

Minutes
City of Monona
Plan Commission
Monday May 13, 2019

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

Present: Alder Nancy Moore (Chair), Alder Kathy Thomas, Mr. Chris Homburg, Mr. Brian Holmquist, Mr. Rob Stein, and Ms. Susan Fox, Ms. Coreen Fallat and Mr. Josh Peterson

Also Present: City Planner and Assistant Economic Development Director Doug Plowman and City Planning Assistant Ciara Miller

Chair Moore asked the new staff and commission members to introduce themselves. The new City Planner and Assistant Economic Development Director, Doug Plowman, joined the commission for his first meeting this evening. Kathy Thomas, formerly a plan commission member, won a seat on the Monona City Council and was appointed by the Mayor as Co-Chair of the plan commission, this is her first meeting serving as co-chair. Additionally, two new members were added to the plan commission since the last meeting, including: Ms. Coreen Fallat and Mr. Josh Peterson.

Approval of Minutes

A motion by Mr. Stein, seconded by Ms. Fox, to approve the minutes of April 8, 2019 carried with no corrections.

Appearances

There were no appearances.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

A. Public Hearing on Request by Tom Sanford for a Zoning Permit following a period of discontinued use for a new tenant, Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center at 6330A Copps Avenue. (Case No. 2-003-2019)

Tom Stanford presented the zoning permit request on behalf of Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center (MVRBC) to the commission. Mr. Stanford stated that the building at 6330 Copps Avenue is well-maintained and that this proposed use is well suited for the existing suite. The prospective tenant, MVRBC, is moving quickly and has already signed the lease for the space pending the approval of the requested zoning permit.

B. Consideration of Action on Request by Tom Sanford for a Zoning Permit following a period of discontinued use for a new tenant, Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center at 6330A Copps Avenue. (Case No. 2-003-2019)

City Planner Plowman informed the commission that a zoning permit for this use was required because the suite has been vacant since a period longer than six months. The proposal is for a very similar use to what was previously located there and the project requires very little build out. The business requires very little parking which can be met through the assigned stalls in the parking lot.

Mr. Homburg felt that this was an appropriate use for the area. In driving by the site earlier that day, he noticed that there is no address on the Copps side of the building, which is a concern regarding emergency response services. Alder Thomas clarified that there are address numbers on the building, but they face the parking lot not the street. Mr. Homburg requested a condition of approval that the address be put on the building façade facing the Copps Avenue.

Mr. Homburg inquired about deliveries and parking requirements. Mr. Stanford clarified that two cargo vans are used for transferring materials, and each van will make one trip per day to and from the site. He also stated that the building has been vacant for some time because the former tenant left the property but agreed to pay rent until December of 2019, so the landlord has not been in a hurry to find a new tenant.

A motion by Alder Thomas, seconded by Mr. Stein, to approve a Zoning Permit for a new use, Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center, a blood laboratory at 6330A Copps Avenue, according to Chapter 480 of the Monona Municipal Code of Ordinances, as proposed, and with the following conditions of approval:

1. All required building permits from state and local agencies shall be obtained. The applicant shall contact the City of Monona Building Inspection Department to confirm requirements.
2. All required State and Local Fire Codes shall be complied with and requirements shall be confirmed with City of Monona Fire Chief Scott Sullivan. Install a Knox Box that can store building keys for all units within the building.
3. Sign permit requests for permanent signage shall be submitted for future Plan Commission approval.
4. Prior to the occupancy permit being issued, signage identifying the building's address must be installed on the façade that faces Copps Avenue to the satisfaction of Staff.

The motion carried (7-0).

C. Public Hearing on Recommendation to City Council on Sign Ordinance Update as Requested by the City of Monona. (Case No. 2-001-2018)

The Monona City Council recently did a first read of the draft sign ordinance that was presented to them by the Plan Commission. During the Plan Commission's ordinance update process, Attorney Bill Cole reviewed the draft language and made suggested edits. The Plan Commission agreed with most of the suggested edits. However, there were two instances where the Plan Commission disagreed with Mr. Cole's objection and did not update the draft with his suggested language. The City Council, in reviewing the draft ordinance recommended by the Plan Commission and Attorney Cole's recommendations, has asked the Plan Commission to reopen discussion related to the one instance of disagreement between the two.

