

Minutes
City of Monona
Plan Commission
Monday July 22, 2019

The meeting of the City of Monona Plan Commission was called to order (7:00 pm).

Present: Alder Kathy Thomas (Acting Chair), Mr. Chris Homburg, Ms. Coreen Fallat, Mr. Brian Holmquist, Mr. Josh Peterson, and Ms. Susan Fox

Excused: Alder Nancy Moore (Chair), and Mr. Rob Stein

Also Present: Doug Plowman, City Planner

Approval of Minutes

A motion by Mr. Holmquist, seconded by Mr. Homburg, to approve the minutes of July 8, 2019 carried with two corrections.

Appearances

There were no appearances.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

A. Public Hearing on Sign Permit Request by AmericInn Monona for one new Landscape Sign, one new Directional Sign, and one new Marquee Sign at 101 W. Broadway. (Case No. S-026-2019)

Mr. Bill Rupp of La Crosse Sign Group presented plans for changes to the faces of three signs at the AmericInn Monona. There was a brand standard change, where ownership asked that all signs be replaced and updated. Ground signs will remain in their existing locations, with just the facing changing, and the wall sign will be redesigned on the same panel. There were no other appearances and the public hearing was declared closed.

B. Consideration of Action on Sign Permit Request by AmericInn Monona for one new Landscape Sign, one new Directional Sign, and one new Marquee Sign at 101 W. Broadway. (Case No. S-026-2019)

Planner Plowman shared the staff report, highlighting that the wall sign is smaller despite there being more text, the other two signs are refacing. Sign measurements were taken and the vision triangle was evaluated by a site visit. There are a couple of dimensional challenges, but these signs have existed since the early 2000's without issue. The entrance off Broadway is unique, and is why the sign is larger than a typical internal circulation sign.

Mr. Homburg shared that the applicant is just refacing the signs. He clarified that it isn't a marquee sign as it doesn't project from the building, but instead a wall sign as it's a part of the approved building. The directional sign is the most challenging part of the application for him. When the hotel was built the Commission wanted the largest number of oak trees to be saved that they could. This forced the wall to be built like it is, and the sign to be higher than normal.

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Further, the signage was allowed to be larger because of the number of out-of-town visitors coming to the hotel, and to ensure parity with the Country Inn and Suites across the street.

Mr. Holmquist sought clarification of the logo measurements from staff. Planner Plowman interpreted the text to be the logo, although the Commission clarified that letters weren't part of the logo, just the stars in this case. The letters were a name, and exempt from the logo requirements.

A motion by Mr. Homburg, seconded by Mr. Holmquist, to approve sign permits for one new wall sign, one on-site directional sign, and one landscape ground sign, requested by AmericInn Monona (c/o the La Crosse Sign Group), to be located at 101 W. Broadway, as proposed, and according to Article XII of the Zoning Code of the Monona Municipal Code of Ordinances, with the following findings of fact and conditions of approval:

Findings of Fact:

1. The on-site directional sign was placed at its current height because of the retaining walls built along W. Broadway. These were designed, and located in such a way as to allow the existing oak trees to remain on site with limited obstructions.
2. The on-site directional sign was originally permitted because of the out of town traffic that would be visiting the hotel. Country Inn and Suites had a similar sign off-property, and the Commission's intent was to be consistent across the two properties. The objective was to direct traffic off of Broadway as quickly as possible, and this is why the name was also allowed on the sign.

Conditions of Approval:

1. As the sign is to be illuminated, an electrical permit shall be obtained from the City's Building Inspector.
2. If the glare from the lighting is deemed to be excessive by the Plan Commission, then the Plan Commission may require adjustments to the lighting.

The motion carried.

C. Public Hearing on Sign Permit Request by Rossi's Pizza & Vintage Arcade for one new Canopy Sign at 4503 Monona Drive #1. (Case No. S-027-2019)

Mr. Dom Dacy of Grant Signs presented the application that is looking to replace two existing canopy mounted signs that are dated, and to consolidate to one. The positioning is challenging with the awning in place, limiting wall mounting options, as well as the residential units above. There are challenges with locating signs below the canopy as there have been issues with delivery trucks in the past. There were no other appearances and the public hearing was declared closed.

D. Consideration of Action on Sign Permit Request by Rossi's Pizza & Vintage Arcade for one new Canopy Sign at 4503 Monona Drive #1. (Case No. S-027-2019)

Planner Plowman shared staff comments on the application, citing the consolidation of two signs to one. History of the sign approvals was shared, Rossi's Pizza moved from Frost Woods, and that sign was approved administratively. The approvals for the arcade sign were deemed wall awning signs. It is outside of the new Code requirements for Canopy Signs for both location and size, but it does consolidate and decrease signage overall.

