

City of Decorah
Planning and Zoning Commission
August 12, 2019 – 7:00pm
Meeting Minutes

Members present included: Llew Jenkins, Nathan Thompson, Tony Clarke, Stan Moellers, Ryan Delaney, and Barbara Massman.

Absent: Joel Zook

Others present: Zoning Administrator / City Manager Chad Bird.

Consider approval of minutes from the July 8, 2019 meeting

Motion by Massman and seconded by Delany to approve the minutes from the July 8, 2019 regular meeting.

Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.

Motion passed.

John Jenkins, 901 Park Street, asked to be placed on the agenda for the Commission's September meeting in order to review the C-3 Design Codes with the Commission.

Consider C-3 Commercial Design Review re: 105 West Water Street, GamesXP – permanent sign – tabled from July 8, 2019

Bird noted the owner / applicant of this store has modified the sign color based on comments from the Commission at the July 8 meeting. He stated the sign background blends with the building so only the "lettering" is of a different color.

Bird reminded the Commission the item was tabled on July 8 and recommended action to taking the item off the table and then a motion to consider the C-3 application.

Motion by Massman and seconded by Clarke to take the item off the table for consideration.

Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.

Motion passed.

The applicant, Tim Borseth was present and reviewed the sign and conditions with the commission. Jenkins asked about any future lighting proposed. Borseth replied he is considering some back-lighting but has not completed a concept or proposal. Jenkins noted she would like to see any proposed lighting come back in a separate application.

Motion by Clarke and seconded by Thompson to recommend approval of the sign in the C-3 Design application for 105 West Water Street.

Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.

Motion passed.

Consider C-3 Commercial Design Review re: 101 West Water Street, VIDA, LC – remove and replace existing steps and landing on South / rear side of building, replace with new metal steps

Bird reviewed this application and noted it is slated for a public hearing and easement with the City Council. He noted due to the impact of the improvements to the side of the building the work is being reviewed through the C-3 application process.

The proposal is to remove the dilapidated concrete stairs / loading dock at this site and replace with a steel structure. The work proposes rear entry stairs and the new stairs will encroach into the alley right-of-way approximately 18-inches.

The building owner, Stan Fullerton is working with others to remodel the building at this address.

Jenkins asked about any safety lighting and Fullerton noted he was uncertain what the plan will be for lighting.

Motion by Moeller and seconded by Jenkins to recommend approval of the stairs in the C-3 Design application for 101 West Water Street.

Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.

Motion passed.

Consider Site Plan Review re: 300 East Water Street, Re: Dry Run Park

Bird, Parks & Recreation Director Andy Nimrod and City Engineer Jeremy Bril reviewed the proposed park design with the Commission.

Bird noted a grass-roots volunteer group, led by individuals involved in the recent Community Visioning process has begun to design, develop, and fundraise for a pocket park on the East edge of the Downtown area. Bird noted Bril has completed a site plan review and a staff report and they reviewed the information.

Nimrod spoke briefly regarding the fundraising component.

Bird advised the Commission, while this site plan is unique, it should be reviewed and considered as any other site plan review / C-3 application process.

Bird and Bril noted there no known code, zoning, or public works issues other than the items outlined in Bril's report.

Motion by Thompson and seconded by Jenkins to recommend approval of the Dry Run Park site plan.

Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.

Motion passed.

Consider Site Plan Review re: 1101 Montgomery Street, Re: Kwik Star

Bird noted staff has completed a checklist review of the site plan application. There are a couple of discussion points, but the majority of the check items appear to comply with the city code sections.

Bird noted there are some technical pieces he and Bril will work with the applicant on address in a pre-construction meeting.

Wade Drumond, representing Kwik Star was present and discussed the general site plan components.

Jenkins asked about traffic congestion and there was some discussion on this topic.

Drumond noted Kwik Star builds to LEED certification but does not seek LEED credentialing due to costs.

Bird noted in his review there are three possible instances where the applicant may apply for a variance through the Board of Adjustment, this will be at the applicant's discretion;

Possible Board of Adjustment variances

17.52.010 - Off-street loading spaces required.
33 required – 27 offered.

17.88.040 - Bulk regulations.
Commerce Drive side at street ROW – 25' required, 11'6" shown.

