

Plan Commission Minutes
April 24, 2023
Approved May 8, 2023

Minutes
City of Monona
Plan Commission
Monday April 24, 2023

The meeting of the City of Monona Plan Commission was called to order (6:00pm).

Present: Alder Nancy Moore (Chair), Alder Patrick DePula, Ms. Coreen Fallat, Mr. Brandon Gries, Mr. Robert Stein, Mr. Chris Conrad, Ms. Susan Fox, and Mr. Chris Homburg

Excused: None

Also Present: Doug Plowman, Planning Director

Approval of Minutes

A motion by Mr. Stein, seconded by Mr. Conrad, to approve the minutes of March 27, 2023 carried with no corrections.

Order of Business

There were no changes to the order of business.

Appearances

None.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

A. Public Hearing on Request by La Choza Del Viejo, for Approval of New Signage at 5415B Monona Drive. (Case No. S-006-2023)

Mr. Chris Huang of Athena Design Group presented the application. The new wall sign will reflect the business's new name after a change in ownership. The sign will have a gray backing board to match the building's awning, and will be LED-illuminated channel letters.

Mr. Gries arrived at 6:02pm.

There were no other appearances and the public hearing was declared closed.

B. Consideration of Action on Request by La Choza Del Viejo, for Approval of New Signage at 5415B Monona Drive. (Case No. S-006-2023)

Planning Director Plowman shared the staff report. The request is for an approximately 22 sq. ft. LED-illuminated channel letter wall sign. The sign will face east towards Monona Drive. The property is zoned Retail Business (RB) and subject to the Monona Drive urban design guidelines. The proposed sign meets size requirements outlined in the Sign Code, is a reduction in size from the current sign, and appears compatible with other signs in the multi-tenant center. Staff recommends approval.

Mr. Homburg asked the applicant if the board on which the sign is mounted will be painted the same color as the building's façade. The applicant said that they will try their best to match the color, and that a larger board has to be used instead of a raceway due to the nature of the sign and the mounting surface. Mr. Homburg said that the colors will need to

match. The other Commission members generally liked the design of the sign and had no issues.

A motion was made by Ms. Fallat, seconded by Ms. Fox, to approve a sign permit for one new wall sign, as requested by La Choza del Viejo, to be located at 5415 B Monona Drive, as proposed and according to Chapter 480 Article XII of the Zoning Code of the Monona Municipal Council, with the following 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 glare from the lighting is deemed to be excessive by the Plan Commission, then the Plan Commission may require adjustments to the lighting.

Mr. Homburg suggested a third condition of approval be added for the sign background to match the building façade. This friendly amendment was accepted by the maker and the second of the original motion.

3. The applicant shall match the color of the board on which the sign is mounted to the color of the background as best as possible.

The motion as amended carried unanimously.

E. Public Hearing on Request by Menard, Inc., Represented by Electrify America on Request for Consideration of a Zoning Permit for Installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Equipment in the existing parking lot at 6401 Copps Avenue. (Case No. 2-009-2023)

The Commission agreed to hear items 7E and 7F prior to 7C and 7D because the applicant for items 7C and 7D was not present.

Mr. Chris Arroyo, on behalf of Menards and Electrify America, presented the application. The proposal is to install six 360-kW electric vehicle charging stations in the Menards parking lot. The chargers will offer Level 3 charging. Supporting equipment, except for the transformer, will be held within an equipment enclosure surrounded by an 8 ft. tall Trex fence.

There were no other appearances and the public hearing was declared closed.

