1. **Call to Order**

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

2. **Roll Call**

Commissioners Kirk, Knight, Magney, Rettew, Calvert, and Odland were present. O’Connell was absent.

Staff members present: Community Development Director Julie Wischnack, City Planner Loren Gordon, and Planner Jeff Thomson.

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

4. **Approval of Minutes:** February 19, 2015

   *Kirk moved, second by Calvert, to approve the February 19, 2015 meeting minutes as submitted.*

   *Kirk, Knight, Magney, Rettew, Calvert, and Odland voted yes. O’Connell was absent. Motion carried.*

5. **Report from Staff**

Gordon briefed the commission on land use applications considered by the city council at its meeting of March 2, 2015:

- Adopted a resolution approving changes to the zoning ordinances relating to the environment.
- Adopted a resolution approving the Applewood development on Plymouth Road.
- Adopted a resolution approving an ordinance change to rezone parcels on Excelsior Road from R-1 to R-1A.

There will be a vision meeting for the Ridgedale southwest sector on March 10, 2015 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Gordon invited commissioners to participate in a survey on how bicyclists would get to a light rail station and how the bike would be stored.
The next planning commission meeting will be March 19, 2015.

6. Report from Planning Commission Members

Kirk stated that the SWLRT Advisory Commission is forming an arts committee to select art work that will be infused in the stations. Anyone interesting in serving on the arts committee should contact Wischnack.

7. Public Hearings: Consent Agenda: None

8. Public Hearings

A. Sign plan review for Ridgedale Center at 12401 Wayzata Boulevard.

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

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

Rettew asked if the “R” would be lighted or change color. Thomson answered that it would be backlit. The existing pylon sign is 85 feet tall. The proposed pylon sign on the north would be 70 feet tall and the signs at the east and west entrances would be 50 feet tall. The towers already exist. The sign faces would be redone.

In response to Kirk’s question, Thomson answered that the resolution would restrict the amount of the square footage that would be allowed on each sign. It would be regulated on a per-sign-type basis. All of the proposed signs are located on property owned by General Growth Properties. The yield and stop signs would be within the interior road system that is governed by a management agreement.

Calvert was concerned snow would cover the directional signs. Thomson answered that the signs would be eight feet tall and should remain visible in the winter.

Benjamin Freeman, representing General Growth Properties, applicant, stated that:

- The proposed sign plan amendment represents the continued modernization and long-term vision of Ridgedale Center. The master plan identifies goals for now and in the future in terms of
signage and focusing on the customer being able to identify the center and navigate within the site. He is excited to improve the property.

• He thanked Wischnack, Gordon, and Thomson for their continued professionalism. It has been a pleasure working with them.
• The signs would not change color. There would be a soft, back-lit glow.
• The towers would be rewrapped, but not made taller.

Kirk asked of what materials the monument sign on Interstate 394 would be made. Mr. Freeman answered a vinyl pattern that would create a sense of texture, but the difference between the two colors is a function of the rendering. It is meant to be internally illuminated and not change color.

Kirk asked if it would be as heavily textured as the graphic appears. Mr. Freeman stated that it would probably be more subtle.

Kirk stated that the signs at the mall entrances would have the same texture. He asked if those signs would be painted aluminum. Mr. Freeman said that the intent would be to make it subtle. There would be some texture without getting too busy.

Chair Odland asked how the finish would weather. Mr. Freeman answered that the materials have not fully been determined. The sign plans would next be put out for sign vendors to bid on. He has asset managers who will advise him on what would hold up to Minnesota winters. The materials would be subject to change during the bid process. The light would cascade behind the letters to create depth.

Chair Odland asked if the material around the “R” would weather well. Mr. Freeman answered in the affirmative. It would weather as well as anything else can in this environment. There would be upkeep that would need to occur.

Chair Odland asked if green features such as solar power would be used. Mr. Freeman responded that the parking lot lighting would be replaced with LEDs. The net use of power would be decreased and it would be clean light.

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

Kirk had a vision of a homogenous look to the entire Ridgedale area from Target to the YMCA. He asked if consistencies in the use of materials and color of signs
could be enforced. Gordon stated that the roadway improvements would work to bind the areas together with landscaping and way-finding signs to navigate around the center.

Kirk noted that the way-finding signs have the opportunity to create uniformity. He would want General Properties to take the lead to establish that.

