

**City of Huron  
Planning Commission/DRB  
January 24 2024, 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 Chairman Gary Boyle. Members in attendance: Jim Hartley, Mark Cencer, Tim Sowecke, and Sam Artino. Staff in attendance: Planning Director Erik Engle, Zoning Inspector Jeff Fantozzi, and Administrative Assistant Christine Gibboney.

Mr. Boyle welcomed new members, Sam Artino, and Tim Sowecke.

**Approval of Minutes (12-13-23)**

**Motion by Mr. Cencer to approve the minutes of 12-13-23 as submitted. Motion seconded by Mr. Hartley. All in favor, motion passed and minutes approved.**

**Audience Comments N/A**

**New Business**

**PPN 42-02023.000**

**1708 Sawmill Parkway – Commercial Signage**

***Project Description***

*Owner is proposing the placement of a double-sided metal ground sign to be placed temporarily on the site to advertise his future storage units.*

Mr. Boyle introduced the case for the proposed ground signage. Mr. Engle reviewed the application for a proposed 32sf ground sign to be temporarily placed on the parcel. He referenced the zoning district is I-2, noting I-2 allows 100sf max area for sign area, so the proposed sign is compliant with this as well as the setbacks. The proposed sign is a three-color design and staff is recommending approval as submitted. Members discussed the time frame being proposed by the owner, staff explained that it is believed the owner is looking to start building later this year or next.

**Motion by Mr. Hartley to approve the design plans for the commercial ground signage as submitted. Motion seconded by Mr. Cencer. Roll call on the motion:**

**Yeas: Hartley, Cencer, Sowecke, Artino, Boyle (5)**

**Nays: (0)**

**Abstain: (0)**

With a majority vote in the affirmative, motion passes and the design plan for commercial ground signage approved as submitted.

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**Old Business**

**Chapter 1129- Sign Code Amendments**

Mr. Engle provided members with a presentation, explaining the key considerations relative to the proposed amendments: Amendments have eliminated a content-based approach to review. Content neutral analysis; strict scrutiny of signage based on content is unconstitutional as decided by Supreme Court in the Reed v. Town of Gilbert case. Mr.

Engle referenced these amendments have been recommended by the Legal Department for compliance and noted he has continued to work with them on the proposed changes. He noted the proposed format in the code is now simply Permanent or Temporary Signs and then broken down within sub-categories. Mr. Engle referenced that wall mounted or ground mounted are the only Permanent type of signage, the rest falling under Temporary signage. Clear measurements and calculations have been added to the code and he is recommending moving away from set/defined maximums and rather using frontage to determine size. He explained that, as proposed, he is recommending using frontage to determine max size for wall signage (1' of frontage = 1sf of sign area). He explained for ground signs, he is proposing a hybrid of the site size along with an overall cap. Mr. Engle noted the items that he specifically would like the Commission to address:

- Route 2 Corridor Overlay? Keep or eliminate? Staff recommends modification of the overlay map to include only the properties adjacent to Route 2 ROW.
- Is PC in agreement with the proposed maximum sf for all signs proposed?
- Temporary signs do not have a permit process, but codifies regulations as to what the maximum sf is for general resident/staff guidance including approval in the Route 6 median (approved by CM office). Is PC okay with this?

### **Route 2 Corridor (Section 1129.10)**

Mr. Engle asked the Commission about their consensus on the current Route 2 Corridor Overlay code. Mr. Engle referenced the proposed amendments to the code, pointing out, that as proposed, they would allow for extra square footage with regard to the sign sizes overall. He also referenced the current map included with the ordinance and how it shows both sides of the highway and suggesting that the Commission consider isolating only the Route 2 ramp area adjacent to the properties on the north side of Sawmill Parkway. Mr. Boyle advised as he recalled this section was established to allow some additional signage to those businesses abutting Route 2 and agrees with allowing signage, however, he acknowledged the minutes of the past meeting, and agreed that he does not believe the city will want to overdo it or allow for billboards in this area. Mr. Boyle agreed he would support the recommendation to reduce the area on the map to limit to the north side of Route 2. Mr. Engle agreed, noting he would not want visual clutter and pointed out safety issues. Mr. Boyle asked members if they agreed, no objections were made. Mr. Engle referenced the recent BZA case involving Stride Mobility and their desire for off-premises signage. Mr. Boyle noted he personally would not want to see digital signs like Stride Mobility's allowed in the corridor. Mr. Boyle commented that the city needs to be cognitive of future issues or requests when approving cases like Stride Mobility and others like the Shawnee School sign when it was approved. Members discussed the Stride Mobility sign, how it originated, the initial variances granted and the current variance request to allow for off-premises advertising, which was denied. Mr. Hartley inquired about Stride Mobility's original intent, stating that he thought they wanted to donate free community advertisements to the schools and the Chamber. Mr. Cencer noted that they have been doing that, that they are asking to sell advertising now. Mr. Engle advised Stride Mobility's recent BZA application was requesting to allow for off-premises businesses to advertise on the sign and had submitted support letters of local businesses interested in doing so. Mr. Engle noted there have been non-local business advertising posted on the sign recently. Mr. Engle noted the code is very clear in prohibiting such off-premises signage. Members asked Mr. Boyle about Perkins Township regulations on billboards. Mr. Boyle advised they restrict the number of the billboards and distance wise. Mr. Artino asked if the proposed amendment follows those same criteria of distance regulations. Mr. Engle said no as far as distance, since billboards are prohibited, but if the city were to allow such then this is something that would have to be added, members agreed. Mr. Engle referenced recent legal cases and believes the city still has the power to regulate whether to have billboards or not,

