

MINUTES
MOUNT VERNON PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 27, 2017

The Mount Vernon Planning and Zoning Commission met September 27, 2017 at Mount Vernon City Hall Council Chambers with the following members present: Truman Jordan, Trude Elliott, Joan Burge, Matthew Nelson and Jenna Wischmeyer. Absent: Rich Hileman and Garret Reddish. Also in attendance, Zoning Administrator Matt Siders and Chad Sands from ECICOG. Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Truman Jordan at 6:35 p.m.

1. Approval of Agenda. This document stands approved unless otherwise indicated by Commission members.
2. Open Forum: each citizen limited to 5 minutes per discussion item.
3. Discussion and possible action of proposed Zoning Ordinance changes. Discussion began with the sign ordinance and some issues associated with it, such as off-premise or portable signs. Siders gave information on other communities and how they handle this situation. Typically these types of signs are not allowed in the right-of-way and our current ordinance does not allow for this as well. Another option is for the signs to be approved by the Zoning Administrator before being allowed. Some of the negative feedback that Siders has received about the signs being placed in the right-of-way is that the area is cluttered, vision is blocked at intersections and the historic feel is no longer there. Siders is not currently enforcing the portable/off-premise signs because it is currently being discussed during this process but all business owners have been notified that it is being talked about. The current code does allow an off-premise sign if it is attached to a structure. Siders said the issue is whether the City wishes to maintain their stance on the off-premise signage in Town Center and also what to allow in the new Central Business District. Siders said that some businesses are using the portable/temporary signs for things such as sales, which is how the ordinance was intended. The definitions for portable and temporary signs are different in the current ordinance. Siders felt the elimination of temporary/portable signs could be done if there was a process of having way finding signs. Sands said this would definitely be a City Council decision to put the money into this type of signage and would solve a lot of issues with the sign ordinance. This process could start with the design

committee under the Community Development Group. Jordan said his feeling is to not totally eliminate but restrict the temporary/portable signage. Jordan said the idea of a sub-committee to discuss these issues is something to think about. Nelson said he is all for going forward with something that is clean and standardized such as way finding, in lieu of portable signs but also doesn't want to restrict people right now until something is in place. He does like the idea of a temporary sign that would allow for showing specials and sales during business hours. Wischmeyer said the Commission doesn't have any control over whether the way finding signage will move forward or not and in terms of the discussion tonight, would be in favor of portable signage if it was done tastefully to help people in the interim. Sands said one option would be to combine temporary and portable signage into one. The City currently allows temporary and portable signs on premise but it is the off-premise that is in question. Elliott suggested taking out portable signs completely and make a recommendation to City Council to begin the process of allowing way finding signs.

Elliott made a motion that the Planning and Zoning Commission make a recommendation to City Council to establish a committee to create way finding signs for businesses in Town Center. Motion seconded by Wischmeyer. Carried all.

Enforcement of the current ordinance and off-premise signs will be put on hold until the Commission comes up with a clear solution to the temporary and portable signs. Wischmeyer felt that off-premise signs could be allowed if they were restricted to certain areas and does not want to keep it the way it is now because it is too restrictive. Sands said again that it would be appropriate to combine the temporary and portable signs into one definition. Then only allow temporary, portable or off-premise signs through the use of a permit. Sands referred to Waverly's sign ordinance and suggested using this as a starting point. Sands will work with Siders over the next few weeks to draft a sign ordinance and present it to the Commission. There was discussion on whether to allow portable signage in General Commercial or Business Park, which is currently not allowed. The commission will focus on Town Center for now and look into this once that is done. Jordan was in agreement with Siders not enforcing the off-premise signs until a solution is reached.

The commission then went over additional areas of the current sign ordinance to determine if any changes were needed. There was discussion on murals and painted signs. Siders said a mural would be exempt as it is considered art. A painted sign would fall under an attached sign. There was

also discussion on whether the electronic sign portion of the ordinance needs to be reviewed due to new technology and the need for these types of signs.

The zoning ordinance changes will not be discussed at the next regular Planning and Zoning meeting on October 10, 2017. A special meeting will be held on October 25, 2017 to continue discussion if there is a quorum of members available.

Meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marsha Dewell
Deputy Clerk