Gordon noted that Highland Bank used corner features at Cartway Lane and Plymouth Road for landscaping and sidewalk treatment. The city may be able to use the landscaping and sidewalk treatments as a template for Plymouth Road.

Kirk felt that Minnetonka has standards for street signs. He did not know if those need to be blended with those at the mall. It would be nice to have consistency throughout the mall property. He knows that the city does not control content of a sign. Wischnack identified two opportunities to provide design elements for the area would be with landscaping and sidewalk treatments. Changing the look of street signs would impact the rest of the city.

Kirk confirmed with Thomson that the approval would regulate signs for the restaurants which would be restricted to wall signs. That restriction also exists in the current sign plan. Freestanding buildings would only be allowed to have wall signs.

*Magney moved, second by Rettew, to adopt the resolution on pages A57-A60 of the staff report which rescinds the existing sign plan and approves a revised sign plan for Ridgedale Center at 12401 Wayzata Boulevard.*

*Kirk, Knight, Magney, Rettew, Calvert, and Odland voted yes. O'Connell was absent. Motion carried.*

Chair Odland stated that an appeal of the planning commission’s decision must be made in writing to the planning division within 10 days.

9. **Other Business**

   A. **Concept plan review for Kraemer’s Hardware redevelopment at 14730 Excelsior Boulevard and 5431 and 5439 Williston Road.**

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

Thomson reported. He recommended commissioners provide comments and feedback to assist the applicant with future direction that may lead to the
preparation of more detailed development plans. It would be useful if commissioners would provide their reaction and general comments on the contemplated land use, building size, architecture, and general site design.

Kirk confirmed with Thomson that the next steps in the process would be for the concept plan to be reviewed by the city council and then the applicant may submit an application for rezoning, site plan, and comprehensive guide plan modification.

Curt Fretham, of Lake West Development, applicant, stated that:

- He described the history of the site since Kraemer’s Hardware moved.
- The plan provides a broader look at the area. There would be a green knoll. He would work to preserve trees.
- The plan would limit the visual mass and mimic what is down the street.
- The courtyard would have a green space center.
- He worked hard to build the building into the topography.
- He provided a slide that shows the access points off of Excelsior Boulevard continuing into an underground garage. There would be 23 underground stalls coming in off of Williston Road. There would be a fire lane on the north side that would access 2 units.
- There would be green space in the corner.
- The fourth story would be pushed back. The building would cut into the grade.
- The units would have doors facing the street to provide a townhouse feel.
- It would be a good-looking building. It would be primarily stone and brick. There would be an option to have a flat roof or pitched roof. He was looking for feedback on that. There would be water storage on top of the roof for rate control. The pitched roof would tie the building in more with the 2 homes on the north. The front elevations mimic the neighboring units as well.
- There would be a mix of 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom apartments.
- There would be a roof-top deck on the corner and a patio area for some units that would look down on the courtyard.
- There would be 78 units total with 60 1-bedroom apartments and 18 2-bedroom apartments.
- There would be 118 exterior parking stalls.
- The overall site is 2.2 acres.
• The units on the north would be twin homes.
• He was looking for suggestions and available for questions.

Kirk asked if the four units would be developed at the same time as the rest. Mr. Fretham would like to, but the area may be used for staging purposes during construction. He was inclined to think the units would be built once the building would be substantially complete or complete. Kirk confirmed with Mr. Fretham that the architecture of the twin houses would be similar to the apartment building.

Knight asked if a visitor would go into the lobby and through the garage to get to the elevator to get to the upper floors. Mr. Fretham said he would take a closer look at that with the architect. Knight and Mr. Fretham agreed that an elevator from the lobby to the upper floors would be better for visitors.

Magney said that the packet mentions four to eight townhomes on the north side. Mr. Fretham clarified that two twin homes, a total of four units, are in the proposal.

Knight noted that the sketches do not include the four-foot rise at Excelsior Boulevard and Williston Road. Mr. Fretham responded that that is hard to show.

Knight liked the way the north end of the apartment building would have the roofline match the twin homes.

Chair Odland asked if there would be a way to access the green space from the third floor. Mr. Fretham said that it would be visible, but not accessible.

Chair Odland questioned if the sidewalk would be intended for the public to use as well. Mr. Fretham answered affirmatively.

