

Minutes
City of Monona
Plan Commission
Monday June 12, 2023

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

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

Excused: Alder Nancy Moore and Ms. Susan Fox

Also Present: Doug Plowman, Planning Director

Approval of Minutes

A motion by Mr. Conrad, seconded by Mr. Stein, to approve the minutes of May 8, 2023 carried with no corrections.

Order of Business

There were no changes to the order of business.

Appearances

None.

Unfinished Business

A. Public Hearing on Request by Monona Grove School District, for Approval of Lighting and Landscaping Plans as Conditioned in the Approved Zoning Permit for Parking Lot and Playground Improvements at 5301 Monona Drive. (Case No. 2-018-2022)

Mr. Jeff Carr of Monona Grove School District presented the application. He shared that the school district previously improved the parking lot and stormwater facilities in 2022. The current application includes the lighting plan and proposed landscaping improvements.

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

B. Consideration of Action on Request by Monona Grove School District, for Approval of Lighting and Landscaping Plans as Conditioned in the Approved Zoning Permit for Parking Lot and Playground Improvements at 5301 Monona Drive. (Case No. 2-018-2022)

Planning Director Plowman shared the staff report. The submitted lighting and landscaping plans are conditions of the approval of the 2022 zoning permit. The property is zoned Community Design District (CDD). The lighting plan as submitted shows the existing conditions. The Commission had previously requested that a formal plan be submitted to show the current lighting. No light trespass is apparent.

Previous discussions about the landscaping plans included the size of the landscaping beds and the opportunity to collaborate with the MG21 students, who have prepared the submitted plans. The green areas were temporarily stabilized and two of the landscaping islands have been mulched. The northern tree island, which acts as a catch basin, is not included in the proposed landscaping plan. The existing tree in the western tree island is to remain, and

Plan Commission Minutes

June 12, 2023

Approved June 26, 2023

three types of native grasses are proposed for each tree island. Grasses do not typically count towards landscaping points based on the City Ordinance. It was recommended that the Commission discuss the appropriate height for the vegetation, visibility within parking lot, and if additional trees are needed. Staff recommended approval of the landscaping and lighting plans.

Mr. Homburg felt that more trees were needed in the landscaping plan, particularly within the eastern island. He liked the inclusion of grasses. Mr. Homburg thought that more lighting would be beneficial in the area where busses line up, but deferred to MGSD. Mr. Conrad agreed about the need for more trees and lighting.

Ms. Fallat agreed that more trees were needed and also encouraged adding wildflowers such as milkweed or butterfly weed. She felt that the 5 ft. grasses may cause vision issues.

Mr. Stein pointed out the opportunity for additional trees near the edges of the parking lot and within the islands. The applicant replied that they were willing to consider more trees, but said that trees within the parking lot at Glacial Drumlin School have created asphalt issues. He also said that the shrubs have been impacted by salt. He felt that a tree could not be placed in the drainage pond because it has tile. In response to lighting concerns, the applicant said that they did not want to project light on to neighbors, and that the bus drops off 8:00-9:00am, and picks up at 2:30-3:30pm. Mr. Stein replied that trees were not necessary in the drainage pond, but were needed in the eastern island and along the southern edge. He suggested street trees for their heartiness and salt tolerance, and encouraged the applicant to remove feather reed grass and pink muhly grass from the plans, and replace them with native species instead.

Mr. Gries shared the same landscaping concerns, but was not concerned about the lighting. He said that the applicant could consider other fixtures to further limit spillover.

Alder DePula suggested bollard lighting in the bus area. Mr. Homburg said that there is sufficient natural light during bus drop off and pick up times based on Mr. Carr's information, which alleviated his concerns. Alder DePula asked the applicant if there were any afterschool activities which used the bus loading area, to which the applicant said there were not. The applicant added that there were additional wall lights on the building which were not included in the lighting plan.

Mr. Stein added the need for more detailed drawings of the proposed planting schemes. The applicant replied that the species were chosen by students and staff, and felt that it would be a beneficial learning opportunity for them to make the suggested changes. Mr. Homburg appreciated the learning opportunity. He recommended that the Commission give the students time to research the suggested changes and come back with edits in the fall. The applicant agreed with the plan and said that work wouldn't begin until the fall regardless.