F. Prehearing Conference on Request by Menard, Inc., Represented by Electrify America on Request for Consideration of a Zoning Permit for Installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Equipment in the existing parking lot at 6401 Copps Avenue. (Case No. 2-009-2023)

Planning Director Plowman shared the staff report. The request is for six Level 3 electric vehicle charging stations and associated equipment in the parking lot of Menards at 6401 Copps Avenue. The property is zoned Community Design District (CDD) and a zoning permit is required due to the new construction. The Comprehensive Plan lists the property as commercial in the existing and future land use maps. The proposal aligns with zoning and the Comprehensive Plan. The charging stations will be installed in the northeast corner of the parking lot, in between the driveways from Copps Ave. and Femrite Dr. There do not appear to be vision triangle concerns, but it is recommended that the applicant confirm that prior to

formal consideration. The equipment and charging stalls will replace 8 regular parking stalls, and the net loss of 2 stalls should not pose an issue. Bollards will be included in front of the chargers and a new 30 ft. light pole is proposed along Copps Avenue which will match the existing poles on site. The proposal requires the relocation of one tree, which will be placed further north close to another tree. City Ordinance requires that mechanical equipment be screened from view, but fencing does not typically exceed 6 ft. in height. In this case, the equipment has a maximum height of 7.5 ft. so an 8 ft. fence is proposed.

Mr. Gries asked if there was potential to expand beyond six stalls in the future. The applicant said that when sites get a lot of traffic a battery energy storage system is often added, but that expansion would require separate permitting. Mr. Gries asked the applicant to consider roughing in for future expansion.

Ms. Fox asked the applicant to ensure the lighting will match the existing lighting. She felt that the fence height was appropriate but that more landscaping was needed.

Alder Moore asked the applicant about how quickly the charging stations could charge a vehicle. The applicant stated that a typical vehicle could reach 80% charge in 30-40 minutes.

Mr. Conrad appreciated the proposed location of the charging stations, as they are sited further from the entrance.

Mr. Stein felt that additional curb stops would be unnecessary. He suggested tall ornamental grasses, such as switchgrass, around the fence. He also asked that the relocated tree be placed elsewhere on Copps Avenue, as the proposed location is too close to another tree. Mr. Stein asked the applicant if the placement of the concrete pads would require cutting into the curbs. The applicant was unsure and will investigate prior to formal consideration.

Ms. Fallat felt that the parking stalls would be wide enough to accommodate existing electric vehicles, and wider vehicles in the future. She agreed that additional landscaping around the fence was needed.

Mr. Homburg asked the applicant if the stalls will be available for the general public, which the applicant confirmed. Mr. Homburg felt that the site would therefore be losing eight stalls. He said the plans seem to show that the bollards will impact the curb and gutter, and noted a potential grade issue near the equipment pad. He asked the applicant to consider how the grade change will be handled. Mr. Homburg requested distances to the property line on the plan sheets.

C. Public Hearing on Request by Cenex, Represented by Madisen Maher Architects, for Approval of an Updated Monument Sign at 925 E. Broadway. (Case No. S-007-2023)

Mr. Jason Hughes presented the application. The applicant is looking to update the existing monument sign to have LED fuel price displays. The sign will be self-dimming at night. A flag pole is also proposed.

There were no other appearances and the public hearing was declared closed.

D. Consideration of Action on Request by Cenex, Represented by Madisen Maher Architects, for Approval of an Updated Monument Sign at 925 E. Broadway. (Case No. S-007-2023)

Planning Director Plowman shared the staff report. The proposal is for an updated monument sign and a new flag sign. The flag sign can be approved administratively by staff. The monument sign as proposed is an approximately 46 sq. ft. LED-illuminated aluminum cabinet with polycarbonate faces, and will include the Cenex logo, the words "Pay at the Pump," and a digital fuel price display. The property is zoned Community Design District (CDD). The sign as proposed meets size and placement requirements per the Sign Code. The new sign will be an increase in size compared to the existing sign. Monument signs are required to be integrated with site landscaping, and existing landscaping is fairly minimal.

City Sign Code requires fuel price signs to be integrated with another sign and are allowed changeable copy. The Sign Code limits electronic message signs to institutional informational signs only. The sign will be self-dimming with 6% brightness at night, the electronic message component is 17% of the total sign area, and four of the other five gas stations in the City have electronic fuel price displays.

