

Minutes of the City of Centralia, Missouri Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting of Thursday, June 23, 2016.

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m.

ROLL CALL – Commissioners Present: LeeAllen Smith (Chair), Harvey Million, Dale Hughes, Mayor Tim Grenke, Mark Mustain, Don Bagley, Alderman Jim Lee, and Alderman Don Bormann. Absent: Guy Lee. Also present were City Attorney, Merritt Beck, and City Administrator, Matt Harline, City Intern, Nathan Kuhn, and James Smith of the Fireside Guard.

Pledge of Allegiance

Those present recited the pledge.

Chairman Smith asked for comments or corrections to the previous minutes. Harline noted that they had been sent out in the packet. **Grenke made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2016 meeting that was seconded by Bagley and approved unanimously by voice vote**

Approving the Final Plat of Southwest County Estates – Plat 4

Harline noted to the reported that the staff had received the proposed Final Plat of Southwest Country Estates, Plat 4 and that it was pretty much the same as the Preliminary Plat except that we would be moving the electric utility easements to the front ten feet of the property instead of the back, a slight adjustment in the elevations to accommodate drainage. Harline stated that staff recommends approval of the final plat. Harline added that Don Bormann was the surveyor on the project and should abstain. Harline noted there are two pieces of land that were divided out from Plat 1 by lot split. Bormann said they would not technically be part of the subdivision but he thinks that they are subject to the covenants. Bormann answered Harline's question by stating that they had renumbered the lots from the Preliminary Plat due to the lots splits. Bormann noted that the improvements had not been completed. Harline said that the following items had to be completed before final improvement with Bormann's assistance: Signatures needed to be added; completion of the improvements to the streets and sanitary sewer; and a letter of credit to cover the amount of the completion of the sidewalks. **Grenke made a motion to recommend approval of Southwest Country Estates Plat 4 as long as the following conditions be met: Signatures needed to be added; completion of the improvements to the streets and sanitary sewer; and a letter of credit to cover the amount of the completion of the sidewalks. Hughes seconded the motion and it was approved by voice vote with Bormann abstaining.**

Reviewing possible changes to sign regulations in Sections 31-19, 31-23, 31-24, 31-25, 31-27, and 31-42 in various zoning districts.

A. Public Hearing & Recommendation to the Board of Aldermen

Chairman Smith opened the public hearing. There were no comments from citizens.

The following discussed presentation is available on the City webpage.

Nathan Kuhn introduced himself as a student at the University of Missouri in the Truman School of Public Affairs and the city's management intern for the summer of 2016. Kuhn stated that he focused on B-1 zoning. Smith asked why we were looking primarily at B-1. Harline replied that the City was anticipating an application for a pole sign and attached sign at a business downtown next to Prenger's grocery store. Harline noted that our current ordinance allows one sign either attached or detached in B-1. Harline noted that idea was to make the current signs compliant if possible, but define anything that was offensive by size or number as illegal.

Kuhn made a presentation based on a lot by lot thorough canvass of signs in the downtown business district. Kuhn said that the two issues that would need to be addressed was how many signs can a B-1 business have and where those signs can be placed. Kuhn referenced the City of Harrisonville's code and the code for Boone County. Kuhn noted that depending on whether or not you counted signs inside of windows or not we would have 48 of 60 businesses with multiple signs or just 32 of 60 businesses. Smith asked if his barber pole would count as a sign and Kuhn replied that by the Harrisonville definition it would.

Kuhn continued with his presentation. In the presentation Kuhn explained that among the issues that would need to be addressed to write an ordinance that made existing signs into compliant would be the definition of a sign, the number of signs allowed per property, the setback of signs, the size or square footage of signs allowed, signage frontage required, flashing signs, and other issues. Kuhn listed some options that the Commission could address in a recommendation to the Board of Alderman: the number of signs allowed and how that is defined, total square footage of signage, frontage requirements, allowing attached and detached signs, special exceptions for gas stations and drive through establishments, and reorganizing the code to group signage code together.

Harline noted that Centralia's City Code does have Chapter 29: Signs and Billboards, but that this chapter only gives general guidance for signs, like the requirement for a permit. Kuhn noted that most information about signs in the code comes scattered through the Chapter 31: Zoning. Kuhn noted that most of the 6 to 7 cities he looked at have their signage code consolidated in one chapter, unlike Centralia's current practice.

