

**PLANNING COMMISSION  
CITY OF RAMSEY  
ANOKA COUNTY  
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Ramsey Planning Commission conducted a worksession meeting on Thursday, October 28, 2021, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present:                   Chairperson Randy Bauer  
  Commissioner Bruce Anderson  
  Commissioner Andrew Dunaway (attending virtually)  
  Commissioner Cheri Gengler  
  Commissioner Eric Peters  
  Commissioner Gary VanScoy  
  Commissioner Brian Walker

Members Absent:                   None

Also Present:                       Senior Planner Chloe McGuire Brigl  
  Code Enforcement Officer Bria Raines  
  Planning Technician Brian McCann  
  City Council Liaison Matt Woestehoff  
  City Councilmember Debra Musgrove

**1.     CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Bauer called the regular meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

**2.     TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01:   Review Ordinance Amending Digital Display Billboard Regulations**

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl reviewed the staff report.

Commissioner VanScoy asked if billboards are not currently allowed.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl confirmed that to be true but noted that there are a few legal nonconforming which predate the existing ordinance.

Commissioner VanScoy commented that this change would then allow up to three billboards. He stated that it would seem one company is requesting this.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that the City is requesting this and put out an RFP.

Commissioner VanScoy asked if there would be a public hearing related to this change.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl confirmed that the City Council would hold a public hearing at the first reading of the ordinance.

Commissioner VanScoy commented that he does not support allowing billboards. He stated that he is bothered that this change is being brought forward by a request from one company but understood that the City initiated the process.

Councilmember Woestehoff clarified that this is not a request by one company, as the City initiated the request. He stated the other two billboards could be through different companies.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that the sign previously discussed would be placed upon City property and the other two signs could be placed upon private properties.

Commissioner Walker asked the number of properties that would fit the necessary criteria.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that the vacant spaces along the highway would qualify, or a portion of the property could be split off for the billboard. She noted that signs would only be allowed within commercial or industrial areas.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that the purpose of having the sign on a parcel without a building would ensure the existing company would not have advertising on the site as well.

Commissioner VanScoy asked if there would be an impact to the monument sign that exists or whether the billboard would be in addition.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl confirmed that the monument signs of the City would not be impacted. She stated that a billboard would not be classified as a monument sign. She clarified that the City would maintain ownership of the land and lease it to the business that operates the sign.

Chairperson Bauer referenced pages four and five which provides additional background information. He stated that some of the language seems duplicative to the information found within the sign ordinance.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that an intent section of an ordinance is common to include. She stated that if there is pushback on the ordinance, it helps to have the intent.

Chairperson Bauer stated that on page five there is language related to the distance between signs and asked if the two miles would be exact or a minimum distance.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that it would be intended as a minimum distance and that language could be updated.

Commissioner Walker stated that he does not like this idea and finds billboards to be tacky. He noted that he would not support the ordinance.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if more research was completed related to the duration of messaging. She specifically asked for the message duration near the intersections of highways 10 and 65.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl provided details on the minimum message durations allowed by different communities.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she believes longer message durations are better in order to avoid driver distraction.

Chairperson Bauer agreed that messages that change too quickly become distracting and hard to read. He recognized that some members of the Commission are opposed to billboards and asked the Commission if there is consensus to continue working on this topic.

Commissioner Gengler stated that she would rather provide input on the restrictions rather than saying the Commission is opposed and losing the opportunity to have input.

Commissioner Peters agreed that he would rather be able to provide input as well. He stated that location and light pollution are important issues. He noted that not everyone uses social media and therefore the messages can be helpful.

Commissioner Dunaway commented that he believes the Council will move this forward and therefore he would agree that it would be better to provide input on the restrictions as well.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he was the only Councilmember opposed to the concept of billboards, therefore he would believe the item will move forward.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that there was consensus from the Council to pursue the RFP, based on the support from the EDA. She did not believe that the concept had returned to the Council again since that time.