Rettew asked if the sidewalk would extend to the twin homes. Mr. Fretham said that diagrams have been made showing it both ways. He was open to doing the sidewalks either way.

Kirk asked what the red-dotted line represents. Mr. Fretham answered the location of a potential stormwater retention system.

Chair Odland asked if the underground garage would connect the 23 stalls accessed by Williston Road and the stalls accessed by Excelsior Boulevard. Mr. Fretham answered that it would not go through. The spots would be assigned.
The public hearing was opened.

Charles Swanson, 5436 Williston Road, stated that:

- He and his wife have lived there 15 years.
- Multiple-story dwellings have created problems in the past because they were so large and he sees that happening now.
- There have been a lot of new homes going in along the road. The area has improved a lot. He would like to see it continue with single-family houses.
- The house across from his driveway is really an eyesore. It has been vacant for 10 years. He would like to see a decision made on it, but he wondered why single-family dwellings would not be constructed.
- New houses are being built on Williston Road.
- It is not zoned for commercial.
- Twin homes would be different from the residences on Williston Road. He would rather not see twin homes or a multiple-story building.
- A new building changed an area going down to the lake in Wayzata drastically. The area is no longer appealing.
- He was concerned there would not be pride in homeownership.
- The lots are nice and could be made into nice, single-family residences.

Bill Jones, 5120 Lee Way, stated that:

- He loved the idea of the twin homes to provide a transition from the commercial area to the single-family area. He guessed that Williston Road would be too busy a street and the lots would not be large enough for single-family residences.
- He suggested that one driveway to service both twin homes would make more sense. The two driveways on Williston Road would be 20 to 30 feet apart and located on a hill which could cause a problem. He suggested a minor design change to allow a vehicle to either enter the garage from the north and turn right into the garage or make a turn so a vehicle could enter the driveway would also be an improvement.
- The idea of a larger building on the corner is wonderful. The area is a commercial site.
• The proposal would allow a lot of residents to stay in the neighborhood in 10 or so years when he and others will be ready to move out of their houses. It would be wonderful to live in an apartment next to a wonderful, commercial area.
• He loved the idea of the apartment building and townhomes. It would be a great mix.
• The proposal could be a very positive change for the neighborhood.

Ellen Swanson, 5436 Williston Road, stated that:

• She is opposed to the apartment building being a big box. She saw no “aesthetics” to it at all. She did not want to live across the street from a big box.
• She is concerned with the density and number of units. She was concerned with increasing the number of people and traffic.
• She questioned if there would be parking spaces on the Williston Road side. Mr. Fretham answered in the negative.
• She did not like the flat roof. It would help to add some “aesthetics.”
• The previous proposals for the site were more attractive.
• She did not know why the boarded-up house is still standing. The prior property owner allowed the structures and a falling down tree to stay there for years. The site as it is diminishes her property value and changes the feel of the whole area.

Phyllis Adams, 14401 Atrium Way, stated that:

• She appreciated having discussions with previous applicants to help her develop an understanding of what density would be appropriate for the site and what uses would survive.
• She is all for bringing more people into the neighborhood because she wants all of the businesses to survive so she may use them too.

No additional testimony was submitted and the hearing was closed.

Rettew had the same concern regarding the two driveways being located so close together. He suggesting combining them. He saw pros and cons to the flat and gable roofs. The flat roof has less mass, but the gable roof ties it in better with a typical home look and breaks up the monotony of a box. He was curious to hear other people’s thoughts. He likes the courtyard. That helps break up visually the big-box look.
Kirk asked how the city deals with abandoned residences. Wischnack explained that when the city receives a complaint, staff will contact the property owner and request steps be taken to resolve the problem. City staff have visited this property and boarded up the vacant house. The property owner is responsible for paying for the cost. The site has not been found unsafe, but is a nuisance. If a resident sees something, then please contact city staff.

Kirk would rather see surface parking on Excelsior Boulevard. It would make sense to extend parking all the way down to where the grocery store and liquor store are located. Blending of the contemporary style and gable roof style works for him because of the horseshoe shape of the building. The massing is alright. He liked the stepping of the number of stories down as the hillside rises so that it would not continue to creep up the hill. It may be a little awkward of a transition from gable roofs to a flat roof from the courtyard view, but the flat roof would pretty much be hidden from the public view, so he did not have a lot of concern for that. He appreciates how the green space would flow in and out of the building. It would articulate the massive back of the building which has been included in previous proposals. Continuing to break up the large block on the southwest corner with different colors and textures as shown is important. He would support more of that throughout the design. Using different textures vertically can help break up mass. The building’s mass would be appropriate because it would be stepped back from Excelsior Boulevard and Williston Road. Overall, it is heading in the right direction and it looks a lot better than the previous proposals. He would support the proposal.

