

**PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSHOP
FEBRUARY 26, 2013**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Solomonson called the Shoreview Planning Commission workshop meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The following were present: Chair Solomonson; Commissioners Ferrington, McCool, Schumer, Thompson, Wenner.

Commissioner Proud was absent.

DEVELOPMENT CODE AMENDMENTS - UPDATE

Sign Ordinance (Temporary Signs and Message Center Signs)

City Planner Kathleen Nordine stated that an amendment is being proposed based on concerns and complaints about temporary signage in the community. Draft amendments have been prepared for review. The goal is to enact changes by May or June in time for the season when temporary signs are most in use.

The proposed amendment would provide more flexibility for use of temporary signs. The maximum area would be increased based on building size. The number that could be used would be increased from a maximum of two per year to four per year. The display time would increase from seven days to 14 days. There must be 14 days between the posting of temporary signs on a property. Illuminated signs would be permitted in windows. Sandwich boards and T-frame signs would not be permitted.

Message center signs would be allowed in commercial districts. Colors and graphics would be reviewed through a Comprehensive Sign Plan review. A Comprehensive Sign Plan would not be required if the proposed signs comply with City regulations. Minor deviations to the standards of the sign code would be reviewed and approved administratively. Feedback to the proposed amendments will also be sought by the Economic Development Commission and retailers/business community. Formal text amendments will be considered by the Planning Commission and City Council in May or June.

Chair Solomonson asked if the allowing temporary signs in a multi-tenant building are based on building size or number of tenants. Ms. Nordine answered number of tenants. The issue is to not have temporary signs posted all the time. A building with 12 tenants would mean that each tenant would be allowed one temporary sign per year counting the 14-day period with no signs in between the posting of a temporary sign.

Chair Solomonson stated that it would be a disadvantage to be a tenant in a large building. Ms. Nordine stated that the intent is to encourage use of reader boards or message center signs for tenants. Message centers and reader boards are preferred rather than use of temporary signs. If a message center or reader board sign is used, temporary signs are not allowed on the property.

Commissioner McCool stated that if there are six tenants in a building and only one can have a temporary sign at a time with 14 days in between the posting of another, it would be awkward for special events like Mother's Day or Valentine's Day or a weekend event.

Commissioner Ferrington asked if a temporary sign can be posted for less than 14 days, such as a one- or two-day special sale. Ms. Nordine answered, no. The intent is for a continuous 14 days, which makes the amendment more enforceable. Mr. Warwick added that a reader board (changeable copy) or message center can be used for short duration temporary messages.

Commissioner Thompson clarified that message centers would be owned by the landlord, and tenants would have to agree on how they are used.

Commissioner Wenner asked how these regulations would impact cottage industries, such as daycare, or tax service. Ms. Nordine stated there is a home occupation ordinance that addresses that signage. No special temporary signage is permitted, such as advertising daycare openings.

[Unable to hear Commissioner Thompson.]

Chair Solomonson asked if sandwich board or T-frame signs are considered temporary signs and if banner signs have been used in the City and how that size was determined. Ms. Nordine stated that they are, but are excluded from the permit requirements. Ms. Nordine stated that Target used a banner for the Grand Opening. Mr. Warwick stated that regardless of building size, banners can only be 32 square feet. The 64 square foot size was allowed for Target during renovation.

Commissioner Ferrington agreed that a business in a multi-tenant building is at a definite disadvantage. Who can put Grand Opening signs up when multiple businesses are opening at the same time, such as the new development on I-694? She questioned the rationale for 14 days between posting of temporary signs. Ms. Nordine stated that the intent is to prevent a proliferation of temporary signs. Mr. Warwick explained that the 14-day period is actually a reduction from the current regulation that requires 30 days between displays of temporary signs. The intent is to have the building facade uncluttered.

Commissioner McCool stated that he would like to see more flexibility to allow businesses in a multi-tenant building be able to have temporary signs at the same time. He suggested language that no more than 50% or 60% of tenants in a building would be allowed temporary signs at the same time. Encouraging message centers is good, but he is not sure that will be a good answer for the new businesses on Red Fox Road. He could envision other reasons for using banners than just Grand Openings. Message centers are good, but a landlord has to put them in.

Chair Solomonson stated that the question is whether it is fair that a business in a multi-tenant building is allowed only one event per year when a temporary sign may be posted. If two businesses opened at the same time, only one could have a banner for a Grand Opening.

Chair Solomonson asked the regulation for window signs. Ms. Nordine stated that it could be an illuminated “open” sign or paper sign. Illuminated signs can cover 5% of window/door area on a wall. Paper signs can cover up to 10% of window/door area.

The regulation for civic event signs is changed to not being posted prior to 14 days of the event day. A civic event would be a fundraiser, such as a book fair or the *Slice of Shoreview*. Chair Solomonson stated that he does not see a reason for the change. Ms. Nordine stated that it is a matter of reasonableness. Mr. Warwick added that 14 days is the same stipulation for a Grand Opening.

Sandwich Boards

Sandwich boards are pedestrian oriented signs that do not need a permit. They are not permitted in the right-of-way and are to be located no more than 12 feet from the business entrance as long as there is 3 feet of no obstruction for pedestrian traffic and accessibility for people with disabilities.

Chair Solomonson stated that he would like to see the distance increased up to 20 feet, as 12 feet is tight. Ms. Nordine explained that the intent is to not have sandwich boards in the boulevard or parking lot or street. They are not intended to be seen from the street but should be kept on the sidewalk.