but noted that Stride Mobility is arguing that the city code is unconstitutional. Mr. Engle and Mr. Boyle reiterated that with the proposed amendments, since they would provide for larger signage, as they would be based on frontage, this could then negate the need to have a separate Route 2 overlay- this is something to consider.

#### **Max. SF Tables**

Mr. Engle referred to the tables and reviewed same. He asked for any comments/questions:

Mark Cencer- other uses allowed in R-1 like schools/churches that have existing signs that are either prohibited or non-conforming- Mr. Engle referenced page 30- Footnote *"Any conforming/non-conforming commercial and/or recreational use within residential districts shall conform to the sign regulations set for a B-1 District"*

Mr. Artino asked if legal should be asked to start looking into limitation and spacing of signs rather than waiting? Members agreed this may be a good idea. Mr. Engle noted, that once the Commission recommends the amendments to City Council, legal will do a review.

Mr. Engle referenced page 25 regarding temporary signs, noting the city does not regulate as far as issuing permits for these but size limitations are included in the proposed amendments. No signage is allowed in any city right-of-way area. Mr. Engle asked for thoughts/questions: Members reviewed the table, no changes to the table were suggested. It was noted, that in the future, this can always be revisited if needed.

Mr. Boyle referenced window signs on commercial properties, but for temporary signs there is no limit, so virtually they could paper the entire window and defeats the purpose of trying to control and can be a safety issue with police not able to have vision into the business. Members agreed that this could be an issue, but acknowledged that staff must be able to manage such any regulations. Mr. Engle suggested perhaps a 25% max coverage be added? Members supported the suggestion and added that perhaps staff consult with the Police Chief for any comments.

Mr. Cencer suggested looking at all city properties for compliance of the proposed code as well. Mr. Engle noted he is used to city properties being exempt, however, will look.

Mr. Boyle asked members about their decision on eliminating the Route 2 code? Discussion ensued, as members commented on their concern over billboards, inquired about ODOT regulations, and existing illumination standards. Mr. Engle noted he would check into existing ODOT illumination standards.

Mr. Boyle asked if members wished to take time and have one more look at the final signage amendments. Members agreed to continue review and place on the next agenda. Mr. Engle voiced his support of members taking the time and noted he would bring back the final edits at the next meeting.

Discussion ensued about the next meeting date; Mr. Boyle noted he would not be available on Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>. Members agreed to have the meeting rescheduled to February 28, 2024.

#### **Other Business**

Mr. Engle welcomed Mr. Artino and Mr. Sowecke to the Commission. He referenced that he had ordered the 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition of the Planning Guide for all members and provided an overview of the duties of the Commission. He also referenced that he is looking at an RFQ for a Comprehensive Land Use Plan, something that the city currently does not have. He also noted that one of the next projects he is looking at is the B-2 zone for Main Street.

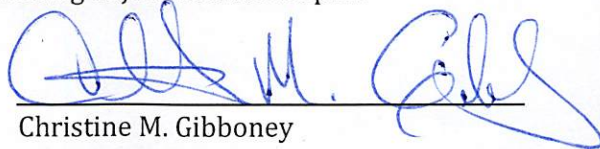
Mr. Sowecke inquired about the role of members and guidelines. Discussion ensued as to corresponding code sections, standard types of cases the Commission reviews. Mr. Boyle referenced the summary of duties in the Welcome Packet.

Mr. Boyle inquired if any other members were interested in chairing the Commission. Consensus of members asked that Mr. Boyle remain chair, if he was willing. Mr. Boyle agreed to continue.

Mr. Engle asked members about their interest in formally adopting rules and offered to prepare a draft that the Commission could review and edit. Members supported the idea.

Mr. Boyle acknowledged former members, Mr. Howell, and Mr. Claus, thanking them for their service on the Commission. Members voiced their appreciation as well.

With no further business, motion by Mr. Sowecke to adjourn, motion seconded by Mr. Cencer. All in favor, motion passes, meeting adjourned at 5:50p.m.

  
Christine M. Gibboney  
Administrative Assistant-Planning & Zoning

Adopted: May 22, 2024