Chairperson Bauer suggested that the Commission focus on the proposed regulations which the Council will be reviewing.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl suggested that billboards be allowed through Conditional Use Permit (CUP), which would mean the Commission would still have the opportunity to review a request that comes forward and provide input.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if the signs could perhaps only be allowed in a specific zoning district, meaning that the property would need to be rezoned and a public process would be required.

Chairperson Bauer noted that would become an issue of spot zoning and therefore would prefer to use the CUP tool.

Commissioner Anderson stated that his concern is related to safety. He noted that if drivers are taking their eyes off the road to look at a sign, it causes a safety concern. He did not see the need for additional distractions until the stoplights are taken off Highway 10.

Commissioner Gengler commented that there are digital billboards throughout the metro and therefore she is unable to make the connection that the sign is responsible for accidents. She stated that perhaps fewer signs be allowed within The COR if these larger signs are going to be allowed.

Commissioner VanScoy commented that The COR Framework is specific to what is allowed, but the City continues to issue variances outside of that framework. He stated that the monuments were meant to communicate what is within The COR. He expects that this ordinance will pass even though he does not like the idea of allowing billboards in Ramsey. He commented that billboards are a distraction and, in his opinion, are not worth looking at and detract from the look of the community. He stated that he does like using a CUP as that would allow additional review of each proposed location. He commented that perhaps eight seconds is too low for message duration.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that she would recommend ten seconds.

Commissioner Walker commented that people are often caught up on how short eight or ten seconds is when it is longer than it seems. He noted that by the time a driver sees the sign, they would only see one or two messages before they pass the sign.

Chairperson Bauer reviewed the consensus items from the Commission related to this ordinance.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that based on the comments he would suggest taking this item off the Consent Agenda for the regular meeting to allow those opposed to vote against the request.

## **2.02: Consider Ordinance #21-18 Allowing Accessory Dwelling Units on Single-Family Residential Properties**

Planning Technician McCann reviewed the staff report.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl noted that staff attempted to make this as simple as possible.

Chairperson Bauer suggested a language change.

Commissioner Dunaway stated that the ordinance states that an accessory dwelling unit would be allowed for properties over 2.5 acres. He noted that there is also language related to a garage conversion and found that confusing as to whether properties under 2.5 acres would qualify.

Chairperson Bauer replied that only properties 2.5 acres or larger would be eligible.

Commissioner Dunaway commented that in the previous discussion he recalls discussion about elderly family members that may require direct care and whether the regulations would be too restrictive.

Chairperson Bauer asked for input on whether Commissioner Dunaway would support garage conversion for an accessory dwelling unit on a property under 2.5 acres.

Commissioner Dunaway commented that he would support an allowance for a garage unit but not a detached accessory dwelling unit on smaller properties.

Commissioner Walker used the example of an 80-foot lot, noting that those garages do not have much room above the vehicles and therefore there would not be space to create living space in that area. He stated that he would support one acre lots for detached units and garage conversions.

Commissioner VanScoy asked if the garages mentioned are attached or detached, or whether that is not specified.

Chairperson Bauer commented that the way the language reads, it would apply to any garage.

Commissioner Walker commented that he would not want an accessory dwelling in an attached garage.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that the existing code already provides for an attached unit, which would address an attached garage.

Commissioner Anderson commented that there are height restrictions that he believes would limit the ability to add that space above a garage. He asked if tiny houses would be addressed.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that the structure would need to be on a foundation and built to Code.

Commissioner Gengler stated that she would also support the one-acre size. She stated that restricting this to 2.5 acres and above would take out a large number of properties. She believed that one acre would be sufficient.

Chairperson Bauer confirmed the consensus of the Commission to support the change to one acre.

### **2.03: Consider Ordinance #21-15 Creating Additional Requirements for Driveways and Parking Pads**

Planning Technician McCann reviewed the staff report.

Chairperson Bauer asked for clarification on a specific example and whether it would be allowed.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl provided clarification.

Chairperson Bauer noted that there are a number of homes that have a parking pad on the side of the driveway in front of the home. He noted that it would appear that those would become

nonconforming with this change. He commented that he does not have a problem with a wider driveway.

Commissioner Anderson noted that 30 feet of street access is allowed.

