

Minutes  
City of Monona  
Plan Commission  
Monday October 10, 2022

The meeting of the City of Monona Plan Commission was called to order (7:00pm).

Present: Alder Nancy Moore (Chair), Alder Brian Holmquist, Mr. Robert Stein, Mr. Brandon Gries, Ms. Susan Fox, Mr. Chris Homburg, and Ms. Coreen Fallat

Excused: Mr. Chris Conrad

Also Present: Doug Plowman, Planning Director

**Approval of Minutes**

A motion by Mr. Stein, seconded by Mr. Gries, to approve the minutes of September 26, 2022 carried with one correction.

**Appearances**

None

**Unfinished Business**

None

**New Business**

**A. Public Hearing on Request by Ignite Glass and Gifts, Represented by Sign Art Studio for Approval of a New Wall Sign at 6009B Monona Drive. (Case No. S-015-2022)**

Mr. Drew Jenson of Sign Art Studio introduced the application for one new wall sign, and acknowledged that the applicant is aware of concerns regarding the size of the sign, as determined by the smallest possible box that can be drawn around the design. In response, he provided the true area of the sign, which is 30.5 sq. ft., and shared a scaled image of the sign in relation to the adjacent tenant's sign. There were no other appearances and the public hearing was declared closed.

**B. Consideration of Action on Request by Ignite Glass and Gifts, Represented by Sign Art Studio for Approval of a New Wall Sign at 6009B Monona Drive. (Case No. S-015-2022)**

Planning Director Doug Plowman shared the staff report. He highlighted that the proposed sign is an LED-illuminated cloud cabinet sign with channel letters, faces Monona Drive, and is approximately 46 sq. ft. as originally measured. The zoning is Retail Business (RB), which allows for one sq. ft. of signage per building façade length, which he field verified as 27.5 ft. He noted the business currently uses window signage, which will remain upon installation of the proposed wall sign. He recommended the Commission verify whether the sign will be centered above the tenant's space or window within the multi-tenant center. He added that the site is subject to the Monona Drive Urban Design guidelines. Planning Director Plowman shared that he has worked with the applicant on the size of the proposed sign. He suggested the Commission discuss a potential exception for the square footage of the sign given its shape.

Alder Moore asked if there was a Comprehensive Sign Plan (CSP) for the entire building and Planning Director Plowman stated that he was unaware of one. Ms. Fox noted that she likes the design and feels it is appropriate to consider the true area of the sign. She added that 30.5 sq. ft. is still larger than permitted by code but that it looks consistent with other signs on

the building. She asked for clarification on the placement of the sign and the applicant stated it would be centered on the available façade.

Alder Holmquist and Mr. Gries expressed concern over granting a size exception based on the shape of the sign, noting that it would be difficult to determine when to apply the true area of a sign rather than the area of the smallest possible rectangle for future applicants. They agreed that an exception might be warranted based on the placement and size of the sign on the building being consistent with other tenants. Mr. Stein and Ms. Fallat agreed.

Mr. Homburg noted that the staff report indicates the sign contains channel letters, but the images appear to be a cabinet sign. Mr. Jenson clarified that the sign does have individual channel letters mounted on a white panel. Mr. Homburg stated that the sign seems large for the space, but a site visit showed that other signs in the center are also large. He expressed support for a size exception based on conformity with other signs in the center, and agreed that the smallest possible rectangle area should be used moving forward for consistency, and not the true area of the sign.

A motion was made by Mr. Gries, seconded by Ms. Fox, to approve a new wall sign at 6009B Monona Drive, as proposed and according to Chapter 480 Article XII of the Zoning Code of the Monona Municipal Code of Ordinances, with the following finding of fact and conditions of approval.

Finding of Fact:

1. An exception to the sign area is granted because it is keeping with the adjacent signs at the retail center.

Conditions of Approval:

1. As the sign is to be illuminated, an electrical permit shall be obtained from the City's Building Inspector.
2. If glare from the lighting is deemed to be excessive by the Plan Commission, then the Plan Commission may require adjustments to the lighting.

The motion carried unanimously.

**C. Discussion of Housing Data and Potential Housing Studies. (Case No. 2-028-2022)**

Planning Director Plowman provided an overview of the memo prepared for the Plan Commission. He highlighted elements that the Commission should consider including a potential housing study, demographic data sources, data elements, housing projections, as well as sharing previous plans for reference.

Alder Moore acknowledged the importance of a housing study but also that available staff time is limited. She stated that previous conversations were centered on housing mix and market trends and asked the Commission if those items would help inform future conversations. She also asked the Commission which data would be most helpful.

Ms. Fox asked whether the Commission should first discuss the purpose of the study and how it relates to the Commission's authority. She acknowledged that while the Commission can discuss density, housing mix is under the purview of the City Council. She indicated that decreased demand for commercial space is an important market trend. Alder Moore agreed that it is not the Commission's role to decide housing mix and stressed the importance of neutrality in any discussion on housing type.

