



Planning Commission

Regular Meeting

~ Minutes ~

1408 Lake Street South
Forest Lake, MN 55025
www.ci.forest-lake.mn.us

Karin Derauf, Deputy City Clerk

Wednesday, February 8, 2023

7:00 PM

City Center - Council Chamber

[City of Forest Lake - Livestream and Recorded Meetings](#)

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Paul Girard	Commission Chair	Present	
Susan Young	Commission Vice-Chair	Present	
Kevin Miller	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Justin Brink	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Geneva Kubal	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Don Stehler	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Jeff Larson	Planning Commissioner	Present	

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Approve the Agenda

Comments:

Motion to: Approve the Agenda

RESULT: ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Geneva Kubal, Commissioner
SECONDER: Justin Brink, Commissioner
AYES: Girard, Young, Miller, Brink, Kubal, Stehler, Larson
NAYS:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

5. Consent Agenda

a) Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from January 11, 2023

Comments:

Motion to: Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from January 11, 2022



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RESULT: ADOPTED [6 TO 0]
MOVER: Geneva Kubal, Commissioner
SECONDER: Don Stehler, Commissioner
AYES: Girard, Young, Miller, Brink, Kubal, Stehler
NAYS:
ABSTAIN: Larson
ABSENT:

6. Regular Agenda

No Items

7. Discussion

a) Electronic Billboards Discussion

Comments: Community Development Director Wittman provided a summary of the previous presentations for dynamic billboards. She noted that with the proposed changes new billboards would be modernized. She commented on the proposed standards and highlighted several items including minimum duration of an image, no animation or moving parts, billboard must contain a complete message, and maximum brightness levels. She also commented on the distance between static and dynamic billboards, noting that the proposal for dynamic billboards is 2,600 foot radius or approximately one-half (1/2) mile. She asked the Commission for feedback on the extensions of a billboard as well as the lighting or a specific foot-candle maximum.

Commissioner Miller commented on the current sign standard of 200 sq. ft. Community Development Director Wittman noted that signs fall under a different code than billboards. City Planner Roberts provided specifics of the sign codes. Chair Girard commented that the proposal is only for the billboards.

Commissioner Young asked about the 672 sq. ft. and if that applies to just dynamic, or all billboards. City Planner Roberts indicated that it applies to all billboards. Commissioner Young also commented on any malfunctioning and any sensors that will monitor the billboards for immediate shut off. She asked about the sizing of any extension. Community Development Director Wittman noted that other communities are using fifteen (15) to twenty (20) % of the size of the billboard. She also noted that city code currently does not allow for extensions.



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Commissioner Young commented on billboards in neighboring towns noting their billboards have a base with brick work so they don't look as industrial. She asked if that is part of the proposal.

Chair Girard commented that he is okay with the proposed distance between billboards. Young commented that she is in favor of proposed distance between all types of billboards not just dynamic. Commissioner Stehler commented on adjacent cities and would like to see similar standards as other cities. There was further discussion regarding messaging on the billboards and benefits to the City.

Chuck Bolkcom, applicant, commented on the 672 sq. ft. or 14 ft. by 48 ft. size of billboards noting that is an industry standard. He also commented on any malfunctioning of the billboards. Chuck discussed the foot candle at .3 with automatic dimmers on billboards. He commented on the distance standards of 500 linear and 2,600 radius distances. He discussed the public service benefit to the community as well.

Commissioner Young asked the applicant his thoughts on dynamic billboards and the ability to actually see the messages. Chuck noted that as individuals we are visual, however, he was in favor of limiting the inventory so as not to result in a "Times Square" look on Highway 35. He also commented on the deterioration of the static billboards that may be overshadowed by dynamic messaging. Commissioner Stehler asked about the billboard on 11th Ave. Chuck noted that he is proposing digital on both sides of the billboards indicating that drivers coming east on 11th will see what is currently there. He also noted that digital signs are producing less light pollution than the static billboards that have lights pointing up at the billboard.

Commissioner Miller commented on illumination on both sides of the sign. Community Development Director Wittman noted that the current code indicates that if there are back to back sides that is considered only one (1) billboard. Commissioner Young commented on language as "per face" not "per billboard". Chair Girard commented on .3 foot candles being changed to 0.3 foot candles in the language.

Commissioner Young commented that she is in favor of 2,600 ft. radius for the dynamic billboards and would like to see more than 500 linear feet between static billboards and suggested 800 linear feet. Community Development Director Wittman commented on the consensus of 1,800 to 2,000 ft. radius distance for any types of billboards, 0.3 foot candles illumination, and no extensions allowed as well as a more esthetic look to the base of the billboard poles.

b) Zoning Ordinance Rewrite Discussion



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Comments: Community Development Director commented on the reasons for zoning ordinance rewrites noting interpretation by administration, regulatory oversight, and community consistency including community values. She also posed questions of the Commission including what are thoughts on processes and procedures, variances, types of uses, any ordinances that cause alarm or are confusing, and if the Commission would like further conversation on individual ordinances.

Commissioner Young commented on the variances that come forward and setting precedence. Commissioner Brink also commented on setting precedence on variances. Community Development Director Wittman noted variances shouldn't be granted based on precedence, but looked at on a case by case basis. Commissioner Young noted why she is cognizant of setting precedence because the City has paid fines for allowing one variance and not another of similar situation. Chair Girard cited a specific variance application that came forward in the past that was denied. He noted the City was sued and lost. There was conversation regarding shore land setbacks.

Chair Girard commented on the Downtown Plan and associated ordinance revisions for implementation of development. City Planner Roberts commented on revisions for the commercial districts to include design standards, parking standards, and other revisions. Commissioner Miller commented on the need to eliminate the open ended codes and have more clearly defined ordinances. Commissioner Young asked about lot splits in terms of standards and processes.

c) Wetland Banking Discussion

Comments: Community Development Director Wittman provided information on wetland banking indicating the reason for creating a bank is to purchase credits for development in wetland areas. She mentioned the moratorium expires June, 2023. She provided a map showing wetland bank service areas noting that Forest Lake is in area 6 and 7 on the map. Commissioner Young commented that banking is very relevant to Forest Lake because much of the rural area in the community is not developable because of wetland. Community Development Director Wittman provided a land use analysis showing the land percentages of undeveloped, agriculture, and water areas. She also discussed constraints and opportunities that wetland banking provides.

Commissioner Miller discussed funding from credits and what that money is used for. Community Development Director Wittman provided several examples. Commissioner Brink commented on designation on where potential wetland areas might be. Community Development Director Wittman indicated that there would be particular areas zoned as a banked area. Commissioner Young commented on the south east portion of the City noting that there probably will never be any development in that area. Community Development



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Director Wittman summed up the conversation and feedback received from the Commission. She also provided a timeline for a potential ordinance to be in place by June, 2023.

8. Other

Comments: Community Development Director commented on the position for administrative assistant in the department. Deputy City Clerk Derauf commented that she would mail out a link to the zoning codes for the Commissioners. Commissioner Kubal commented on controversial decisions and thinking about the narrative of “not in my back yard” and educating the community on why changes to the City are important.

9. Adjourn

Motion to: Adjourn

RESULT:	ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Justin Brink, Commissioner
SECONDER:	Jeff Larson, Commissioner
AYES:	Girard, Young, Miller, Brink, Kubal, Stehler, Larson
ABSENT:	