17.88.030 - Permitted accessory uses – signs.
Section 17.16.120 prohibits the use of electronic signs of any type. Digital sign is shown and proposed for post sign.

City utility departments are still in review of this submittal for some of the utility connections and other technical details.

**Motion by Clarke and seconded by Delaney to recommend approval of the Kwik Star site plan for 1101 Montgomery Street.
Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.
Motion passed.**

Consider review of City Code Title 17 – solar equipment

Bird noted Zook has been working with the Winneshiek Energy District administering a grant toward a SolSmart designation with the City and the outcome would be a significant honor and bragging rights.

The energy districts of NEIA (including Howard and Clayton) are working together on this program. Other local gov'ts that have signed on include Winn Co Supervisors, City of Cresco, City of Elkader, City of Monona. The efforts to keep energy dollars local and clean through locally-owned solar, while led clearly by Decorah in recent years, are being admired and emulated by our neighbors.

The "goals" section can vary widely, and include just about anything related to solar that the community is interested in, including the following or others

- Ensuring that zoning and possible future permitting processes are transparent, efficient, and supportive of solar development
- Defining and incorporating goals for locally-owned solar and solar jobs into the community's sustainability plan

- *Partnering with local non-profits and the business community on community engagement and solar market transformation*
- *Becoming a model community for the efficient and attractive use of solar canopies over public parking lots, possibly in combination with public electric vehicle charging stations*
- *Developing a robust metrics tracking system for locally-owned solar impacts related to economic savings and emission reductions*
- *Pursuing city-owned solar PV, possibly together with storage for emergency operations backup*

The City's Comprehensive Plan notes a preference for solar activities:

9.7 Land Use Policies

Solar access rights and energy conservation are encouraged in the review process of subdivision plats and site plans.

11.10 Sustainable Design

The City of Decorah promotes sustainable design and construction standards in developments, buildings and infrastructure. Every effort should be made to conserve natural resources by reducing waste and pollution through efficient use of land, energy, water, air, and materials. These principles are evident in the land use policies (see 9.6) promoting solar access rights and energy conservation.

Zook's intent with this information is for the Commission to consider proposed changes to the zoning code to be more sympathetic to solar and solar building installations.

The Commission noted they would review the information.

Consider review of City Code Title 16 – subdivisions (2nd review)

Bird noted this is a continuation of the discussion over the last two months. Bird asked for any changes or discussions.

Delaney raised some discussions and questions regarding sidewalks and street widths. There was also some discussion about the relevance to Statewide Urban Design and Specifications (SUDAS). Brill noted there is some overlap and there was conversation about being as clear as possible with some descriptions.

Bird noted when the Commission has completed review, he would submit to City Council for code amendments.

Motion by Thompson and seconded by Jenkins to recommend approval of the proposed code amendments to Chapter 16 – Subdivisions of the City Code.

Roll call vote: Ayes; Thompson, Jenkins, Moellers, Delaney, Clarke.

Nays; Massman.

Absent; Zook

Motion passed.

Discussion and possible action on zoning code sections related to short-term lodging units and rentals

Bird reported information summer intern Ira Kuehn has collected regarding short-term rentals in the community. In 2017 there was a total of 26 different Airbnb listings within the city limits of Decorah. Since then, 53 new listings have gone up on the Airbnb website while 8 of the original 26 are no longer listed.

This gives us a total of 71 current Airbnb listings that are within the city limits of Decorah. To come up with these numbers we searched the Airbnb website using Decorah as a filter and recorded all of the listings that came up. If you do this you will notice that the website gives you 108 results because it includes listings that are outside of the city limits and in nearby towns such as Calmar, Highlandville, or Waukon. The website gives an approximate location for each property instead of an address, so we used the county's GIS Beacon site with the "Decorah Zoning" layer to figure out what zone each of the listings fall into. We found that out of the 71 listings 45 are in zone R-3, 13 are in zone R-2, 1 listing is in zone R-1, and 12 are in zone C-3.

There was general discussion and some on the commission asked if the information and addresses could be plotted on a map.

Bird said they could do this and that he and Kuehn would also gather some information on licensing and registrations from around the state.

Other business

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm

Respectfully submitted,



Chad A. Bird
City Manager
Zoning Administrator