

**City of Huron
Planning Commission/DRB
December 13, 2023, 5:00 P.M.**

The meeting was called to order at 5:00pm. in the Council Chambers at Huron City Hall, 417 Main Street by Vice Chairman Bob Howell. Members in attendance: Mark Claus, Mark Cencer, and Jim Hartley. Members absent: Gary Boyle. Staff in attendance: Planning Director Erik Engle, Zoning Inspector Jeff Fantozzi, and Administrative Assistant Christine Gibboney.

Approval of Minutes (10-11-23 Work Session, 10-18-23, 11-8-23 Work Session, 11-15-23)

Motion by Mr. Hartley to approve the minutes of 10-11-23 and 10-18-23 as submitted. All in favor, motion passed and minutes approved.

Motion by Mr. Claus to approve the minutes of 11-8-23 as submitted. Motion seconded by Mr. Hartley. All in favor, motion passed and minutes approved.

Motion by Mr. Cencer to approve the minutes of 11-15-23 as submitted. Motion seconded by Mr. Claus. All in favor, motion passed and minutes approved.

Audience Comments N/A

Old Business

Chapter 1129- Sign Code Amendments (Objectives/Key Considerations attached and made part of the minutes)

Mr. Engle noted the review and amendments to the Chapter have been proposed to comply with federal level action that signage should not be identified by content, this is not best practice. He referenced previous review and edits that have been incorporated. Mr. Engle referred to the Sign Code Objectives/Key Considerations summary and reviewing same, noting he is seeking content review and recommendations from the Commission. He explained grammar and formatting items need not be reviewed as these will be done by staff in the final review. Mr. Engle explained he is seeking Commission input on establishing number of signs, max square footage of signs, and their preference on formulas to be used for these; frontage, hard number, cumulative total, etc.

Mr. Engle referred to the three charts included in Exhibit B of the packet:

- 1) Permanent Ground Sign Allowances
- 2) Temporary Sign Allowances
- 3) Sign Type Per Zoning District Allowances (incorporates both Permanent & Temporary)

Mr. Engle explained that there would no longer be a listing of signs identified by their content, rather signs will now be grouped as Permanent or Temporary. Commission members reviewed the groupings and discussed how this format would work.

Mr. Howell requested a page-by-page review of Exhibit B. Items of note/discussion/recommendations:

- Page 2- 1129.01 – considering numbering instead of lettering. 1129.02 Definitions (b), then number beginning with (1). (4) Awning/Canopy Sign “means signs painted upon a cloth, plastic or metal surface” add: “*or other similar materials*”

- Page 6- 1129.03 Title change to: "*Sign Measurements and Calculations*"
- Page 6: Clarify sign heights for signs other than ground signs
- Page 7: Specify calculated areas relative to Plaza Areas where there are multiple tenants. Discussion ensued as to base this calc on frontage or sf.
- Schedule 1129.13: Noted that a few existing entry signs (Chaska & Old Homestead) have 2 ground signs at entrance and the code for R-1 allows for only (1) sign.

Inquiry into Billboards & Off-Premises Signage

Mr. Engle reported details of a recent BZA Application that went before the BZA Board on Monday submitted by Stride Mobility. They were requesting variance consideration to allow for external, off-premises, businesses to advertise on their existing digital sign along the Route 2 Corridor. Mr. Engle noted the code prohibits external, off-premises signage; the case was presented to the BZA and BZA denied the variances. He noted that it was mentioned to the applicant that staff had been working on sign code amendments and that their inquiry would be mentioned to the Planning Commission for a discussion to see if the board had interest in reviewing the code section(s) to allow billboards/off-premises signage and review the current Route 2 Overlay regulations. Mr. Engle noted the question to the board is whether the body would like to consider such a change to the code... do you want to allow billboards or not? Discussion ensued on variances granted for signs both in the Route 6 area and within the city in general. Mr. Howell expressed concern for allowing billboards in that small area of Route 2.