Ms. Fallat asked for clarification as to where the sign would be located with regards to the residential windows above. Mr. Dacy stated that the sign is located at the edge of the canopy, and at least 6' away from the windows. Mr. Peterson had similar concerns, and shared that for the existing signs the majority of the text is in-line with the canopy, with the logo projecting above. The sign exceeds the square footage that the Code allows, and despite the signs being consolidated he is interested why there is such an increase in size at the one location. Planner Plowman shared that if this was deemed a wall sign, the sign would receive 1 sf. per linear foot of frontage and be permissible as proposed. There are two other signs at the shopping center that have similar style above the canopy as well. Ms. Fox had similar concerns about the signs impact on the windows above, but the existing signs are similar in that respect. There was general concern about the size of the sign.

Mr. Homburg asked for clarification of the mounting location of the sign. The intent is to mount to the top of the canopy but level with the front face. Mr. Peterson questioned the signs projection from the front, it was confirmed that this is about 3" from the front of the canopy. Mr. Homburg added that when last approved the sign was deemed a wall sign because there is no signage band available. There was no canopy sign allowance, as there is today, although that's primarily for awning signs. Mr. Homburg feels that the sign is appropriate for the size of the store, but clarified that the Commission would have to be comfortable approving this as a wall sign. The exception would be that the sign isn't mounted against the building. It wouldn't look appropriate against the wall as it would be setback, and the other two businesses in the center have signs in similar locations.

Mr. Peterson asked if the building owner had approved the design. Planner Plowman responded that one of the submittal sheets shows landlord approval with a signature. Mr. Holmquist clarified that if the owner so chose to convert the canopy area into an enclosed porch that this would be a wall sign. The modification of the space helps reinforce the sign as a wall sign and not a canopy sign, that and the depth of the roof help make it more manageable. Ms. Fox shared that she thinks it's a nice addition, and that the consolidation of the signs makes sense.

A motion by Mr. Homburg, seconded by Mr. Peterson, to approve the sign permit for one new wall sign, requested by Rossi's Pizza and Vintage Arcade (c/o Grant Signs), to be located at 4503 Monona Drive #1, as proposed, and according to Article XII of the Zoning Code of the Monona Municipal Code of Ordinances, with the following findings of fact and condition of approval:

Findings of Fact:

1. This is considered a wall sign, and in light of existing architecture where there is no appropriate place to mount a wall sign at this location, this sign may be mounted to the top edge of the existing canopy.
2. All other businesses in the same building are using the same technique to mount their signs, and were approved accordingly.
3. The applicant is reducing their number of signs on the property from two to one.

Conditions of Approval:

1. As the sign is to be illuminated, an electrical permit shall be obtained from the City's Building Inspector.

The motion carried.

E. Public Hearing on Sign Permit Request by Forage Kitchen for two new Canopy Signs at the “The Current”, Phase 1, 800 W. Broadway. (Case No. S-028-2019 & S-029-2019)

Planner Plowman shared that the applicant was unable to attend, so he presented the application to the Commission. This is for signage at the Forage Kitchen at the Current Redevelopment on both the north and south faces. Conditions of the Comprehensive Sign Plan (CSP) state that no non-anchor tenant is allowed signs greater than 15’ in length without Plan Commission approval. Both signs are above this size, and require a hearing. In speaking with the applicant, this is the companies brand, and changing the spacing would impact the brand recognition. There were no other appearances and the public hearing was declared closed.

F. Consideration of Action on Sign Permit Request by Forage Kitchen for two new Canopy Signs at the “The Current”, Phase 1, 800 W. Broadway. (Case No. 2-028-2019 & S-029-2019)

Planner Plowman shared staff comments on the signage. The signs are wide in design, but limited in height. The design is sleek, and given the spacing isn’t overstepping in terms of overall size, rather it is the brands identity.

Mr. Homburg shared that the sign looks great. The sign is understated and looks nice on the building. The entire building is well signed, and this adds to it. Mr. Holmquist would like to add that this application isn’t subject to needing owner submittal for changes to the CSP. This CSP specifically has a condition for Plan Commission review of signs over a certain size and thinks it is an appropriate use of the Commission.

A motion by Ms. Fallat, seconded by Mr. Peterson to approve sign permits for two new canopy signs, requested by Forage Kitchen (c/o Sign Art Studio) for Phase 1 – Building A of “The Current” development, located at 800 West Broadway, as proposed, and according to Article XII of the Zoning Code of the Monona Municipal Code of Ordinances, with the following condition of approval:

Condition of Approval:

1. As the sign is to be illuminated, an electrical permit shall be obtained from the City’s Building Inspector.

The motion carried.