Harline requested that it be made clear that businesses may have more than one sign. Harline noted that B-1 does have height restrictions and lot line limits, noting the Commission can keep those regulations. Harline recommends that any current signage be allowed for 10 years, minimum, given that this would give reasonable time for amortization, noting that more expensive signs might be given more time. Harline requests that the Commission consider first, a motion to clarify the current disagreement on how the code should be interpreted, and second, if desired, a motion specifying what the Commission wants staff to look into.

Chairman Smith asked to see pictures of the Centralia Barbershop, and Commission discussed what counted as a sign. Kuhn responded that it all depends on how Centralia defines “sign” and that currently staff recommends all signs behind glass do not count, but noting that some cities would count window signs. Harline recommended that signs giving hours, open/closed, exit/entrance, etc. be given a special category and exception. Smith asked about current height requirements of signs, and Kuhn answered with the requirements in City Code Section 35-25.A.2, but noted the Commission could recommend comprehensive changes to the signage code. Pictures of other B-1 zone business were referenced to discuss whether businesses that are wide or cross multiple buildings should be allowed more signs and how sides of building compare to frontages. Kuhn noted it might make sense to allow signs per business license.

Mayor Grenke asked for staff to develop a draft ordinance that the Commission can consider at its next meeting. Bagley asked for staff to consolidate the signage code into one area. Grenke asked if there is urgency on this issue. Harline responded that there is a business coming that has expressed desire for multiple signs. Lee expressed that the city would probably allow the request. Harline responded that the best way to do so would be to clarify that that is acceptable through the code.

Chair Smith expressed that there is a problem with temporary signs. Harline acknowledged that some citizens have complained about some temporary signs. It was discussed where temporary signs should be allowed, whether in city right of way. Bormann proposed that nonprofits be given special allowances for temporary signs.

Harline proposed that staff bring back a draft ordinance clarifying that a business may have both an attached and a detached sign. Mayor Grenke asked whether other cities count signage by square footage measurement. Harline responded yes, and cited Harrisonville’s definitions, and noted that signage could be regulated by a percentage of the side of a building or by linear foot of frontage.

Harline noted that so far Centralia’s signs do not seem out of hand. Grenke expressed that Centralia’s signage code should not hamper new businesses. Hughes expressed that the signage code should not allow signs to be outrageous. Harline stated that sign ordinances must be able to clarify so that decisions are not arbitrary or biased. Allowances for signs in zone R-1 discussed.

Hughes made a motion for city staff to write up and present to the Board of Aldermen a draft ordinance allowing a business both an attached and a detached sign in the B-1 district provided they meet all height and other restrictions. The motion was seconded by Lee and approved unanimously by voice vote.

Other requests by the Commission include a better definition on temporary signs throughout the city, consolidating signage code into one section of the code, defining what a sign is, and the main points from tonight’s discussion.

Chairman Smith closed the public hearing.

Beck mentioned the “Township” US Supreme Court case that dealt with signs and zoning, and noted that it should be referenced as Centralia’s signage code is developed. Harline noted that freedom of speech must not be infringed.

Comprehensive Plan Process

Harline noted the memo in the packet and the Centralia has the opportunity to work with the Mid-Missouri Regional Planning Commission. There is a proposed timeline in the memo. Centralia has the opportunity to make the process more open to the public so that it is a community plan and so more people will be educated in what the city is doing and planning. The first step would put together committees, and even open application for seats to the public. It has also been recommended by the Mid-Missouri Regional Planning Commission that members of the Board of Aldermen and Planning and Zoning Commission participate as members on these Comprehensive Plan committees. Harline recommends that in July the Comprehensive Plan is fully adopted and started. Four committees are recommended. **Grenke made a motion for the staff to send out an application for the public to apply for positions on the Comprehensive Plan planning committees and for the process to be further reviewed in the coming July meeting. The motion was seconded by Bagley and approved unanimously by voice vote.**

As May Arise

Harline reported that the company that wants to build a utility monopole has returned with their application, and Harline describes the permits that they will need.

Lee said the Historical Society was informed that the railroad would be setting up two towers that would support smart rail and avoid accidents.

Adjourn

Bagley made a motion to adjourn that was seconded by Mustain and approved unanimously by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

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