Chairperson Bauer stated that his example would have that width at the driveway but then the driveway would widen to the third stall garage and then an additional bump out on the side. He noted that it would give the equivalent of a three-car garage driveway to homes with two car garages.

Commissioner VanScoy stated that perhaps the width of the driveway at the garage could go 15 feet past the garage to provide that additional space.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that would be allowed under the language as proposed. She provided additional clarification.

Commissioner Walker stated that he would have an issue restricting motorbikes, go-karts, or snowmobiles. He stated that it is more of a property size issue. He stated that there could be a family with four children that race motorbikes or snowmobiles, and they should be allowed to store those items. He noted that if those families are on five or ten acres, they should not be limited on those items.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl noted that section of the ordinance was not included in the update. She stated that if desired, staff could review that section and bring it back for additional review.

Code Enforcement Officer Raines noted that this language only applies to outdoor storage. She noted that typically people with large lots keep those items indoors.

Commissioner Gengler asked if there are complaints received for those types of items.

Code Enforcement Officer Raines commented that the complaint that brings staff to the property is not related to those items, but those items are noticed when staff visits the property.

It was determined that this item would be pulled from the Consent Agenda and would come back to the Commission with additional detail to review.

#### **2.04: Discuss Ordinance #21-20 Home Occupation Revisions**

Code Enforcement Officer Raines reviewed the staff report.

Chairperson Bauer asked the square footage needed for a vehicle.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl replied that a standard two car garage is 400 square feet. She stated that there have been a lot of Home Occupation Permits and this has not been an issue as people tend to have a lot of storage.

Chairperson Bauer noted that his son has a home occupation, and his vehicle is currently parked outdoors to allow space for his woodworking business.

Sneior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that in that instance as long as customers do not come to the property and the sales occur online, that would be allowed.

Chairperson Bauer stated that he would only require space for one vehicle. The Commission agreed.

Commissioner Walker commented that he cannot fit two vehicles in his garage no matter how hard he tries, therefore he would also support only requiring space for one vehicle.

Chairperson Bauer asked for clarification on the language related to the home being a secondary business location.

Code Enforcement Officer Raines explained that language is meant to address the situation in which there is a primary business location, but the home address is used to store business materials. She stated that in example, sometimes construction equipment is brought to the home to be stored.

Commissioner Walker asked how someone would know whether a bobcat is for personal or business use. He stated that there seems to be too much overreach as long as it is not creating a junky situation.

Commissioner VanScoy stated that the concern is not related to one piece of equipment but multiple things.

Code Enforcement Officer Raines explained that the language is meant to address when a home is used as a dispatch center for employees. She stated that technically the home or garage are not being used for operating the business, but the business equipment and materials are stored on the home property and dispatched for use daily.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated that home occupation complaints are the largest generator of complaints each month. She stated that as the cost of business and commercial space increase in cost, people are moving those operations to their home property.

Commissioner Walker stated that he could support something based on lot size and the type of business. He stated that if he had two bobcats on ten acres, he did not believe that would be a problem but recognized it would be a problem to park trash trucks on an 80-foot lot.

Code Enforcement Officer Raines stated that the system is complaint based, staff is not going out looking for people in violation. She stated that under the current Code, one piece of commercial equipment is allowed as long as it is properly screened.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that most people with businesses are not an issue and are in contact with staff, attempting to do the right thing. She stated that this ordinance is meant

to address the situation where someone has 85 lawnmowers in their yard they are attempting to repair.

Commissioner Gengler commented that it appears there is a loophole in the language currently and the change would address this issue.

Councilmember Woestehoff agreed that if there was threat of pulling a Home Occupation Permit, that would tend to have more weight than a nuisance complaint.

Commissioner VanScoy commented that this would give staff more enforcement ability when dealing with a home occupation business where someone is running multiple large trucks down the residential road and disturbing neighbors.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl confirmed the changes proposed by the Commission.

### **3. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT**

No additional comments.

### **4. ADJOURNMENT**

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chloe McGuire Brigl  
Senior Planner

ATTEST:

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Brian McCann  
Planning Technician

Drafted by Amanda Staple  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*