Mr. Homburg felt that an exception for the electronic fuel price display was appropriate. He suggested the finding of fact be edited to also acknowledge that no other messages on the sign are changeable. He also felt that better landscaping was needed and suggested flowering annuals. Mr. Homburg noted that the existing sign is not level and the new sign should be made level.

Mr. Gries agreed with Mr. Homburg about using flowering annuals for landscaping. The Commission had no other concerns and generally supported the proposal.

Alder Moore asked Mr. Homburg if a condition of approval should be added to make the sign level, which he felt was appropriate. He also felt that the finding of fact should include the State requirement to display fuel prices.

A motion was made by Mr. Homburg, seconded by Ms. Fox, to approve a sign permit for a monument sign including a fuel price sign as requested by Cenex, to be located at 925 East Broadway, as proposed and according to Chapter 480 Article XII of the Zoning Code of the Monona Municipal Council, with the following finding of fact and conditions of approval:

Finding of Fact:

1. An exception for an electronic message sign to display fuel prices is warranted due to the routine need to update the fuel prices, because Wis. Stat. 100.18(8) requires the display of fuel prices, and because no messages other than fuel prices are changeable.

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 glare from the lighting is deemed to be excessive by the Plan Commission, then the Plan Commission may require adjustments to the lighting.
3. A landscaping plan is to be submitted to City Planning staff for approval and landscaping shall be planted with the sign installation by July 1, 2023.
4. Changeable copy shall only be permitted for the fuel price displays.
5. The new sign shall be made level upon installation.

The motion carried unanimously.

Reports of Staff and Commission Members

A. Staff Report Regarding Status of Development Project Proposals.

1. Economic Development Update

Planning Director Plowman shared that the Community Development Authority (CDA) will be discussing the 5015 Monona Drive development at their next meeting. The developer is looking for a clear direction from the CDA before returning to the Plan Commission.

2. Potential Upcoming Plan Commission Items

Planning Director Plowman shared that the Menards electric vehicle parking is expected for formal consideration and a comprehensive sign plan is expected for South Towne Mall at the former Hobby Lobby space. The MG21 students will also likely return with a landscaping plan for the school parking lot.

3. Updates/Discussion on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Efforts.

None.

4. Updates/Discussion on Sustainability Efforts

The Commission had previously discussed showcasing the solar panels that Dave Jones installed at their campus. Planning Director Plowman shared the news in the April Monona E-Newsletter. Alder Moore shared that the Sustainability Committee would like to compile a list of all the solar panels in the City. Ms. Fallat added that the Sustainability Committee may also want to look at the developments which are roughing-in for electric vehicle charging.

Alder Moore shared that the City has applied for a grant funded by the Inflation Reduction Act to upgrade most of the City's street lights to LED. Mr. Homburg asked about the pilot test for LED street lights. Alder Moore said that they would have to check with Brad Bruun for the results.

5. Upcoming Meetings: May 8, 2023 and May 22, 2023

Planning Director Plowman shared that unless there are pressing items, the May 22nd meeting will likely be cancelled because he will be away.

B. Plan Commission Requests for Information from City Staff

Ms. Fallat asked for an update on the new tenants at South Towne and on the Madison School District RFP that GoRiteway pursued. Planning Director Plowman said that he did not have a timeline for when the tenants would begin construction and move in, but that they are

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working on a comprehensive sign plan. The bus proposal was unsuccessful in their contract bid, so it is on hold.

Alder Moore added that the Commission had previously asked for housing data, and that the Planning Department is working on a report. She reminded the Commission that an update to the Strategic Housing Plan was done in 2016 as part of the UniverCity partnership.

Adjournment

A motion by Mr. Stein, seconded by Mr. Gries, to adjourn carried. (6:55pm)

Respectfully submitted by:
Thor Jeppson, Assistant Planner