

Submitted May 1, 2019

Approved May 8, 2019

**MINUTES OF THE ROCKVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING NO. 11-2019
Wednesday, April 10, 2019**

The City of Rockville Planning Commission convened in regular session in the Mayor and Council Chambers at 7:00 p.m.
Wednesday, April 10, 2019

PRESENT

Gail Sherman – Chair

Anne Goodman

Sarah Miller

Don Hadley

John Tyner II

Charles Littlefield

Rev. Jane Wood

Present: Eliot Schaefer, Assistant City Attorney
Jim Wasilak, Chief of Zoning
Deane Mellander, Zoning Administrator
Tamara Dietrich, Zoning Inspector

I. RECOMMENDATION TO MAYOR AND COUNCIL

A. Zoning Text Amendment TXT2019-00250, Comprehensive Sign Code Revisions; Mayor and Council of Rockville, Applicants.

Deane Mellander presented an overview of the proposed changes to the Sign Code. He noted that staff has recommended that pole signs become nonconforming and that an amortization period be implemented such that those nonconforming pole signs would be required to be removed after eight years. He also highlighted major changes, including the allowance of off-premises signs in certain circumstances, the optional sign package, changes to the regulations for the MXE Zone, and that the Sign Review Board should be dissolved or restructured.

Ruth Hanessian, former member and chair of the Sign Review Board, addressed the Commission at the request of the Chair. She expressed concerns about the proposed changes and the Sign Code in general, based on her experience as a business owner and Sign Review Board chair. Her concerns included: that directory signs were not large enough for shopping centers, lack of enforcement on “bandit” signs; that there should be a level playing field among developments; whether off-premises signs are a good idea; and that the fees are too high for a sign modification, among others.

Alan Frankel, current Chair of the Board of Appeals, also addressed the Commission. He expressed the following concerns: that the proposed amendment does not address video and laser signs, which are increasingly popular; that the temporary sign category should include “estate sale”; that the Board of Appeals should not be the authority to approve modifications to the sign code via the variance process; that the term aesthetically pleasing is vague; that pole signs should

not be made nonconforming, and the amortization of pole signs is a taking; and that election signs should not be regulated.

The Commission discussed their concerns with the proposed amendment and the testimony received. A suggestion was made that an alternative to information signs could possibly be in an app, which could function as a directory to businesses and points of interest. Other discussion topics included: whether the Sign Review Board should be dissolved; whether certain definitions should be clarified, including temporary, durable and political signs; that enforcement is an issue; concerns about fees; that sign twirlers should be prohibited; and that there should be a level playing field among properties and sign regulations.

Commissioner Hadley noted the following concerns that were expressed by the Commission: temporary signs, pole signs, Sign Review Board dissolution, fees that are too high, a level playing field, technology, whether variances should be granted by the Board of Appeals or an administrative process should apply.

Commissioner Hadley moved to provide a generally favorable recommendation to the Mayor and Council, subject to consideration of specific items listed. The motion was not seconded, and the Commission discussed next steps. The Commission decided to revisit the Text Amendment at the next meeting, with a breakdown of each issue of concern and some options to consider. A clean copy of the Text Amendment with no redlines so the Commission may review that version will also be provided. Deane reviewed the list of concerns to confirm the list with the Commission, temporary signs, pole signs, Sign Review Board dissolution, fees that are too high, a level playing field, technology, whether variances should be granted by the Board of Appeals or an administrative process should apply, as well as fees and the concept of aesthetically pleasing.

The Commission asked if staff could request that the Mayor and Council public hearing could be delayed until May 13 so that the Commission could submit its recommendation in time.

II. COMMISSION ITEMS

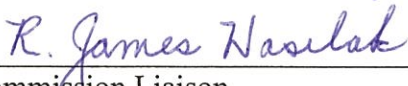
- A. Staff Liaison Report – Jim Wasilak reported that the next meeting would be on April 24. There will be one Final Record Plat, a resubdivision in the Preserve at Tower Oaks, and a Text Amendment for recommendation addressing uses in the MXE Zone, in addition to further consideration of the Sign Code Text Amendment. He also noted the May 8 meeting, as well as the public hearings for the Master Plan on May 15 and 22.
- B. Old Business – None.
- C. New Business - None.
- D. Minutes
 - 1. March 13, 2019: Commissioner Goodman moved, seconded by Commissioner Tyner, to approve the March 13, 2019 minutes as drafted. The motion passed 6-0-1, with Commissioner Littlefield abstaining.
 - 2. March 27, 2019: Commissioner Tyner moved, seconded by Commissioner Goodman, to approve the March 27, 2019 minutes as drafted. The motion passed 4-0-3, with Commissioners Hadley, Littlefield and Wood abstaining.

E. FYI Correspondence – None.

III. ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, Commissioner Wood moved, seconded by Commissioner Goodman, to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 p.m. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Commission Liaison

