

MINUTES
PLAN COMMISSION
City Hall Forum - 100 State Street, Beloit, WI 53511
7:00 PM
Wednesday, July 5, 2023

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairperson Ramsden called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Councilor Day and Commissioners Ramsden, Abarca, Flesch, Janke, and Elliott (7:03 PM) were present. Commissioners Anderson and Jacobsen were absent.

2. MINUTES

2.a. Consideration of the minutes of the June 21, 2023 Plan Commission meeting

Chairperson Ramsden wanted language added to the minutes regarding the Trevino rezoning explaining why he voted no, specifically concern about there being no other attached housing in the neighborhood, that less green space could impact property values, and property owners should have an expectation that the zoning surrounding their property should remain as it is. Commissioner Janke moved to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Commissioner Abarca. Motion prevailed, voice vote (5-0).

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

3.a. Consideration of Resolution 2023-031 approving an Exception to Section 30.09 and denying an exception to Section 30.40(2)(c) of the Outdoor Sign Regulations for the property located at 2757 Prairie Ave

Julie Christensen, Community Development Director, presented the staff report and recommendation.

Chairperson Ramsden asked if Ms. Christensen can summarize the purpose of the Sign Ordinance. Ms. Christensen brought the purpose section of the Sign Ordinance onto the monitors and read through the section.

Chairperson Ramsden asked why the signs was legal nonconforming since 2005. Ms. Christensen said that when the land division was approved in 2005, the Shopko sign was not kept on the same parcel where Shopko was located. This sign was then re-used by CubeSmart. Chairperson Ramsden asked if it is possible when the ordinance is revised to have some language in there that would give the City the ability to take down a sign if it was no longer necessary. Ms. Christensen said that it is difficult to take away a sign because with the way the state law is written, unless the sign is abandoned for 12 months or more.

Chairperson Ramsden opened the public hearing.

Vicki Schleisner, 761 South Oak Drive, Janesville, Wisconsin, stated she is asking Commissioners to consider granting her request for larger signs on the building. Ms. Schleisner stated that she originally wanted the signs on both sides of the building. Ms. Schleisner said that the reason the ordinance allows exceptions is because there are different circumstances, and when you drive down Prairie you cannot see their sign so that is why they want the signs on both sides of the building.

Commissioner Ramsden stated that in order to grant an exception it has to meet three requirements listed in the Ordinance. Chairperson Ramsden said staff says the 30 square foot sign is an adequate size for the business, and the staff does not feel that the hardship is being shown. Ms. Schleisner said she knows that, but wants the Plan Commission to take that into consideration.

Commissioner Flesch asked if the monument sign would be under the CubeSmart sign. Ms. Schleisner said yes, but with the other signs along Prairie Avenue, you cannot see the sign until you drive past it. Chairperson Ramsden said that the staff argument is that the smaller secondary wall sign is adequately visible. Ms. Schleisner said it would be hard to see if it was half the size that it is on the rendering.

Commissioner Elliott asked what would be an example of a hardship that would meet the requirements of the Ordinance. Ms. Christensen said that if they had a site that was further back from the street where it would be hard to see, and if the building was already there, setback on the site, and they are simply replacing the sign. Ms. Christensen said that the City is trying to only allow the minimum signage needed for the site. Another example would be if the business had a long name, so the name could not be read unless the sign size was increased. It is an analysis on a case-by-case basis.

Ms. Schleisner stated that she is competing with the neighboring businesses, and that there is hardship. Ms. Schleisner said that the customers will not be able to see the signs due to the other signs nearby. Chairperson Ramsden asked if the Pizza Hut sign and KFC sign are conforming. Ms. Christensen said she thinks the KFC sign is nonconforming, and she does not know about the Pizza Hut sign.

Chairperson Ramsden asked when the City staff evaluated this if they took in consideration the large poles on the existing pole signs that could be obstructing the view of her signs. Ms. Christensen said that they took a look at other Scooters signage, where smaller signage was installed on the building.

Commissioner Flesch asked Ms. Schleisner when she bought the property, she looked at the ordinances to see what signage would be allowed. Ms. Schleisner said she looked at the sign ordinance and saw that it allowed exceptions, and that is why she is here tonight hoping it can be granted.

Councilor Day said the way that it is submitted she can still have a larger sign, having one sign rather than two signs. Ms. Christensen said she can apply the bonus sign to one sign or both signs. Commissioner Janke said that she could eliminate the one logo on the front and apply that square footage to increase the two signs. Ms. Christensen said she does not know if she can do that. She said that there is a couple bonus allowances, and all the bonuses are related to reducing the maximum sign area for an on-premise sign.

Councilor Day asked if they could eliminate the monument sign all together. Ms. Schleisner said that they considered not doing the monument sign because it is expensive and will delay opening. Ms. Christensen said that if she does not do a freestanding sign, removing the monument sign, then one of the wall signs could be up to 150 square feet, as it would be the primary. If they still used the same size wall sign, they could use a percentage of the reduction in the primary towards the other secondary signs, and possibly have the sizes that the applicant wants on the building.

Commissioner Flesch said that if you eliminate the monument sign, they have the ability to make the two building signs larger. Ms. Christensen said staff would have to recalculate the bonuses, but it is possible that she could have both of her larger wall signs, if she removed the monument sign.

Commissioner Janke said that the sign could be visible from the street. Commissioner Elliott said he thinks that would be different if it was on Milwaukee Road, but there is not a lot of traffic on Prairie. Commissioner Elliott said the size would be helpful, and he does not know if it would look nice if it were smaller. He said he sees the hardship.

Chairperson Ramsden closed the public hearing.

Chairperson Ramsden said that there needs to be compliance, but he believes there is a hardship there with the signage. He believes the hardship is not self-created, the pole sign is not something she can do anything about.

Commissioner Janke moved to approve the Resolution allowing the maximum sign area exception but denying the exception to increase the size of the secondary signs, seconded by Commissioner Flesch. Motion approved, roll call vote (3-2), with Chairperson Ramsden and Commissioner Elliott voting no.

4. STATUS REPORT ON PRIOR PLAN COMMISSION ITEMS

Ms. Christensen updated the Plan Commission on the actions taken by City Council related to a variety of items previously reviewed by Plan Commission. Ms. Christensen said the next Plan Commission meeting is scheduled for July 19, 2023.

5. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Julie Christensen outlined the future agenda items.

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Flesch moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Janke at 7:55 PM. Motion carried, voice vote (5-0).



Mike Ramsden, Chairperson