded by Effertz at 5:51 p.m. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Greg Kruschke
Community Development Manager