

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

The Ramsey Planning Commission conducted a regular meeting on Thursday, February 27, 2025, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Cheri Gengler
 Commissioner Bruce Anderson (virtual attendee)
 Commissioner Randy Bauer
 Commissioner Tom Hunt
 Commissioner Gary Van Scoy

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Planning Manager Todd Larson
 City Planner Adam Martin
 City Council Liaison Eric Peters

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 Hunt, seconded by Commissioner Van Scoy, to approve the agenda as presented.

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Anderson	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Hunt	aye
Chairperson Gengler	aye

Motion Carried.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

5.01: Approve the December 19, 2024 and January 23, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

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

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Hunt	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Anderson	aye
Chairperson Gengler	aye

Motion Carried.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS/COMMISSION BUSINESS

6.01: Public Hearing: Code Amendments to Chapters 2, 10, 26, 105, 106, and 109

Public Hearing

Chairperson Gengler called the public hearing to order at 7:02 p.m.

Presentation

Planning Manager Larson presented the staff report stating that staff recommends approval of the Code Amendments as presented.

Citizen Input

No comments.

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner VanScoy, to close the public hearing.

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Anderson	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Hunt	aye
Chairperson Gengler	aye

Motion Carried.

Chairperson Gengler closed the public hearing at 7:10 p.m.

Commission Business

Motion by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Hunt, to recommend that City Council approve Code Amendments in Chapters 2, 10, 26, 105, 106, and 109.

Further discussion

Commissioner Van Scoy asked for clarification on the change from the word Ordinance to Code. Planning Manager Larson explained that the Code is the regulation while the Ordinance is the tool used to amend the Code.

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Hunt	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Anderson	aye
Chairperson Gengler	aye

Motion Carried.

Planning Manager Larson noted that this item will move forward for City Council consideration at the March 11, 2025 meeting.

7. COMMISSION BUSINESS

7.01: Continue Discussion on the Sign Code Update Pertaining to Electronic Messaging Centers and Wall, Freestanding, and Additional Types of Signage

Presentation

City Planner Martin presented the Staff Report related to window signage.

Commissioner Hunt commented that he did not see any issue with the existing window signage, noting that in some cases it provides more privacy for the customers inside and therefore would prefer to just eliminate that requirement.

Commissioner Bauer agreed.

Councilmember Peters commented that if the window signage were not used, the business would most likely use window shades and agreed with the direction from the Commission.

Commissioner Anderson asked if staff would have an example where window signage would be a problem.

City Planner Martin commented that staff have not received any complaints on window signage and therefore it does not seem to be an issue for residents in the community.

Commissioner Anderson agreed that the regulation should be removed.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked if the action would eliminate the regulation across all zoning districts, recognizing that the COR had different regulations based on aesthetics.

Planning Manager Larson agreed that window signage can detract from the overall aesthetic but noted that there are many examples of window signage within the COR that does not meet the regulation.

Chairperson Gengler commented that it would be hard to distinguish the differences for enforcement as aesthetics vary from person to person.

Councilmember Peters asked if there could be another mechanism for enforcement if window signage were to get out of control, such as strobe lighting.

City Planner Martin confirmed that could be addressed under the Nuisance Ordinance through Code Enforcement.

Planning Manager Larson provided general language that could be used to state that window signage should be properly hung and in good condition.

Commissioner Anderson asked if there would be a mechanism for enforcement if the sign were derogatory.

City Planner Martin replied that the Sign Code cannot regulate content, noting that has been highly discussed in the judicial system because of First Amendment rights.

Commissioner Anderson commented on the years it took to get rid of the XXX store and would not want to see that come back.

Planning Manager Larson explained that adult uses are regulated differently and provided additional details. He noted that in an instance such as that, staff would work with the City Attorney to determine if enforcement could occur.

Commissioner Anderson referenced stores that will sell THC products and asked if mood enhancement products could also be advertised.

Planning Manager Larson replied that THC is legal, and the City cannot regulate content.

City Planner Martin commented that the window sign examples shown in the presentation did not obtain proper permits, but the City also has not received complaints.

Chairperson Gengler asked if painted windows are considered a window sign or temporary sign.

City Planner Martin commented that would be considered window signage.

Chairperson Gengler asked for clarification on the types of neon signs that would be allowed.

City Planner Martin replied that he would get that answer for the next meeting.

Chairperson Gengler confirmed the consensus of the Commission to eliminate the restrictions on window signage and replace with the general language suggested by Planning Manager Larson that the sign must be properly hung and in good condition.

Councilmember Peters asked if a business receiving their business license is provided with a packet of regulations.

City Planner Martin replied that there are some handouts for residents based on various types of projects. He agreed that once the sign code is completed and adopted, he could develop a similar package of information related to signage for a business.

City Planner Martin continued his review relating to electronic message center (EMC) signs.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked the rationale behind the restrictions.

City Planner Martin replied that it is quite common to have standards in place, although those can vary widely between communities.

Planning Manager Larson commented that it is also an issue of aesthetics as flashing or quickly changing messages can be seen as tacky. He recognized that people are not currently following the rules therefore the question is whether to enforce the rules or eliminate those rules.

Commissioner Van Scoy commented that he recalled the rationale for the restrictions were related to driver safety as those messages can be distracting for drivers.

Planning Manager Larson commented that he could speak with the Police Chief to determine if distraction from a sign was reported as the reason for an accident, but anticipated that response would be very low.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he likes standardization and would prefer to match the seven-second standard that is used for the billboards. He agreed there should be instantaneous transitions between messages and did not believe animation should be allowed.