Mr. Stein asked whether the Housing Study should include goals set by the Commission or focus on data gathering. Alder Moore mentioned that there are currently housing goals in the Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Housing Plan. Mr. Stein asked if there was a way to give the Commission, or any other City Committee, more ability to influence housing mix. Alder Moore said that the City can indicate preferences in discussions with developers. Mr. Homburg and Alder Holmquist clarified that the Commission does have the authority to influence housing mix, particularly through rezoning recommendations to City Council and per the goals and land use maps in the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Fallat added that many conditions have changed since the Comprehensive Plan was published and brought up uncertainty in current market trends for housing mix.

Ms. Fallat indicated that one of the Commission's goals is to have developments be full and successful, but that changing conditions since the Comprehensive Plan was published and uncertainty in current market trends make that difficult. Mr. Homburg agreed that he would like for the Commission to be making informed decisions on housing mix.

Alder Moore shared that the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to uncertainty in housing market trends and that there may be an upward shift in the preference for apartments. Mr. Homburg expressed concern that the Commission has primarily approved only a single type of housing, apartments, since the 2010 Census. He stated that exact numbers are not available but that the City had approximately 4,000 housing units and then approved 1,000 apartments, which has the potential to shift the City's dynamic. He indicated that this was driven by market trends. Alder Moore added that there is diversity in housing within rental units and that the Commission does not want to discourage development. Alder Holmquist responded that market trends should be a small piece of the study and cautioned against the Commission responding to current trends. He also indicated an interest in housing affordability data, particularly between owner-occupied and rental units. Mr. Stein added that assessing demand for owner-occupied homes would be important (houses on market, days on market, price above asking, etc). Ms. Fallat wondered if the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission has regional data for this topic.

Ms. Fallat inquired about market trends for seniors looking to move out of their single-family homes and if housing was available for such willing sellers. Alder Holmquist stated that this was considered in the Strategic Housing Plan. He mentioned that the City is tracking the volume of single-family homes that are being rented and discussed the difference between owner-occupied and renter-occupied single-family homes in terms of length of ownership. Alder Moore added that short-term rental of single-family homes, such as through Airbnb, can decrease housing supply but encourage the maintenance and improvement of properties.

Ms. Fox added that she would like more information on trends with parking requirements, especially case studies of other communities which have made changes to parking requirements. She added that she would also like to see more individual homes but wondered where they could be built. She encouraged the Commission to be realistic about the supply of land and the types of housing that works. Alder Moore echoed this thought and added an interest in pocket neighborhoods.

Ms. Fox and Alder Moore asked Planning Director Plowman if he could identify priorities and about a timeline for gathering preliminary information. He stated that Census data could be gathered and compiled in 2-3 months. He added that further discussions on parking reform and conversion of commercial space could be helpful, but that ordinance revisions are in the work plan. He also recommended that the housing study look at the regional context of

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market trends and forecasts, but that market trend analysis would likely need to be contracted out.

Mr. Homburg cautioned that residential tax rates would have to increase if the Commission shifted away from too much commercial space, which yields the most tax revenue for the City. He also expressed concern about speaking to developers about trends in parking because the needs of Monona are different than the needs of higher density urban communities, and that developers have a profit incentive to reduce parking.

In reference to a previous conversation on the viability of Zipcar, Alder Moore shared that she found Zipcar to be very active on campus at UW-Madison and that it is 1.5 million subscribers. She also shared that Madison Metro is hosting two open houses at the Library on 10/20 and 10/25 to discuss a proposed bus route with increased service on Broadway and Monona Drive.

There were no other comments and the item was declared closed.

### **Reports of Staff and Commission Members**

#### **A. Staff Report Regarding Status of Development Project Proposals.**

##### **1. Economic Development Update**

Planning Director Plowman followed-up with the developers regarding a site visit to the Northpointe development and stated that he will send out an availability poll to the Commission.

##### **2. Potential Upcoming Plan Commission Items**

A review of the draft CSM for the Northpointe development to combine the two parcels is expected. Conversations have continued about PIP approval being contingent upon finalizing the private access drive for the Northpointe development. A signage application is expected for a retail space on Monona Drive. A prehearing is also expected for a commercial use on West Broadway. The new Assistant Planner will be attending to introduce himself to the Commission.

##### **3. Updates/Discussion on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Efforts.**

None

##### **4. Updates/Discussion on Sustainability Efforts**

None

##### **5. Upcoming Meetings: October 24, 2022, November 14, 2022**

#### **B. Plan Commission Requests for Information from City Staff.**

Mr. Homburg asked if Planning Director Plowman had received any updates from Chipotle. He stated that the soonest an opening could be expected is by the end of the year.

### **Adjournment**

A motion by Mr. Stein, seconded by Mr. Gries, to adjourn carried. (8:20pm)

Respectfully submitted by:  
Thor Jeppson, Assistant Planner