

Minutes
City of Monona
Plan Commission
Monday June 28, 2021

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

Present: Alder Nancy Moore (Chair), Alder Kristie Goforth, Mr. Chris Homburg, Mr. Robert Stein, Ms. Susan Fox, Mr. Brian Holmquist, Mr. Patrick DePula and Ms. Coreen Fallat

Also Present: Doug Plowman, City Planner and Elisa Guerrero, City Planning Intern

Approval of Minutes

A motion by Ms. Fox, seconded by Alder Goforth, to approve the minutes of June 14, 2021 carried with one correction.

Appearances

None

Unfinished Business

A. Public Hearing on Request by Galway Companies for Approval of a New Comprehensive Signage Plan and Feature Wall at 6408 Bridge Road. (Case No. S-010-2021)

Mr. Homburg recused himself from the discussion.

Mr. Yoder of Sign Art Studio, representing Galway Companies, shared that the signage proposal and feature wall had not changed since the last Plan Commission meeting other than formally including the 3 square feet interior sign on the entrance to the public parking garage.

B. Consideration of Action on Request by Galway Companies for Approval of a New Comprehensive Signage Plan and Feature Wall at 6408 Bridge Road. (Case No. S-010-2021)

Mr. Plowman shared the staff report, summarizing the comprehensive signage plan and proposed feature wall. Comments from the previous meeting were positive overall. He highlighted the interior parking sign and recommended discussion of the sign as well as ideas for delineating public parking from resident parking.

Mr. Holmquist and Mr. Stein said that the whole feature wall should not be considered a sign, only the sign overlay that read "The Current". Alder Goforth felt that the entire feature wall should be considered signage if a sign that says "The Current" is overlaid on the wall, but could be considered only artwork if there was no sign on top of it. She felt it was a precarious precedent to set for murals or art walls in the future. Ms. Fox said that the feature wall in this case was unique because the building had frontage on multiple streets and because the art was not depicting an item to be sold, like in the case of a retail business painting a mural of the kinds of products they sold.

Mr. Holmquist said that the feature wall could be considered a background for the sign, similar to the way that the building archways painted in brand colors for tenants of the Pier 37 development were considered architectural details, not signage. Ms. Fallat said that the

language in the zoning permit should make very clear what part of the wall is considered a sign and what is not, to help address Alder Goforth's concern.

Alder Moore asked if, in previous discussions about the development, the public parking was intended only for customers of businesses in the Current buildings, or if it was intended for all businesses along Inland Way, like the Breakwater. Mr. Holmquist and Mr. Stein said that when parking was previously discussed, it was generally discussed for the development as a whole, although they did not remember if parking at the second Current building was meant for all businesses specifically. Mr. Yoder clarified that, having spoken with Mr. Doran, the development agreement states that neither customers of the Breakwater or Four Lakes Yacht Club had access to the underground parking.

Mr. Stein and Ms. Fox felt that the sign listing businesses for which public parking was intended was appropriate and that including Grand Crossing Park on the sign adequately covered more public uses of the space. Ms. Fallat agreed that the sign was appropriate, but wondered if it was large enough to be easily visible.

A motion was made by Mr. Stein, seconded by Ms. Fox, to approve sign permits for new wall signs, address sign, feature wall as well as on-site directional and warning signs in the Comprehensive Sign Plan, requested by Galway Companies for Phase 2 of "The Current" development, to be located at 6408 Bridge Road, as proposed, and according to Chapter 480 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 building faces three different streets and is deemed eligible for an increased allocation of wall signage.
2. The address sign is allowed to exceed mounting height and size due to the scale of the frontage along Bridge Road and the need to effectively identify the building address.
3. The feature wall (without the additional wall sign) is deemed to be an architectural feature and does not count towards the square footage calculation of signage for the building. However, the overlaying wall sign is part of the square footage of the building, and this sign is included in the approved package.

Conditions of Approval:

1. If the signs are 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.
3. The final location and mounting of the vehicular and pedestrian warning signs along Inland Way shall be coordinated with City Staff such that they are located outside of the vision triangle.
4. The applicant shall work with City Staff to effectively delineate public parking within the interior of the underground parking lot.

The motion carried (Mr. Homburg abstained).

New Business

A. Public Hearing on Request by Mala Yoga Center, Represented by Grant Signs for New Signage at 5734 Monona Drive. (Case No. S-011-2021)

Mr. Jonathan Coon, from Grant Signs, explained that the proposed sign location (perpendicular to Monona Drive) was atypical, but was the location of the previous tenants sign. The sign was a cloud cabinet sign for the letters and a cabinet sign of the logo.

B. Consideration of Action on Request by Mala Yoga Center, Represented by Grant Signs for New Signage at 5734 Monona Drive. (Case No. S-011-2021)

Mr. Plowman said that the sign area of 23 square feet was appropriate, given the building's 40 ft. of frontage. The sign meets code and follows the Monona Drive Design Guidelines. The sign's location made sense given the slope of the roof towards Monona Drive.