A motion was made by Mr. Homburg, seconded by Mr. Gries, to table consideration of the landscaping plan and to approve a Zoning Permit for the lighting plan, as requested by Monona Grove School District, as proposed and according to Chapter

480-55 of the Monona Municipal Code of Ordinances with the following conditions of approval:

1. If site lighting becomes an issue in the future the Plan Commission may require additional site lighting be installed.
2. The applicant shall return to the Plan Commission for approval of the landscaping plan by October 1, 2023.

The motion carried unanimously.

New Business

A. Public Hearing on Request by Raposa Design for Approval of a Comprehensive Sign Plan for a New Multi-Tenant Space at 2351 W. Broadway. (Case No. S-013-2023)

Mr. David Israel, the property owner, presented the application. He shared that Hobby Lobby vacated the space one year ago, and the space has since been subdivided and leased to Michael's and Five Below, with a third tenant space unleased. He has worked with sign vendors and Planning staff to consider appropriate sizing for the new signage based on the previously approved Hobby Lobby signage.

Mr. Chuck Zimmerman of Capital City Signs presented the proposed signage for Five Below. A representative for Five Below shared that larger wall signs have been requested, as they feel it is more appropriate for the larger façade.

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

B. Consideration of Action on Request by Raposa Design for Approval of a Comprehensive Sign Plan for a New Multi-Tenant Space at 2351 W. Broadway. (Case No. S-013-2023)

Planning Director Plowman shared the staff report. The request is for a Comprehensive Signage Plan (CSP) for the three tenant building at 2351 W Broadway within South Towne Mall. Each tenant is requesting a wall sign on the north and south facades. Michael's and Five Below are proposing a tenant panel on the existing monument sign and temporary banner and active construction signage. On the monument sign, the existing larger panel for South Towne Mall will be replaced by the Michael's panel.

The parcel is zoned Community Design District (CDD). Buildings in the CDD are allowed one wall sign for each business on each façade which abuts a public street frontage with a maximum area of 150 sq. ft. Five Below has 66 ft. of frontage and is proposing a 225 sq. ft. sign on the front façade (including the blue background) and a 75 sq. ft. sign on the rear façade. Michael's has 96 ft. of frontage and is proposing a 135 sq. ft. sign on the front façade. The white background has not been counted in the signage calculation as it was determined to be an architectural element. Michael's is proposing a 46 sq. ft. wall sign on the rear façade. The future third tenant has 35 ft. of frontage. The CSP includes a 39 sq. ft. placeholder wall sign on the front and rear façades for that tenant. Five Below is also proposing a 5 sq. ft. suspended pedestrian sign under the canopy perpendicular to the store.

Staff recommends that the temporary signage, which includes the banner signs, active building signs, and vinyl clings, is allowed for a fixed duration. Planning Director Plowman pointed out that Michael's active building sign as proposed is located on Floor and Décor's property and needs to be moved on to the site.

Mr. Gries and Mr. Conrad had no issues with the proposed signage. Mr. Stein felt that the wall signs and tenant panels on the monument sign were appropriate, but was unsure about the need for the suspended pedestrian sign and if the board signs should be allowed.

Ms. Fallat agreed with Mr. Stein and asked the applicant if it was standard to have three types of temporary signage. Mr. Zimmerman replied that the board signs will help given the setback distance and said that similar packages have been used elsewhere in the region. Ms. Fallat also asked if the pedestrian sign was a store standard for Five Below. She felt it would look strange as the only business in the shopping center with a pedestrian sign, and said that other tenants couldn't have one due to the irregular façade. Mr. Zimmerman said that they are common at shopping centers but agreed it may look out of place. Ms. Fallat asked Mr. Israel if he was concerned about losing the South Towne Mall branding on the monument sign. He replied that it was not preferred, but was necessary to attract national retailers.

Mr. Homburg said that he was initially concerned about the amount of signage proposed, but given the recent loss of tenants at South Towne, the additional signage is necessary to support commercial uses and add vibrancy. He asked the applicant to clarify the background color of the Five Below sign. The applicant said it will be blue. Mr. Homburg pointed out that the sign code does not allow for board signs unless they are active constructive signs, which the proposed signs are. However, the Commission is considering an exception to allow them to remain up for a limited time after issuance of an occupancy permit. He liked the suspended pedestrian sign as it would make the building feel more like a shopping center and improves the pedestrian scale. He was okay with losing the South Towne panel on the monument sign given the need to attract national retailers.