Mark Schneiders of Stride Mobility addressed the Commission, explaining that there is interest from the community in seeking to advertise on his sign, this was the basis for seeking variances through the BZA to allow him to have external/off-premises business advertise. He referenced the revenue to the community and recognition of the businesses if they were to be able to advertise and mentioned that he has been donating time to Huron City Schools and the Huron Chamber to allow them to advertise events. Mr. Engle reiterated that he is asking the Commission of their interest in considering discussion on this topic. Discussion ensued as to the origins of the sign itself; Mr. Engle noted that multiple variances were granted by the BZA relative to the size, height, setback, and messaging for the existing sign. Mr. Cencer expressed that he did not believe this is an issue along Route 2. Mr. Claus noted he may consider this, but only along the Route 2, and would want to cap sizes. Mr. Howell questioned how many signs would the Commission want to see in this area? Mr. Engle suggested that perhaps the Commission use Stride Mobility's sign as the basis for the max size, setbacks, heights, etc. if/when they wish to entertain further discussion on the inquiry. The Commission thanked Mr. Schnieders for attending.

1129 Review of Charts

Mr. Engle and members reviewed the proposed charts for (1) Permanent Ground Signs, (2) Temporary Signs and (3) Grouped Sign Types by Zoning District (will replace current Appendix A). Members referenced schools and churches within R-1 Districts and discussion ensued as to how code would apply. Members discussed existing signs that may not conform. Mr. Engle noted he would try and capture existing details, but ultimately, any signs that do not comply would be considered pre-existing/non-conforming.

Discussion then focused on whether to base criteria on a cap of the square footage or a cumulative total. Mr. Engle reported that several municipalities strictly base criteria on cumulative by sf. In conclusion, consensus was footage/cumulative.

Commission members advised they would like to take additional time to review the proposed amendments.

Mr. Hartley left the meeting at 6:15p.m.

Other Business

Mr. Claus reported that there was discussion at the Council level regarding the newly proposed ordinances for Chickens and Bees. Mr. Claus explained that Council has asked for a Planning Commission recommendation on a question raised about grandfathering in any properties who have chickens/chicken coops now. Mr. Engle noted that he is of the opinion that no, he would like them to have to become compliant with the code. Discussion between members ensued on the topic. It was noted that 1) any nuisance situation is not grandfathered and 2) there is no legal basis requiring grandfathering of existing.

Motion by Mr. Howell to recommend to City Council that there be no grandfathering relative to proposed chicken ordinance amendment. Motion seconded by Mr. Cencer.

Yeas: Howell, Claus, Cencer (3)

Nays: (0)

With majority if favor, motion passes and recommendation made to City Council.

Mr. Claus noted that there is a possibility that he will no longer be on the Planning Commission in 2024, as Council generally changes members on various boards at the annual appointments.

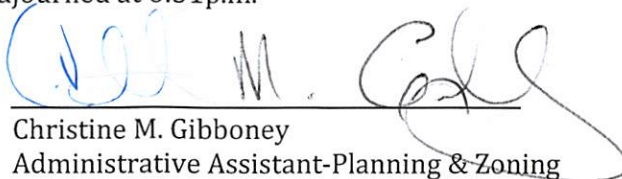
Mr. Claus reported the RFQ for ConAgra has been issued, submissions due in January. He noted several firms were issued notice and it has been publicly advertised.

Mr. Engle reported that the city was contacted by a contractor inquiring about the demolition permit process relative to the Lime Plant.

Mr. Engle reported that the Main Street Corridor Plan has been adopted. He then referenced future code research that he will be working on: B-2 Zone for the entire stretch of the downtown areas, agricultural zones, review of BZA decisions on residential cases to support any amendments to the code on the repeat type of cases that have been discussed on pre-existing non-conforming properties, looking into accessory dwelling units-like in-law suites as the city has received many inquiries for these.

Mr. Howell inquired about Stride Mobility- as to what hardship was proven in the original BZA case that granted the variances allowing for the digital sign in the first place? Mr. Engle noted it was unclear to staff why the variances were granted at the time, and staff predicted this type of request for advertising would follow. Mr. Claus noted he believes while Stride Mobility would be a good steward, it still opens the door to billboards. Discussion by members ensued on the fact the code specifically prohibits billboards.

With no further business, motion by Mr. Cencer to adjourn, motion seconded by Mr. Claus. . All in favor, motion passes, meeting adjourned at 6:51p.m.


Christine M. Gibboney
Administrative Assistant-Planning & Zoning

Adopted: 1-24-24