The Commission members agreed that the sign location was appropriate. Mr. Homburg and Mr. Stein said that the cabinet sign was appropriate in this case because it was curved to show the shape of the letters and there were no channel letter signs on the building. Mr. Holmquist asked if the applicant had considered adding a landscape ground sign, and Ms. Casey responded that she had no such plans at the moment.

A motion was made by Alder Goforth, seconded by Mr. DePula, to approve the request by Mala Yoga Center for a new wall sign to be located at 5734 Monona Drive, as proposed, and according to Chapter 480 Article XII of the Monona Municipal Code of Ordinances with the following finding of fact and conditions of approval:

Finding of Fact:

1. The cabinet sign is being allowed as it follows the contours of the letters and gives the illusion of backlit letters.

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 excessive by the Plan Commission, then the Plan Commission may require adjustments to the lighting.

The motion carried.

C. Prehearing Conference on Request by Compass Properties and The Neutral Project for Consideration of a Zoning Permit for Construction of a New Mixed-Use Building at 4601-4711 Monona Drive. (Case No. 2-016-2021)

Mr. Helbach and Mr. Davis presented the development proposal, which consisted of ground floor commercial space (possible tenants included BMO Harris Bank, a fitness center and a coffee shop) and three additional floors of residential apartments. There would be one level of underground parking and additional surface parking. The development would offer a car-sharing program for residents, which would reduce the amount of parking necessary by about 10%. The building's fourth floor would be stepped back to reduce the building's massing along Monona Drive. Additionally, the building would provide electric vehicle charging as part of a community car share service, a 100kW rooftop solar array, and green roof space in line with the goals of the applicant.

Mr. Plowman shared the staff report, calling out that the area was currently zoned as commercial use and may need to be re-zoned to Community Design District or to pursue a Planned Unit Development. He also suggested discussion of the building's massing, the possible ground floor retail uses, and how the car-sharing option would affect the parking requirements for the site.

Ms. Deb Reynolds, 203 Starry Ave, shared concerns about the building's size and density it would create, in addition to the increased traffic it would create. She asked that more of the units be 2-3 bedrooms, to accommodate families, rather than studio and 1-bedrooms.

Ms. Becky Alexander, 4807 Wallace Ave, also expressed concerns about increased traffic from the development, given that street parking is already tight due to high school students parking in the area.

Mr. Homburg said that a general Development Plan and Precise Implementation Plan would likely be necessary or the property would need to be rezoned. Mr. Holmquist felt the land use was appropriate and various commission members expressed appreciation for the sustainability features of the development.

Mr. Homburg, Mr. Stein, Ms. Fox, and Alder Moore commented that the proposed density of the development was a little too high for the area. Some commission members worried that the size and density of the building strained the available green space on the site. Additionally, Mr. Homburg said that the proposed parking might not be sufficient for the site, even taking into account the car-sharing program. Mr. Holmquist, Alder Moore and Alder Goforth agreed that the parking difficulties, which are linked to the proposed density, would require further discussion.

Mr. Homburg, Ms. Fallat, Ms. Fox, Mr. Holmquist recommended the building be set further back from Monona Drive, and that the landscaping along Monona Drive be increased to soften the look of the building. Mr. Homburg, Mr. Stein and Mr. Holmquist liked that there were no curb cuts on Monona Drive, while Alder Goforth expressed concern about vehicle traffic conflicting with pedestrians, especially on Gordon Ave. The Commission agreed that traffic flow would be important for the site.

Mr. DePula asked if the developers would consider a certain percentage of the units being designated for affordable housing, which Alder Moore, Alder Goforth and Ms. Fallat, agreed was a good idea. Mr. Helbach said they could consider affordable units. Ms. Fallat, Alder Moore and Ms. Fox recommended looking into different commercial tenants, since there are already several fitness centers and coffee shops along Monona Drive.

Reports of Staff and Commission Members

A. Staff Report Regarding Status of Development Project Proposals.

1. Economic Development Update

2. Potential Upcoming Plan Commission Items

Mr. Plowman shared the upcoming meetings would include a zoning permit for One City Schools and a couple other zoning permits.

3. Upcoming Meetings: July 12, 2021, July 26, 2021

The commission will return to in-person meetings for the July 12th meeting.

B. Plan Commission Requests for Information from City Staff.

Plan Commission Minutes

June 28, 2021

Approved July 12, 2021

Alder Goforth requested that Mr. Plowman discuss the Immaculate Heart of Mary's bell tower schedule with the owners, because of neighborhood complaints.

Adjournment

A motion by Mr. Stein, seconded by Mr. Holmquist, to adjourn carried. (9:11pm)

Respectfully submitted by:
Elisa Guerrero, City Planning Intern