

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

The Ramsey Planning Commission conducted a regular meeting on Thursday, November 21, 2024, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Cheri Gengler
 Commissioner Randy Bauer
 Commissioner Tom Hunt
 Commissioner Eric Peters

Members Absent: Commissioner Bruce Anderson
 Commissioner Ryan Heineman
 Commissioner Gary VanScoy

Also Present: Planning Manager Todd Larson
 City Planner Adam Martin
 City Council Liaison Matt Woestehoff

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairperson Gengler led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Gengler, Commissioners Bauer, Peters, and Hunt. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioners Anderson, Heineman, and VanScoy.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

5.01: Approve the October 24, 2024 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

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

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Gengler, Commissioners Peters, Hunt, and Bauer. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Anderson, Heineman, and VanScoy.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS

7. COMMISSION BUSINESS

7.01: Continue Discussion on the Sign Code Update Pertaining to Wall Signage

Presentation

Senior Planner Martin presented the Staff Report and asked the Commission to provide direction to staff to develop clear, consistent, and simplified regulations for wall signage in all zoning districts.

Commissioner Bauer asked for clarification on the table as to whether the word “none” was used to mean there is no maximum rather than none were allowed.

Senior Planner Martin confirmed that the word “none” in that instance means there is no maximum. He stated that the maximum number of wall signs would be removed across all districts for consistency as staff believe that there are other mechanisms to better control the signs while also providing flexibility in how businesses choose to promote their business. He confirmed that businesses would still follow the sign permit process.

Commissioner Peters commented that there is not a definition for box cabinet signs.

Senior Planner Martin confirmed that he forgot to add that definition and provided a description.

Chairperson Gengler asked the definition of mansards.

Senior Planner Martin explained that word was carried over from the existing code and provided an example. He stated that he could include a definition.

Commissioner Bauer commented that any term that is not familiar should be included in definitions.

Planning Manager Larson confirmed that as the last part of the review, staff will go through all the language to add necessary definitions.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that perhaps the row for maximum number of signs, that now states “non” for every district, should just be deleted.

Senior Planner Martin replied that cities typically include that information, but it would not necessarily need to be included.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that perhaps the total sign area is the top line of that table as that would provide the necessary guidance.

Commissioner Peters stated that perhaps those could be combined into one row, including the total sign area and explaining there is no maximum number of signs.

Chairperson Gengler asked if there are examples in the area of a 100 square foot sign on a wall.

Senior Planner Martin was unsure.

Planning Manager Larson could not think of any but provided some dimensions that could be 100 square feet. He stated that it does fall in line with what other cities allow.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if the same standards would apply to a single tenant.

Senior Planner Martin replied that would not apply. He explained that there is language to ensure that one tenant does not take up all the space and that signage is split between the tenants in a multitenant space.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if there is a scenario where space on the signage could be used to advertise something else, such as the development itself.

Senior Planner Martin commented that he could not recall any instance of non-tenant signage with the exception of the Ramsey office plaza, which is identified on the sign.

Commissioner Bauer asked if space for lease within the building would count as non-tenant signage.

Planning Manager Larson explained that real estate signage is temporary and covered in another area of the code. He stated that this line is meant to address individual tenants not an individual sign. He stated that staff could clarify that language.

Senior Planner Martin stated that he will make the changes as discussed and bring the final draft back for consideration at a later time.

7.02: Discuss the Sign Code Pertaining to Freestanding, Temporary and Additional Wall Signage

Presentation

Senior Planner Martin presented the Staff Report asking the Commission to provide direction to staff to develop clear, consistent and simplified regulations for freestanding, temporary and additional wall signage in all zoning districts.

Commissioner Bauer suggested that the no advertising for menu boards be changed to no outside advertising, as that would allow a business to advertise their own specials but not advertise for another business.

Commissioner Hunt used the example of McDonald's which may advertise their happy meal toys, which could be in partnership with a movie and asked if that would qualify as advertising another business.

Commissioner Peters commented that he would believe that would fall under the category of selling a product that McDonald's is selling.

Chairperson Gengler commented that she has not seen a menu board advertising for another business, so perhaps that language is just not needed in the code any longer.

Commissioner Peters agreed that language could just be removed.

Chairperson Gengler asked if there should be regulations on dynamic signs or dynamic monument signs and provided some examples.

Senior Planner Martin commented that those standards would come forward for discussion at the December meeting. He welcomed any input the Commission may have on how to make the standards for freestanding signs more efficient and consistent across the zoning districts.

Planning Manager Larson commented that the biggest question staff had on this section was related to the freestanding square footage sign requirement for the COR, noting that none of the existing signs meet that size. He stated that rather than making all those businesses come in to make a request to allow their sign, the standard should just be increased to bring those signs into compliance and to be consistent with what is allowed in the other districts.

The Commission supported that change.

