

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

The Ramsey Planning Commission conducted a regular meeting on Thursday, August 26, 2021, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present:                   Chairperson Randy Bauer (virtual)  
  Commissioner Bruce Anderson  
  Commissioner Cheri Gengler  
  Commissioner Eric Peters  
  Commissioner Gary VanScoy  
  Commissioner Brian Walker

Members Absent:                   Commissioner Andrew Dunaway

Also Present:                       Senior Planner Chloe McGuire Brigl  
  City Planner Chris Anderson  
  Zoning Code Enforcement Officer Bria Raines  
  Planning Technician Brian McCann  
  City Council Liaison Matt Woestehoff

**1.     CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Bauer called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2.     PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chairperson Bauer led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3.     CITIZEN INPUT**

None.

**4.     APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion by Commissioner Peters, seconded by Commissioner VanScoy, to approve the agenda as presented.

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Peters	aye
Commissioner Walker	aye
Commissioner Gengler	aye

problems with a parking, the parking standards would be able to regulate that activity. She stated that if a family member were at your home, they would park in the driveway. She noted that the intent would be to have the property remain looking like one home or single-family home property.

Chairperson Bauer asked if the Commission would like to continue to study this issue and what additional information, they would like staff to gather.

Commissioner Peters stated that he would be open to additional discussion. He noted that if people have sufficient space, he does not see a problem allowing this activity. He stated that he would be concerned with allowing a camper in the backyard of an 80-foot lot. He stated that residents should be provided direction.

Commissioner Gengler stated that she supports this and agree it bears further discussion. She stated that the majority of requests are not going to be for an Airbnb activity but to allow an older family member to live on the property and spend time with their loved ones. She stated that some people will view it as a way to make money, but noted that could be included in the regulations, specifying that rental could not be done. She stated that additional regulation could also be added that would prevent a camper on wheels from being used.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he is not strongly in favor of this, noting that he would want a lot more information on the maximum square footage, minimum lot size, whether there would be inspection of the structures, and the type of neighborhoods where this would be allowed. He stated that if someone has 20 acres of land and wants to build a tiny house next to their home, that would be different than that same structure on a one-acre lot.

Commissioner VanScoy stated that he did not think he would support this but as discussion continues, he is more interested in continuing the discussion. He stated that this could have value for the community, especially related to care for aging parents. He stated that he would like to see more information on surrounding communities and their requirements along with any issues they may have experienced. He believed this would be worth the time necessary to complete additional study.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that people are already doing this to some extent and therefore having a way to permit the activity and make it safe would be great. She stated that they are attempting to streamline the ordinances and make the process more efficient and easier to use.

## **7.02: Review Ordinance Amending Digital Display Billboard Regulations**

### **Presentation**

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl presented the Staff Report stating that the Planning Commission should provide feedback on the draft ordinance and direct staff to bring the ordinance forward to City Council for final approval.

### **Commission Business**

Commissioner Walker asked if this is City owned property that would be leased to a sign company. He asked if this ordinance would be intended to allow the City to do something that no other property could do.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that three signs would be allowed with spacing two miles between signs, therefore other properties would be allowed if they met that distance.

Commissioner Walker stated that his issue is that the Commission would be recommending an ordinance that only the City would benefit from financially.

Commissioner Anderson asked the size of the sign that the City currently has on Highway 10.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl estimated the digital display section to be about 150 square feet.

Commissioner Anderson noted that the digital display section of the City sign is clearly too small while he believes the Champlin billboard is much too big. He stated that perhaps half of that size be allowed. He stated that it would be nice to generate revenue from the sign, but he was unsure that he wanted it to be owned by the City. He stated that perhaps the land is rented, which would generate income. He stated that sign height will also be an issue because the new interchanges may impact views.

Commissioner Gengler stated that she believes that the current proposal would have a sign company leasing the space from the City and the City would only have the one sign, which would leave two additional spots open for others that are interested.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl confirmed that the City does have a vendor it has been working with and the City is working on lease negotiations with that vendor. She stated that the EDA and City Council have chosen the vendor and made the decision to allow this, therefore an ordinance is needed.

Chairperson Bauer noted that two other private parties could come forward with proposals if they met the requirements of the ordinance and spacing.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated that the draft ordinance includes a stipulation that there would need to be some benefit to Ramsey, such as a welcome to Ramsey statement, or advertising space for the City.

Commissioner Gengler stated that she is concerned with the two privately owned lots. She stated that parts of the overlay are close to residential areas and asked if there could be stipulations on where the sign could shine to avoid impact to the adjacent residential areas.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that the residential zoned and mixed-use zoned properties were not allowed and noted that an additional stipulation could be added requiring a certain distance from residential property.

Commissioner Peters referenced the sign for Suite Living, noting that the sign is very bright.

Commissioner VanScoy commented that he likes the idea of consolidating the signage into certain areas. He stated that the City currently has a master sign plan for The COR, which states that there will be three monuments. He asked how this would interact with the signage for The COR.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that this would be a privately owned sign and would not be counted as a monument sign for the City.