Mr. Cole explained that there was proposed language related to political yard signs in footnote five of the Temporary Miscellaneous Sign Group that identifies a sign type to be used for "electoral purposes only". Mr. Cole stated that one of the primary reasons for updating the code was to bring it into compliance with a supreme court decision that requires sign ordinances to be "content neutral"; by using the language "electoral purposes" one would have to read the sign to know if it was for an election, meaning that it is not content neutral if you have to read it to apply the code.

Mr. Cole has drafted suggested language that he believes still accomplishes the legitimate goal of reducing clutter while maintaining content neutrality. His proposed language was provided in a memo to the Plan Commission members and it maintains the electoral time period where increased signage is allowed, with six signs permitted not to exceed 36 square feet and no individual sign greater than 12 square feet.

There were no other comments and the public hearing was declared closed.

D. Consideration of Recommendation to City Council on Sign Ordinance Update as Requested by the City of Monona. (Case No. 2-001-2018)

Mr. Homburg stated that he likes the suggested language. He asked why 12ft² was chosen as the maximum sign size. Mr. Cole said that 12ft² was an arbitrary number and could be 6ft² as is originally proposed in the draft.

Mr. Homburg asked Mr. Cole if any other changes were made by the Council besides the one sent back to the Plan Commission tonight. Mr. Cole stated that the Council agreed with him to strike the phrase “does not contain a commercial message” from the definition of Temporary Miscellaneous Sign. Mr. Cole understands the commissions desire to limit commercial endorsements on temporary signs in neighborhoods, but there is no way to do that without regulating content.

In reviewing the draft, a commission member asked if the commission would like to reconsider the number of temporary miscellaneous signs allowed per site. Under the new ordinance each property is entitled to one yard sign. Mr. Stein stated that he would prefer to keep it at one sign and also mentioned that he felt that 6 signs is too many for the campaign season. Attorney Cole responded by saying that there is case law that limits infringement of political speech, and limiting political signs to only two does not allow all households (with several voting age residents) freedom of expression. Mr. Stein acknowledges, this but felt that six is still too high.

The Commission discussed at length what an appropriate amount of signage during a busy election season where several offices are up for election would be. Ultimately, the commission agreed to keep the language as written by Attorney Cole with the exception of maximum sign square footage being reduced from 12ft² to 6ft².

Ms. Fox raised the concern that over the past few months she has noticed several new flag signs that have gone up. She asked if once the new ordinance passes, if they will be able to keep them. Mr. Homburg responded and stated that they would not because they are not legal conforming signs under the existing ordinance.

A motion by Mr. Homburg, seconded by Mr. Holmquist, to recommend approval of the sign ordinance update to the Monona City Council with the following changes:

1. Footnote five of the Temporary Miscellaneous Sign Group table should be updated with Mr. Cole’s suggested language as written with one minor change updating the maximum individual sign area from 12ft² to 6ft².
2. The reference to commercial messaging in the definition of Temporary Miscellaneous Signs should be deleted.
3. The footnote 8 textbox under the Permanent Miscellaneous Sign Group should be expanded so the full statement can be read.

The motion carried (7-0).

Reports of Staff and Commission Members

City Planner Plowman informed the commission that some structural modifications to the Riverfront Redevelopment may need to come back before the commission. It is a time sensitive issue and the next meeting is scheduled for May 28th which is Memorial Day. Chair Moore state that because it is a time sensitive issue, it would be difficult to wait for the June 10th meeting and instead suggested that the plan commission hold a meeting on the Tuesday following memorial day, May 28, 2019. Enough members for a quorum indicated that they would be available for a rescheduled meeting on Tuesday May 28th.

Mr. Homburg stated that typically with zoning permit applications, the plan commission likes to review site plans. The applicant for the Coppins Avenue zoning application tonight did not include one. City Planner Plowman stated that he would note this for future meetings.

Adjournment

A motion by Mr. Stein, seconded by Ms. Fox, to adjourn carried. (7:51pm)

Respectfully submitted by:

Ciara Miller, City Planning Assistant