

MINUTES OF THE ALBERT LEA PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting
February 6, 2024
5:30 pm – City Center

Chairman Lucas Schuster called the meeting to order at 5:37 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jared Dawson
Rachel Christensen, Ex-Officio
Matt Dorman
Matt Maras
Lucas Schuster, Chair
Steve Thompson

MEMBERS ABSENT

Wyeth Anderson, Vice-Chair
Leon Axtman

STAFF PRESENT

Cierra Maras, Development Services Administrative Assistant
Wayne Sorensen, City Building & Zoning Official

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Maras and second by Dorman to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Schuster and second by Maras to approve the December 5, 2023 meeting minutes as presented with one change. Motion carried.

Staff report prepared by Megan Boeck, City Planner, is to become part of these minutes by reference.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Amending Section 42.089. – Recreational vehicle parking and storage in residential districts.

Sorensen stated that staff had some difficulty determining when a parking area should be paved or not which made enforcement difficult to administer. He stated this amendment clarifies where pavement is and is not required in residential areas for parking, such as RVs next to a house.

2. Amending Section 50.0018. – Accessory buildings, fences and site appurtenances.

Sorensen explained that this amendment has been requested by residents for a while and it is a new allowance of a fence height to be 4' in the front yard if it is 90 percent see through.

3. Amending Section 50.0395 & 50.0396. – Principal permitted uses & Conditional permitted uses.

Sorensen stated that staff has inconsistently administered enforcement on industrial type warehousing in the B-2 district. This amendment removes mini-warehousing from being a principal permitted use in a B-2 district and moves it to be a conditional permitted use. It also clarifies the design standards for mini-warehousing as a conditional use.

4. Amending Section 50.0402. – Building design standards (B-2 Community Business District).

Sorensen stated this amendment clarifies some screening requirements that had inconsistent language and building materials allowed in the B-2 district. Changes include materials allowed on vertical surfaces of building fascia as well as window space requirements. A new requirement was also added to provide screening for ground mounted equipment and exterior ductwork. Screening is currently required for rooftop equipment so this new change will include screening for ground mounted equipment.

5. Amending Section 50.0818. – Building design standards (Diversified Central District).

Sorensen stated this amendment allows for an expansion of metal building materials allowed in the Diversified Central District. He stated staff is trying to modernize materials allowed and this amendment will now allow non-corrugated metal roofing, siding, or prefabricated metal panels with hidden fasteners.

6. Amending Chapter 50, Article III, Division 21. – Shoreland Management District.

Sorensen stated that this ordinance was never updated after the annexation of the Wedgewood Cove area and this amendment will reflect the inclusion of Pickerel Lake. There will also be a new requirement to obtain a permit from the Development Services Department for any clearing or alterations within the shore impact zone and on steep slopes. He explained that after-the-fact permitting, inspections, and shore restoration becomes extremely costly and this permit requirement will hopefully help prevent unauthorized shoreland alterations.

7. Repealing & Replacing Chapter 50, Article IV. – Signs.

Sorensen explained that this is a complete replacement of the existing sign ordinance that staff has considered to be inconsistent, cumbersome, and incomplete as it relates to current signage practices and requests. This new ordinance contains additional and modified definitions, slightly reduced sizes

in different districts, clarifies prohibited signs and nonconforming signs, creates an allowance for flags, feathers, and yard signs, and more.

Schuster opened the hearing to the public at 7:12 pm

Robert Hoffman, on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce board members, thanked staff for updating the sign ordinance and said it was something businesses needed and it should help make it easier for people to want to join the downtown area.

Schuster closed the hearing to the public at 7:13 pm.

Motion by Schuster and second by Maras to recommend to City Council approval of seven ordinance amendments and the replacement of the sign ordinance as written.

Motion passed on a 5-0 voiced vote.

COMMISSIONER COMMUNICATION

None.

STAFF COMMUNICATION

Sorensen stated he will be bringing solar and wind ordinances forward in an upcoming meeting to review as well as the tiny home ordinance. He also stated the tiny home ordinance will be set up like a tiny development district.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Thompson and second by Dorman to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 pm. Motion carried.



Cierra Maras, Planning Commission Secretary



Lucas Schuster, Chairman