Mr. Homburg suggested revising Finding of Fact #3 to state that the increase in the cumulative size of the signage is warranted given the exceptional depth of the building, not due to the subdivision, and revising Finding of Fact #5 to state that the white façade is an architectural entry feature. He did not feel that it was necessary for Condition of Approval #4 to require the temporary board signs to be located on premise, as long as authorization from the other property owner was received. Ms. Fallat felt that the basis for the exception granted in Finding of Fact #3 was more due to the building's setback rather than size. The Commission agreed to combine Findings of Fact #3 and #4.

A motion was made by Mr. Homburg, seconded by Mr. Gries, to approve a Comprehensive Signage Plan as requested by Raposa Design-Architecture, to be located at 2351 W. Broadway, as proposed and according to Chapter 480 Article XII of the Zoning Code of the Monona Municipal Council, with the following findings of fact and conditions of approval:

Findings of Fact:

1. 2351 W. Broadway fronts both W. Broadway Frontage Road and the Beltline Highway allowing for multiple wall signs.
2. The main signage is comparable to the former Hobby Lobby signage as well as other anchor tenants in this center.
3. A size exception and an increase in the cumulative size of the wall signs is warranted, as the signage is appropriate for the size of the building and given the extraordinary depth of the building, the substantial setback from W. Broadway, and the need for building identification from W. Broadway and the Beltline Highway.
4. The white-painted façade for Michael's is an architectural entry feature and not a portion of the wall sign.
5. An exception to allow for the active building signs to remain up for a short period after issuance of a building occupancy permit is warranted given the substantial setback from W. Broadway and the need to advertise for hiring purposes.
6. An exception for the size and number of banner signs is warranted given the scale of the building, substantial setback from W. Broadway, and the need to advertise for hiring purposes.
7. Temporary vinyl clings on the multi-tenant pylon sign panels are warranted given the need to advertise for hiring purposes.

Conditions of Approval:

1. All required state and local building permits shall be obtained.
2. As some signs are to be illuminated, an electrical permit shall be obtained from the City's Building Inspector.
3. If glare from the lighting is deemed excessive by the Plan Commission, then the Plan Commission may require adjustments to the lighting.
4. Active Building signs may be displayed for no longer than 30 days after issuance of a Building Occupancy permit.
5. Banner signs may be displayed for no longer than 30 days after issuance of a Building Occupancy permit.
6. Vinyl clings may be displayed for no longer than 30 days after issuance of a Building Occupancy permit.
7. Additional signage for the third tenant space shall require City Staff or Plan Commission review.

The motion carried unanimously.

Reports of Staff and Commission Members

A. Staff Report Regarding Status of Development Project Proposals.

1. Economic Development Update

None.

2. Potential Upcoming Plan Commission Items

Planning Director Plowman shared that The Bloom development will be on the agenda at the June 26th meeting with revised plans. A signage proposal is also expected for a new commercial tenant at Yahara Terrace.

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

Plan Commission Minutes

June 12, 2023

Approved June 26, 2023

Alder DePula shared that he and the Mayor met with County representatives regarding the Regional Housing Strategy. He said that there will be three more meetings before the group begins working on implementation. An implementation committee will likely be formed.

4. Updates/Discussion on Sustainability Efforts

Planning Director Plowman shared that Alder Teresa Radermacher and Assistant Planner Jeppson have been meeting with Department Heads to discuss sustainability metrics and reporting, and how it relates to the City's Green Tier Legacy Community (GTLC) reporting. He said that they will be meeting with the Planning Department soon.

Mr. Homburg said that sustainability improvements should make sense for Monona's goals, and cautioned against making unnecessary changes simply to improve GTLC metrics.

5. Upcoming Meetings: June 26, 2023 and July 10, 2023

B. Plan Commission Requests for Information from City Staff

None.

Adjournment

A motion by Mr. Stein, seconded by Mr. Gries, to adjourn carried. (7:11pm)

Respectfully submitted by:
Thor Jeppson, Assistant Planner