

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

May 28, 2024

The Fergus Falls Planning Commission held a regular meeting on May 28, 2024 in the Council Chambers of City Hall. Acting Chair Duffy called the meeting to order at 5:15 PM. Present were Sarah Duffy, Wayne Schuett, Mike Walls, Nate Kunde, and Ryan Fullerton. Absent were Laurel Kilde and Paul Vukonich. Staff present were Klara Beck and Jill Hanson.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Kunde made a motion to approve the minutes from April 22, 2024. It was seconded by Commissioner Fullerton. Passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4a. SIGN ORDINANCE UPDATES

Community Development Director Klara Beck presented handouts for the discussion that showed the changes to the sign ordinance in red. Klara explained there were sections added to the code for findings, purposes, effects, severability, and definitions. Klara suggested replacing the section "Licenses & Permit Fees" with a "Permit Required and Exceptions" sections. Klara highlighted the sections on exempt signs and unauthorized signs, noting election signs are covered in state statute so we are using that same language. A new section was added for determining computation methods for the area of a sign. Awning signage was added to the code, window signage is exempt, and drive thru menu signs will be considered as part of the building permit process.

There was some discussion about billboards in B-5 and B-6 zones in the city limits, and it was suggested the proposed language be changed to allow for 400 feet spacing between billboards in these zones. It was noted that the State of MN allows 500 feet between signs on the interstate. Klara stated Electric Message Centers (EMCs) will have their own section in the code, as will temporary signs and community events. There was some discussion about authorized signs vs. unauthorized signs and how the Code Enforcement Officer may enforce violations of the code. The PC wanted to review the changes to the code individually and bring it back to the PC for discussion at the next meeting.

4b. PARKING IN B-6 ZONES

Klara Beck explained the PC has received a request to amend the B-5 and B-6 zoning code to prohibit overnight parking. Overnight parking has reportedly led to challenges for some businesses with large parking areas in the B-5 and B-6 zones, including a significant increase in litter, making it difficult for the business to maintain a clean and welcoming environment for their customers. The additional burden of cleaning up after overnight parkers stretched the capabilities of existing staff and resulted in Public Works staff from the City of Fergus Falls being deployed to perform cleanup.

There was some discussion and Acting Chair Duffy and Commissioner Fullerton both felt that the businesses in these zones should be able to determine if they want to allow overnight parking. If they do not, it should be their responsibility to restrict overnight parking on their sites. Commissioner Kunde stated that he felt that the City should not be responsible for cleaning up the trash on private lots.

STAFF UPDATES

5a. Cannabis Zoning

Klara Beck explained that the City Council heard the PC's recommendation from their April meeting but chose not to approve cannabis sales in B-3 zones and instead are focusing on sales in B-6. The city attorney's office is working

on final language. It will be brought back before the council at a future meeting. There was some discussion about the process thus far.

The meeting adjourned at **6:03 PM**.

Klara Beck

Community Development Director