



LANSING PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
April 2, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.
Neighborhood Empowerment Center
600 W Maple Street, Lansing, MI

MINUTES – *Approved 5/8/2024*

1. OPENING SESSION

Ms. Alexander called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

- a. Present: Katie Alexander, Shane Muchmore (arrived at 6:54), John Ruge
- b. Absent: Tony Cox, Josh Hovey, Monte Jackson, Ted O'Dell
- c. Staff: Andy Fedewa Principal Planner, Zachary Driver Commercial Corridor Specialist

No quorum present

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

3. COMMUNICATIONS

Norma Bauer submitted an article about fare-free public transit to the Planning Commission.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS & ITEMS FOR ACTION

A. Draft Sign Ordinance, Chapter 1310

Mr. Fedewa presented an overview of the proposed sign ordinance that will repeal and replace the current ordinance, Chapter 1442. The current ordinance utilizes former zoning districts to determine various regulations and has many regulations that were nullified by the case Reed vs. Town of Gilbert.

Ms. Alexander asked if the number of allowed projecting signs and wall signs will lead to excessive signage. Mr. Fedewa stated that the sign area of all wall signs is calculated together and capped by a maximum square footage of total sign area. Projecting signs are limited to 16 square feet, but when a projecting sign is utilized in lieu of a wall sign it is still limited by the total allowable wall sign area. A business owner will have to determine how their signs fit within that limit.

Mr. Ruge stated his concern about signs exempted from permitting. Mr. Fedewa clarified that even though some types of signs will not need sign permits, they are still regulated by other rules elsewhere in the ordinance.

Mr. Muchmore asked about limiting signage placed in rights-of-way and how the city can cite the people that leave them since their phone numbers are on the sign. Mr. Driver replied that he and numerous other employees from Code Enforcement and Public Service remove those signs when they can. Mr. Driver stated that he does call the numbers on a case by case basis to warn people to not place signs in the rights-of-way.

Mr. Muchmore asked if the rules for sign setbacks are adequate to limit conflicts with vehicle lines of sight at intersections and driveways. Mr. Fedewa answered that staff is very sensitive to that safety issue and clear vision areas are protected in the proposed sign ordinance and the form-based zoning code.

Mr. Ruge stated that he is concerned that tall ‘pole’ freestanding signs will still be allowed under the proposed regulations instead of allowing only ‘monument’ freestanding signs like other communities to limit visual blight. Mr. Fedewa replied that staff did debate the two types of signs and stated commission members are welcome to offer alternatives to staff’s recommendations to City Council.

Ms. Alexander opened the public hearing.

Norma Bauer asked how nonconforming signs will be removed. Ms. Alexander allowed staff to respond. Mr. Fedewa stated that many existing signs will be considered legally nonconforming which means they will be allowed to stay as legally required by zoning case law. There will be opportunities to remove nonconforming signs as they are abandoned and when properties are redeveloped.

Mitch Rice, member of the Board of Zoning Appeals, spoke in support of the draft sign ordinance and mentioned how he thinks the proposed rules will limit the amount of variance applications that are reviewed by the BZA.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak, Ms. Alexander closed the public hearing.

Mr. Ruge asked if projecting signs will be allowed to project over the rights-of-way. Mr. Fedewa replied that they may project over the sidewalk as long as there is 10 feet of vertical clearance below them. They will not be allowed to project into the street area.

Ms. Alexander asked if the Board of Zoning Appeals has reviewed the proposed ordinance as the body that grants variances. Mr. Fedewa stated that staff has not yet presented to them.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Ms. Bauer spoke on conditions in the Lansing metropolitan region and on the coordination between surrounding municipalities. Ms. Bauer spoke in favor of fare-free public transit.

Mr. Rice asked staff to confirm if 6525 S Pennsylvania Ave. was in violation of the sign ordinance.

6. RECESS – Not taken.

7. BUSINESS

A. Consent Items – None

B. Old Business – None

C. New Business – None

8. REPORT FROM PLANNING & ZONING OFFICE – None

9. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON – None

10. COMMENTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS – None

11. PENDING ITEMS: FUTURE ACTION REQUIRED – None

12. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.