

**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**March 25, 2024**

The Fergus Falls Planning Commission held a regular meeting on March 25, 2024 in the Council Chambers of City Hall. Chair Kilde called the meeting to order at 5:15 PM. Present were Laurel Kilde, Sarah Duffy, Wayne Schuett, Mike Walls, Nate Kunde, and Paul Vukonich. Absent was Ryan Fullerton. Staff present were Klara Beck and Jill Hanson.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion to approve the agenda by Commissioner Duffy and seconded by Commissioner Kunde. Passed unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Duffy made a motion to approve the minutes from February 26, 2024. It was seconded by Commissioner Kunde. Passed unanimously.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**4a. SIGN ORDINANCE UPDATES**

Community Development Manager Klara Beck presented handouts for the sign ordinance discussion, outlining the process used for the documents. Chair Kilde suggested that members review the highlighted sections of the handouts to ensure consensus on the proposed changes. Discussion ensued regarding sandwich board code and the exemption of window signs that cling to the window. Seasonal sign language was removed from the draft code and integrate into the temporary sign regulations. Klara mentioned that staff had consulted sign ordinances from other communities to assist in drafting our code changes.

Discussion followed regarding billboards, questioning the rationale behind the 800 feet spacing requirement between billboards. Klara agreed to investigate the guidelines for billboards. She also committed to updating the code language and preparing a comparison document for the PC's review.

**4b. ACCESSORY STRUCTURES**

**Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**

Klara Beck highlighted the limited language in the current code concerning ADUs. She noted the increasing popularity of ADUs as a means of providing affordable housing options and maximizing land use efficiency. While other municipalities in Minnesota have embraced ADUs, our city code does not readily accommodate them in residential zones.

**Accessory Structures on adjacent parcels**

Klara Beck explained the current regulations prohibiting the construction of accessory structures on adjacent parcels without a primary structure. This restriction limits property owners' flexibility in utilizing land they own adjacent to their primary structures.

**Shipping Containers as accessory structures**

Klara Beck mentioned both code enforcement and zoning for the City of Fergus Falls have fielded questions regarding the use of shipping containers as accessory structures in residential zones over the last year, but our current code does not address shipping containers specifically. Some Minnesota municipalities permit their temporary use for specific storage purposes. Others strictly prohibit their use. Some allow them as accessory structures subject to regulations governing setbacks, aesthetics, and building code.

Discussion ensued regarding accessory structures, with the PC expressing support for amendments to the zoning code to allow for more options for property owners. Klara proposed forming a subcommittee to initiate discussions on ADUs and explore potential amendments to the zoning code. Chair Kilde, Commissioner Duffy, and Commissioner Kunde volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Chair Kilde noted the subcommittee could also take on the work of reviewing nuisance ordinance.

#### **4c. INDOOR/OUTDOOR STORAGE IN B-6 ZONES**

Klara Beck explained that current regulations within the B-6, Sub-Regional Shopping Center Business District do not permit storage activities except through an Interim Use Permit. Following recent discussions with parties interested in purchasing properties in B-6 zones for uses including indoor or indoor and outdoor storage, the PC expressed support for the incorporation of language into the B-6 code that may enable indoor/outdoor storage in B-6 zones.

#### **STAFF UPDATES**

None

The meeting adjourned at **6:20 PM**.

*Klara Beck*

Community Development Manager