

Community Development Department

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MINUTES PLAN COMMISSION JULY 6, 2021 AT 6:30 P.M. CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Members Present: Dan Toland, Lisa Moody, Patricia LaRue, Diane Odeen, Craig Hofland, Chris Holtkamp, Rebecca Prendergast
Members Absent: None
Staff Present: Amy Peterson, Crystal Raleigh, Brandt Johnson, Jon Smits
Others Present: David and Karen Meyer, N847710 60th St.
Eric Johnson, on behalf of T.W. Equities, LLC

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting convened at 6:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M/Moody, S/Odeen to approve minutes. Motion carried 7-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

PUBLIC HEARING

PC Resolution 2021-02 to approve a special sign permit for an electronic reader board sign in the I-1 Industrial zoning district at 3329 Casey Street

Mayor Toland opened the public hearing. Amy Peterson gave a presentation about special sign permits and the application from T.W. Equities, LLC (TW). The sign in question faces north/east towards Winfield United (Winfield). It is over 600 ft. from the nearest homes. As part of the development approval process, a sign plan was submitted with the architectural and civil plans and when building construction started the stone columns for the sign were built, but a sign face had not been installed for a number of years.

Peterson reported that in early February 2021, staff observed that electronic panels were installed on the monument sign face. That addition is not what was approved on plan submission, and it is not in compliance with the City's sign ordinance as electronic signs are not permitted in industrial zoning districts. Staff brought the compliance issue to the attention of the applicant via letter on February 11, 2021.

Peterson said that the time, staff offered two options,

1. Remove the portion of the sign that is in violation with the ordinance and covenants (electronic message board), or

2. Request a variance from the Economic Development Corporation (EDC/ARC) and a special sign permit from the Plan Commission so that the electronic sign may remain (which the applicant opted for)

Peterson said the EDC/ARC considered the proposal in April 2021 and conditionally approved the sign with the following conditions:

- Sign cannot be on past regular business hours (7am – 7pm)
- Limitations on brightness and color
- Static images only with duration of images changing no less than once every five minutes
- The sign must be maintained

Peterson went over the review criteria with the Plan Commission and provided considerations from staff that included the intent of the sign ordinance, the dated nature of the City's code regarding sign technology, and the precedent setting implications. Peterson said that under further analysis and in talking with the applicant, the conditions in the resolution pose challenges to the sign as currently installed. An alternative resolution was also provided to the Plan Commission

Peterson reported the architectural design review committee approved a modified sign with some conditions attached. Peterson went over the review criteria for the special sign permit and the resolution pertaining to special sign permits. Peterson went over some of the considerations with the Commission regarding the special sign permit that TW is applying for. The approach for the conditions in the alternate resolution take into consideration the municipal code, the conditions on the University of Wisconsin-River Falls (UWRF) sign, and also the sign that has already been installed. Peterson went over the alternative resolution with Council that included conditions such as the signs operational hours, what the sign must be equipped with, prohibitions on full motion videos, etc.

Peterson concluded the presentation and the Mayor asked for public comments. Eric Johnson on behalf of TW came up and voiced his support of the resolution. Eric Johnson mentioned that the sign in question would generally only apply to those that use Casey Street to get into TW.

Chris Holtkamp asked why TW installed the sign without approval and Peterson mentioned that the permit was included in the original developer's agreement. Eric Johnson replied that he did not know what happened between the time when the permit was obtained and when the decision was made to go with an electronic sign.

Patricia LaRue thanked TW for being in River Falls and mentioned that six seconds for reading the signs is too fast for people to read.

Mayor Toland closed the public hearing and opened the Commission discussion.

Diane Odeen said that she appreciated learning how UWRF's sign on south Main came to be and that staff were looking to create a sense of consistency with the sign ordinance and future sign applicants.

Lisa Moody asked if companies/organizations could put on their sign's things like "Happy 4th of July", happy birthday to a particular person, etc. and asked what the status is for the Walgreens, American Legion, and Library signs. wo questions pertaining to question about anecdotal signs. Moody question

about Walgreens, American Legion sign, Library sign. Peterson talked about the sign ordinance that includes provisions for reader boards, stipulating red and white font, and full color messages on signs.

Odeen talked about commercialization of messages on signage.

LaRue talked about I-1 sign differentiation and Business zoned sign differences and that she can see many people wanting these types of signs. She likes the original proposal but not the hour aspect. Five minutes would be good for her.

Craig Hofland mentioned that he thinks the current sign ordinance is antiquated and that the City should update it to reflect modern day applications and consistency throughout the City. Hofland asked what precedence this would set if the Commission approved this special sign permit. Peterson gave a brief history of the recent electronic signs organizations were submitting to the City and that this special sign permit would be a shift if approved.

Mayor Toland mentioned consistency being important when approving signs. Odeen also agreed with Mayor Toland about updating the code to reflect consistency.

Hofland asked if other businesses have inquired about electronic signs. Peterson responded that there have been businesses in the past that have asked.

Moody commented on the UWRF sign and how there were some compromises made between the City and university. Chris Holtkamp commented about Comprehensive Plan update and how that will be a good time to talk with the community about signs in the City.

LaRue asked Peterson how much this special sign permit cost TW and Peterson said it was \$1,200. LaRue commented to Eric Johnson about six seconds for each message on the sign and that it is too fast which Eric responded that the minimum that the sign is at now is between 15-30 seconds but will reiterate to his supervisors that it should be longer than six seconds.

Holtkamp asked about RFEDC and if they were ok with this sign as it could set a precedence and Peterson said RFEDC probably won't have a problem with the electronic sign.

M/Odeen, S/Moody to approve a special sign permit for an electronic reader board sign in the I-1 Industrial zoning district at 3329 Casey Street. Motion carried 7-0.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

Resolution to approve a certified survey map variance in the extraterritorial subdivision jurisdiction in the Town of Clifton for David and Karen Meyer

Peterson gave a presentation about David and Karen Meyer's property within the extraterritorial subdivision jurisdiction (ETJ), and the proposed lot seeking to be created. Peterson mentioned that the applicants first applied in 2019 for a variance and provided a history of the Meyers application. Peterson talked about the options staff presented to the Meyers in which they choose to apply for a variance for the CSM as drafted.

Peterson said staff recommends the approval of the variance and that this variance is not precedent setting as this is a one off approval of the variance based off unique conditions.

Moody asked if the ETJ ordinance was amended specifically for the Meyers. Odeen said that it was amended to comply with state law.

Holtkamp mentioned there was a good faith effort made between the City and the Meyers regarding this variance.

M/Holtkamp, S/Moody to recommend approval of a resolution to approve a certified survey map variance in the extraterritorial subdivision jurisdiction in the Town of Clifton. Motion carried 7-0.

REPORTS/DIALOGUE

Director's Report

Peterson provided a director's report that included the Comp Plan RFP process, the inclusion of 700 S. Main, TID 18, and ROW vacation at the next Plan Commission meeting, SUP considerations being sent back to the Plan Commission and a staffing update.

Holtkamp said he appreciated that the RFP was only digital and appreciated that it was done that way.

ADJOURNMENT

Moody made a motion to adjourn at 7:12 p.m.

M/Moody, S/Holtkamp; motion carried 7-0

Respectfully submitted,



Brandt Johnson, assistant to the city administrator