Message Centers

Message centers would now be permitted for business use in addition to public and quasi-public uses. The standards would be the same. Only a single color can be used with text only and no graphics. Color and graphics would be a deviation that could be proposed through Comprehensive Sign Plan.

Chair Solomonson requested that proximity to residential be a consideration and whether there should be a setback requirement. Ms. Nordine stated that previous limitations were because quasi-public and public uses are often in residential areas.

Commissioner Ferrington expressed her concern that neighborhoods be protected from brightly lit signs.

Commissioner Wenner stated that a City goal is to limit light pollution. Ms. Nordine stated that the levels used are the same as billboards and must have dimmers. The brightness cannot be .3 foot candles above ambient light.

Commissioner McCool suggested that the lighted signs can only be on during operation hours.

Comprehensive Sign Review Process

Ms. Nordine stated that in order to streamline the process for signage approval, it is proposed that signs that comply with the ordinance would not require a Comprehensive Sign Plan, even if there were two or more signs. Minor deviations of height or size could be taken care of administratively.

Commissioner Ferrington stated that she would prefer the language remain as it is, so that any deviations would be presented for approval through the Comprehensive Sign Plan process. That would allow the Commission the opportunity to consider any impact to residential areas.

It was the consensus of the Planning Commission to streamline the approval process and allow administrative approval if signs that are in compliance with the ordinance. Minor deviations may also be approved administratively.

Residential Districts - Structure Setbacks

Mr. Warwick stated residential redevelopment infill in residential neighborhoods has been discussed by the Commission for some time.. What is being addressed here are Code regulations to allow more flexibility for property owners to make improvements to their property. Comments from previous discussions have been incorporated into this text. The changes would include:

- A minimum front yard setback of 25 feet
- Code continues to require averaging for setbacks when adjacent houses are located with more than a 40-foot setback
- Current code establishes a standard of a 50-foot street right-of-way, reduced from the 60 feet ROW used throughout the City before 1990. Where the right-of-way is still 60 feet the required structure setback is reduced to 20 feet from the front property line provided the structure is 35 feet back from the finished road surface. This is intended to maintain separation by recognizing the wider right-of-ways and boulevard that can be used in lieu of a front yard. The setback for corner lots has been increased from 30 feet to 35 feet from the improved street for any portion of yard abutting a street. In considering averaging and alignment, a 20-foot range is acceptable.
- On substandard lake lots if the existing side setback is more than 5 feet and less than 10 feet, that setback can be used for expansion of the house. Staff is suggesting this same provision be allowed for non-riparian properties.

Commissioner Ferrington stated that she supports flexibility that will allow people to reinvest in their homes and stay in their homes. What is presented is reasonable.

In response to Chair Solomonson's concern about accessory structures, Mr. Warwick stated that they are not allowed closer to the lot line than a principal structure. Chair Solomonson also expressed concern about heights of structures 5 feet from the lot line. He would like to see a maximum height stipulated that allows a reasonable but not excessive interior ceiling height for the addition.

A member of the public requested the floor in order to comment. Chair Solomonson advised those in attendance that the public is welcome to attend workshop sessions of the Planning Commission, but no public comment is taken at these workshops.

Chair Solomonson called a short break and then reconvened the meeting.

Commissioner McCool referred to page 4, and suggested the word “except” be deleted. On pages 6 and 7, he noted that it appears that averaging with plus or minus 10 feet could bring a setback to 15 feet. Earlier the stipulation of plus or minus 10 feet was only used if the setback averaged 15 feet more than what is required.

Building Height

Ms. Nordine stated that recent developments, PaR Systems and Lakeview Terrace exceed height standards of 35 feet. Code provides for the height maximum to be exceeded with an additional foot of setback for every foot of height added to the maximum allowed, and that there is no difficulty for firefighting capabilities.

Ms. Nordine stated that in comparison, the City is more restrictive than other communities. The Building Official has stated that the Building Code addresses height in relation to the type of construction proposed. The Fire Chief states that height is not a concern because of interior sprinkling systems, and the Fire Department has equipment and training for firefighting in taller buildings.

The character of the community is second tier suburban with low density residential and open space. Growth will be through infill, which will mean higher density. The question is whether there is support to permit taller buildings in some areas of the City.

Commissioner Thompson stated that there are a lot of people in adjoining neighborhoods who are unhappy with the height of Lakeview Terrace. However, the City is quite restrictive and she would be open to loosening the regulation.

Commissioner Ferrington stated that she would not want to change the residential standard of 35 feet but would consider a change for commercial businesses depending on where they are located.

Commissioner Wenner stated that he would favor a change in requirements in commercial areas and on arterial roads. Height could be a buffer from high traffic.

Commissioner McCool agreed with earlier comments and would support a change for commercial areas. He noted the special overlay used for commercial areas used by Edina.

Chair Solomonson noted Minnetonka’s approach that requires a certain distance from residential areas. His concern is proximity to residential, but he would support more flexibility.

Surface Water Management

Ms. Nordine stated that the portion of the Comprehensive Plan referring to Grass Lake Watershed Management Organization (GLWMO) needs to be amended to reflect the change to jurisdiction under Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District.

Public Works Director Mark Maloney will attend the May Planning Commission workshop to discuss surface water management standards and industry standards.

The meeting adjourned.