Commissioner VanScoy asked if the concept of having three monuments for the businesses in The COR would be maintained. He believed that this should be reviewed as separate signage has been allowed within The COR and noted that there would be benefit to reviewing that signage plan.

Chairperson Bauer agreed that the sign ordinance should be reviewed because of the continued exceptions and variances that have been granted.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that the Council discussed this when it made the selection for the vendor. He stated that the Council was not unanimously supportive, as he opposed this. He noted that this would however generate about \$60,000 a year in revenue for the City from the land lease and the portion of the advertising sales the City would receive. He noted that the City would also be allowed to advertise its own messaging. He stated that there are currently three billboards between Armstrong traveling toward Anoka, noting that they are not always full with messaging. He noted that the other signage is related to business signage and would not be consolidated. He stated that he would believe that the regular billboards would be replaced with digital billboards if this is adopted. He stated that the EDA was unanimously supportive of this action.

Chairperson Bauer asked why Councilmember Woestehoff opposed this item.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he had several hesitations, one of which was that there were 80 signs between Armstrong and Anoka, on one side of the road. He stated that he is also concerned with the timing as the final plans for Highway 10 have not yet been finalized and could impact visibility. He stated that he also feels that digital billboard detracts from the rural character of Ramsey. He stated that he would also be concerned that businesses akin to advertising on digital billboards would be mainstream fast food type businesses. He stated that he does not want to see Ramsey overwhelmed with fast food restaurants and believes that Ramsey should aspire to be more of a Main Street community rather than a Coon Rapids.

Commissioner Anderson stated that his strongest objection is the size of 700 square feet. He stated that he would like to see that number much smaller. He stated that the nighttime illumination section may address the brightness concerns. He stated that his biggest concern is the size of the sign and whether the visibility would be impacted following the Highway 10 project.

Chairperson Bauer asked for input from the Commission on the maximum sign size.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he would suggest perhaps 400 square feet. He stated that he does not want to see a 600 square foot sign in Ramsey.

Commissioner Walker stated that if the sign is going to be leased out, businesses in surrounding communities can advertise in Ramsey versus the actual Ramsey businesses.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that the vendor did provide preferential pricing to Ramsey businesses, it would allow businesses from other communities to advertise as well. He stated that the lease period was proposed at 30 or 35 years and the company committed to maintaining the sign during that period.

Chairperson Bauer commented that he did not believe the City could restrict businesses from other communities from advertising on the sign.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted that he found the proposed language in the previous vendor proposal which stated that 50 percent of advertising would be reserved for City messages and Ramsey businesses.

Commissioner Peters asked if there is language related to election messaging.

Councilmember Woestehoff confirmed there are stipulations that would prevent certain content, such as adult and political. He stated that although he agrees with Commissioner Walker, noting that he does not like the City being the only beneficiary, this City land might be the opportunity to test this out.

Chairperson Bauer asked if the language related to regulated content would be part of the lease or ordinance language.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that he believed that language was within the lease but noted that the ordinance could also have language related to content.

Commissioner VanScoy stated that he is also concerned with the number of signs and is disappointed that this will not result in consolidation. He stated that he does not support this type of sign, but if this moves forward he would like to see a restriction related to the size of the sign.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that the pending lease would have a sign slightly smaller than 700 square feet. She recommended the discussion focus on location, distance between signs, number of signs, and architectural standards. She noted that the size of the sign has already been set.

Commissioner Anderson did not believe enough information has been provided. He stated that he would like information on placement, size, brightness, etc.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated that the discussion from the Commission could be forwarded to the Council, but he would not recommend that this goes forward to ordinance.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated that distance, location, brightness, and size of the sign is included in the draft ordinance.

Commissioner Anderson commented that he is not comfortable with the size of the sign.

Chairperson Bauer asked and received confirmation from staff that the City owned site has already been selected for one sign.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated that the proposed size of the sign is 672 square feet.

Commissioner Gengler stated that perhaps an overall square footage is allowed for all three signs in total, so that the 672 square feet is subtracted, and the other two signs would have to split the remaining size allowed.

Commissioner Walker stated that he does not support this type of sign in Ramsey.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that the Commission can recommend denial.

Commissioner Walker stated that if the motion is for denial, it will most likely be overridden by the City Council and therefore the Commission would miss its opportunity to provide input.

Chairperson Bauer agreed that if the Commission has recommendations, it should include those for the Council.

Motion by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Walker, to recommend that City Council deny the ordinance.

### **Further discussion**

Commissioner Anderson stated that he feels he does not have enough information. Senior Planner McGuire Brigl commented that the issue could be tabled. Councilmember Woestehoff advised of the upcoming joint meeting between the Planning Commission, City Council, and EDA and perhaps that would be a good time to discuss this item. Chairperson Bauer stated that the motion and second could be withdrawn and the issue could be tabled.

Commissioner Anderson withdrew his motion.

Commissioner Walker withdrew his second.

Motion by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Walker, to table this item until the time the joint meeting occurs with the City Council and EDA.

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Anderson	aye
Commissioner Walker	aye
Commissioner Peters	aye
Commissioner Gengler	aye