G. Public Hearing on Proposed Alterations to the City of Monona Landmarked Property at 4705 Tonyawatha Trail Requested by Property Owners Toi Pedrick and Robb Hardie, Represented by Architect Mark Henrichs, For Determination by the Plan Commission if the Proposed Alterations Would be in Harmony With the External Appearance of the Landmark on Site; and Whether the Proposal Would Significantly Alter Or Destroy The Historic Characteristics of The Landmark, According to Section 13-1-64 of the Historic Conservation Ordinance (2016). (Case No. 2-005-2019)

Mr. Mark Henrichs- the project architect presented plans for three small additions proposed for the exterior. The homeowners have lived at the property for 10 years, always with the intent to make it a viable structure to live in. Proposed improvements include a small reworking of stairs and door, remodeling of an existing 3 season porch with roughly the same footprint, and an addition of an open porch. According to the City’s landmark book, this porch was understood to have been located across the entire back of the house, and the owners propose rebuilding in this spirit. Mr. Tom McNeil of 4704 Tonyawatha Trail spoke in support of the project. There were no other appearances and the public hearing was declared closed.

H. Action on Proposed Alterations to the City of Monona Landmarked Property at 4705 Tonyawatha Trail Requested by Property Owners Toi Pedrick and Robb Hardie, Represented by Architect Mark Henrichs, For Determination by the Plan Commission if the Proposed Alterations Would be in Harmony With the External Appearance of the Landmark on Site; and Whether the Proposal Would Significantly Alter Or Destroy The Historic Characteristics of The Landmark, According to Section 13-1-64 of the Historic Conservation Ordinance (2016). (Case No. 2-005-2019)

Planner Plowman provided an overview of the project. This is the same property that came before the Commission in March, 2019 for a garage addition. The application did go before the Landmarks Commission on July 10 and received a recommendation of approval to the Plan Commission 4 votes to 1. There was discussion about the structure, the materials and general appropriateness. The most contentious point was the south facing entryway porch with a triangular roofline. Two of the three additions are existing and are being replaced, the third existed and is being added again.

Ms. Fox shared that the plans look good, and she is pleased the Landmarks Commission approved the plans. She added her appreciation for all of the work the homeowners have done on the house to this point. Mr. Homburg commended the applicants for their improvements. The porch had been discussed as the toughest area, and he shared that he is glad they are pursuing improvements. The entry canopy may not look exactly the same, but argues it didn't dramatically alter the look and feel and was architecturally in-line with other buildings of its type. Mr. Peterson echoed the sentiments, stating the proposed improvements look to have been designed in a very tasteful manner.

Mr. Holmquist asked if the west elevation windows are being converted into doors. Mr. Henrichs shared that they are already existing. The doors were added when the windows were redone on the main side of the house. Mr. Holmquist was surprised doors were approved without a railing. Mr. Homburg suggested it was likely a condition from the Building Inspector that they had to be fastened shut. Mr. Holmquist shared his support, and how he enjoyed seeing the house being improved and where it fits with the preservation policy in Monona. Mr. Homburg asked for clarification of the second finding of fact. He asked if it could be softened to "substantially change the architecture of the landmark". Mr. Holmquist hoped it could match the existing language for continuity.

A motion by Mr. Homburg, seconded by Mr. Holmquist to approve the determination that upon consideration of Subsection(a), the Commission deems the project appropriate and does not deem it necessary to refer the application to the Common Council for acquisition or preservation of this landmark.

Findings of Fact:

1. Based on plans submitted for the proposed addition and reviewed by the Landmarks Commission on July 10, 2019, the proposed work is harmonious with the historic characteristics of the landmark site; and
2. The proposed work will not substantially change, destroy or adversely affect the architecture of the landmark.

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Approved August 12, 2019
The motion carried.

Reports of Staff and Commission Members

- A. Staff Report Regarding Status of Development Project Proposals
 - a. Upcoming Meetings – August 12, 2019, August 26, 2019 (Tentative)
- B. Mr. Holmquist highlighted the use of flag signs in Monona, and is concerned that it needs to be better enforced given the recent passing of the Sign Code. There was hope that there can be more discussion with those in violation before letters are sent. Planner Plowman has made himself available to discuss signage options with business owners. Ms. Fallat asked if there needs to be a broader educational outreach campaign. Alder Thomas suggested MESBA may be an avenue to help educate local business owners. Mr. Homburg offered to talk to the Executive Director of MESBA to see if there may be an option to add this to the newsletter. The letters could have two levels; the first being educational along with personal contact, the second being more direct. Ms. Fox seconded the sentiment for better contact. Mr. Holmquist sees the opportunity to educate the business community of their options with the new Code, as well as what has always been prohibited – specifically the flag signs.

Adjournment

A motion by Ms. Fallat, seconded by Mr. Peterson, to adjourn carried. (7:44pm)

Respectfully submitted by:
Doug Plowman, City Planner