Planning Manager Larson commented that scrolling text would fall under animation, noting an example of a current business sign that uses scrolling text.

Chairperson Gengler commented that she supports the seven-second time and static transitions. She stated that she could see where scrolling text would be fine, such as in the marketplace, but could be distracting in other areas.

Planning Manager Larson commented that scrolling text could be allowed but other animations could be prohibited.

Chairperson Gengler agreed.

City Planner Martin commented that he does like the idea of having a sign packet to provide to businesses. He stated that this could also be an opportunity to reach out to existing businesses to explain the rules.

Chairperson Gengler recognized that it is more of an education piece where businesses were simply not aware.

Commissioner Bauer recalled previous discussions about message duration related to the billboards and agreed that it would make sense to match that standard.

Commissioner Hunt asked where the signs are located that are not meeting the three-second duration right now. He stated that it would seem the larger multi-business signs would be self-regulating as a business would not want to pay for advertising that cannot be seen because the message is moving too quickly.

City Planner Martin commented that it can be self-regulating and provided examples that currently violate the regulations. He agreed that it would be an issue of education for the businesses. He continued his review relating to temporary signs.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked for more details on sandwich board signs.

City Planner Martin commented that type of sign is regulated and allowed within the COR and prohibited outside of the COR. He recognized that sandwich boards are still used outside of the COR at times. He clarified that he was looking to add that sandwich board signs could be placed on private property outside of the COR.

Chairperson Gengler asked and received confirmation that there are regulations on the length of time a temporary sign can be used, outside of the current exemption.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked if there are restrictions for a garage sale sign.

City Planner Martin replied that those are generally allowed to be placed without a permit as the Code reads today, but they cannot be placed in the right-of-way or attached to City infrastructure. He stated that there are also limits on the number of times a resident can use those signs. He recognized that those regulations are also not always followed.

Planning Manager Larson stated that real estate signs are another common violator.

Chairperson Gengler asked if there is any way to rule that a sign has been in place too long, without the permitting process.

City Planner Martin commented that would be similar to the language that was added for window signage, requiring it to be in proper placement and good condition. He stated that without the permit they would not know when the sign was installed.

Chairperson Gengler stated that her biggest concern with temporary signs is if they are a safety hazard, such as those installed to a stoplight post or placed in the right-of-way where the view would be obstructed. She stated that if the removal of those signs could be enforced in another way, she could support removing the process that currently does not seem to be working for anyone.

City Planner Martin commented that the Code does include language that the only temporary signs allowed in the right-of-way are government signs such as road construction and voting here signs.

Commissioner Van Scoy asked how issues could be addressed if the language for temporary signage were removed.

City Planner Martin commented that he does not propose to eliminate temporary signage language but instead reframe it.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he likes the allowance for sandwich board signs within the COR and did not oppose temporary signage outside of the COR as long as they are not placed in the right-of-way and are in good condition. He was unsure how that would be enforced. He stated that perhaps permits are required for a certain size of a sign.

Chairperson Gengler noted that perhaps certain types of temporary signs would require a permit. She asked and received confirmation that there is already a limit on the number of temporary signs that can be on a property.

Commissioner Van Scoy commented that people are already not getting permits and there is no enforcement.

Planning Manager Larson commented that there seems to be a consensus that the signs need to be properly placed and in good condition. He suggested that the Commission look around town in the next few weeks at temporary signs and they can continue discussions at the next meeting.

Commissioner Hunt asked for information on how other cities regulate temporary signs.

City Planner Martin commented that temporary signs are very differently regulated from community to community, but noted that in driving around it appears that temporary signs are an issue in most communities.

Planning Manager Larson commented on the low cost of production of these temporary signs. He noted that some cities have more proactive enforcement, going around to remove signs regularly whereas Ramsey does not.

City Planner Martin commented that perhaps this is an issue of education, noting that once the regulations are completed, he could include an article informing residents and business owners of the temporary signage regulations that could be pushed through typical City platforms.

Chairperson Gengler thanked staff for the continued work on the Sign Code.

Commissioner Van Scoy referenced definitions and asked for clarification.

City Planner Martin commented that he would add that definition.

Commissioner Van Scoy referenced the definition of billboard, which does not mention the size.

City Planner Martin explained that they do not want to get too specific with size in this definition.

Planning Manager Larson commented that staff could look into that further.

8. COMMISSION / STAFF INPUT

Planning Manager Larson noted the items anticipated for the March Commission meeting. He also provided an update on previously reviewed planning cases and other items of interest to the Commission.

Planning Manager Larson also noted that Abdi Sahal has left the Planning Administrative Assistant role for a full-time planner job with the City of Waconia and thanked him for his help over the past eight months.

Councilmember Peters noted an upcoming open house on March 5th for the Highway 10 interchange project. He stated that if there are food truck vendors, they can submit permits as that season will soon be approaching. He encouraged interested residents to apply for the vacant positions on advisory boards and commissions.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Bauer, seconded by Commissioner Van Scoy, to adjourn the meeting.

A roll call vote was performed:

Commissioner Anderson	aye
Commissioner Bauer	aye
Commissioner Van Scoy	aye
Commissioner Hunt	aye
Chairperson Gengler	aye

Motion Carried.

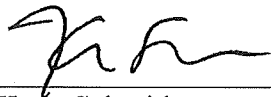
The regular meeting of the Planning Commission adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Todd Larson
Planning Manager

ATTEST:



Katie Schmidt
City Clerk

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.