Rettew loves the trees on Williston Road. He would like the developer to complete the tree audit and preserve as many mature trees as possible.

Kirk stated that twin homes would be appropriate in the proposed location because the area has higher density and commercial uses, but he would prefer the rest of the lots adjacent to Williston Road contain single-family residences.

Knight asked if the twin homes would be owner occupied. Mr. Fretham answered affirmatively.

Chair Odland asked if including more owner-occupied twin homes had been considered. Mr. Fretham answered that it had been considered, but they could not come up with a viable plan. The corner is busy, numerous twin homes would create multiple driveways, and the property with the existing boarded-up building would not make it economically feasible.
Chair Odland liked Lake West Development’s proposal in another location that
was laid out into a nice neighborhood. Mr. Fretham explained that that property
had more room for a street, but this property does not have enough room for a
street. The depth makes a big difference.

Chair Odland asked if he had considered individual houses with a row-house feel
to provide more ownership to the neighborhood. Mr. Fretham responded that the
study did not take them in that direction.

Magney likes the green space, gabled roof on the apartment to provide a nice
transition to the houses to the north, and one driveway. He likes the building
colors and different materials of stone and brick. It looks nice.

Chair Odland asked if there would be green aspects for power, water retention,
or garden areas that would be a community area. Mr. Fretham said that there
would be water retention on the rooftop, an above-ground stormwater collection
area that would collect the water from the roof, and preservation of green space
in the front and the border. That would work with either a gable or flat roof.

Knight asked if the stormwater pond would have a controlled outflow or if it could
potentially overflow. Mr. Fretham answered that it could potentially overflow.
Knight was concerned that the twin homes would have water problems. Mr.
Fretham explained that would not happen because there would be enough
change in elevation to prevent that.

10. Elections

A. Election of chair and vice chair of the 2015 Minnetonka Planning
   Commission.

Chair Odland and Kirk volunteered themselves to serve as chair.

Knight moved to nominate Kirk to serve as chair of the 2015 Minnetonka
Planning Commission. Kirk, Knight, Magney, Rettew, and Calvert voted
yes. Odland voted no. O’Connell was absent. Motion carried.

Rettew nominated himself to serve as vice chair of the 2015 Minnetonka
Planning Commission. Kirk, Knight, Magney, Rettew, Calvert, and Odland
voted no. O’Connell was absent. Motion failed.
Knight nominated Odland to serve as vice chair of the 2015 Minnetonka Planning Commission. Kirk, Knight, Magney, Rettew, Calvert, and Odland voted yes. O’Connell was absent. Motion carried.

11. Planning Commission Bylaws and Policies

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

Gordon reported. He recommended approval of the bylaws and policies without changes.

Kirk asked if it would be appropriate to review ordinances regarding tear downs at this time. Gordon and Wischnack noted that the mcmansion policy would apply if the new construction would require a variance. Kirk wanted something to get at addressing a medium-sized lot that would allow a house much bigger than those in the existing neighborhood. He would like to address that issue at another time. He expects more of those will be happening in the future. Gordon said that data could be collected to identify Minnetonka’s tear-down trends. It is a lot-size issue more than home style. Calvert noted a newspaper article that reported how young people are looking for small, split-level houses, but the ones from the 1970s are dated. Some cities are investing in updating the split level-houses built in the 1970s. Some were featured in the paper. Kirk noted that those are some of the most economic houses in Minnetonka.

Wischnack said that the city now offers rehabilitation loans and down payment assistance for residents with incomes up to 110 percent of the median income.

Gordon clarified that the issue of tear downs and rebuilds would be reviewed as a broader policy.

Kirk moved, second by Knight, to readopt the attached bylaws and policies.

Kirk, Knight, Magney, Rettew, Calvert, and Odland voted yes. O’Connell was absent. Motion carried.
12. Adjournment

Knight moved, second by Kirk, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

By: ____________________________
Lois T. Mason
Planning Secretary