Senior Planner Martin noted another maximum within the COR for sign height that does not match the standards outside of the COR, nor does it match the signs that exist.

Chairperson Gengler asked if staff is open to variations between the different COR zones, as it could make sense to allow higher signs in the more business/external zones, such as near Coborn's, rather than the internal zones.

Commissioner Bauer commented that his other concern would be that traffic will move faster on the highway with the elimination of the stoplights. He stated that if they are attempting to attract businesses to the COR, they will want to have proper signage to direct drivers from the highway to the COR.

Commissioner Peters asked if the six-foot height applies to any style sign. He noted that some people are taller than six feet.

Senior Planner Martin provided some examples of signs that would seem to be applicable within the COR for the six-foot maximum.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that the maximum height for a ground sign could be six feet where the maximum height for a pylon sign could be 25 feet.

Senior Planner Martin asked if the Commission preferred the term ground sign or monument sign, noting that pylon and monument are the most commonly used terms in the sign industry.

Chairperson Gengler confirmed the consensus of the Commission to use monument sign rather than ground sign.

Commissioner Hunt asked if 25 feet would be the maximum for pylon signs.

Senior Planner Martin commented that staff can review that and propose an appropriate height for the next review.

Commissioner Bauer recalled a time when there was strong enforcement related to temporary signs within the right-of-way, but noted that this year there appeared to be many violations.

Planning Manager Larson commented that the Council direction to staff has changed to complaint based and staff has not received many complaints.

Commissioner Bauer commented that the Riverstone HOA developed its own sign rules and provided input on those regulations.

Senior Planner Martin commented that currently a permit is required for temporary signs, but it is rare that someone actually comes in for that permit.

Commissioner Bauer referenced the time restrictions, which would allow the nonstandard temporary signs for a total of four weeks per year, but one week at a time. He stated that in the case of a new business, one week would seem a bit restrictive.

Planning Manager Larson replied that restriction is for this specific type of sign, but a now open banner attached to the building would be allowed for a longer period.

Commissioner Bauer stated that he would support allowing one of these more eye-catching types of signage for more than one week at a time for a new business.

Chairperson Gengler asked if the one-week periods can be consecutive.

Senior Planner Martin replied that his interpretation is that the one-week periods would be four separate instances. He used the example of a new car dealership that had special sales during the year and perhaps used an inflatable type of sign to catch attention during those sales.

Planning Manager Larson commented that type of signage can be a bit obnoxious and therefore businesses typically reserve that type of signage for special events.

Commissioner Bauer suggested keeping the four weeks per year, but removing the one week a time provision.

Planning Manager Larson commented that he would still want language to be included so that the four weeks could be split up throughout the year. He stated that many neighboring businesses do not like these types of signage and therefore it is a job of balancing needs.

Senior Planner Martin provided information on flags, noting that currently these more temporary style flags are counted towards the permanent signage for the business.

Planning Manager Larson commented that staff believe that the language linking flags to permanent signage was perhaps meant more for traditional style and size corporate flags flown on a regular flagpole.

Chairperson Gengler suggested that language be added similar to pennants requiring that the flag be removed if it is damaged.

Senior Planner Martin confirmed that language could be beneficial to apply to all temporary signs.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if there is a better way to regulate the number of temporary flag style signs, rather than using square footage and counting it against the permanent signage allowed.

Planning Manager Larson commented that staff believe that there could be and will investigate that, perhaps just limiting the number of temporary signs.

Commissioner Hunt asked if there are time limitations on other types of temporary signs.

Planning Manager Larson reviewed the current time allowances for temporary sign permits.

Commissioner Bauer commented that in some cases the flag type signs are more permanent and therefore perhaps do not need the time restriction, but language could be added related to the condition of the sign.

There was additional discussion on fuel pump island signage and language that was unclear as to what would fall into that category.

Planning Manager Larson asked if the awning could be considered a wall sign.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked how the sign part of the awning would be counted, as an awning could be very large, but the type could be a smaller portion.

Planning Manager Larson replied that he would count just the type face area, but some communities count the entire awning.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he would not want to count the entire awning area.

Chairperson Gengler asked and received confirmation that the awning would then be counted in the permanent signage but only the type face area and not the entire awning. The Commission agreed.

Planning Manager Larson commented that staff will use this input tonight to draft some updates for the Commission to consider.

8. COMMISSION / STAFF INPUT

Planning Manager Larson commented that the December meeting will be held on December 19th and there will be two public hearings for the Commission to hold. He stated that they will also continue their discussion on signs at that meeting.

Councilmember Woestehoff provided input on the items on the City Council agenda the following week.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Hunt, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Gengler, Commissioners Bauer, Hunt, and Peters. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Anderson, Heineman, and VanScoy.

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Larson
Planning Manager

ATTEST:

Abdihafid Sahal
Planning Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.