

City of Moline

PLAN COMMISSION

Wednesday, September 11, 2013
4:00 p.m.
Council Chambers

AGENDA

1. PC 13-11 Public hearing for a request from Brad Bagby (applicant) and the Eagle Crest Condominium Association (owner) to rezone property located at 4341 26 Avenue from R-2 One-Family Residence District to R-4 One to Six-Family Dwelling District. (Shawn Christ, Land Development Manager)
2. PC 13-12 Public hearing for a request from the City of Moline to rezone property located at 2500-2600 River Drive from ORT Office, Research & Technology District to B-2 Central Business District. (Shawn Christ, Land Development Manager)
3. Call to Order
4. Approval of Minutes – August 21, 2013
5. Consideration: PC 13-11
6. Consideration: PC 13-12
7. Review upcoming meetings
8. Other

Any person with disabilities who wishes to attend the meeting who requires a special accommodation or any other person requiring a special accommodation in attending the meeting should notify Marty Wessels, Department of Planning & Development, 524-2030.

**Plan Commission
Minutes
Wednesday, August 14, 2013**

PRESENT: Dan McConaghy (Chairman), Cindy Wermuth (Vice Chairman), Pete McDermott, Butch Trevor, Matt Puck, Jeff Nelson, Mike Wendt, Dennis Kelly, Mike Crotty

ABSENT: John Wetzel, Bill Fitzsimmons

STAFF: Shawn Christ, Marty Wessels, Jeff Anderson

OTHERS: Scott Mullen, Executive Director of iWireless Center
Kevin Snodgrass and Rocky Jones, iWireless Center staff
Roger Strandlund, attorney for iWireless Center

Chairman Dan McConaghy called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. in the Moline City Council Chamber.

Mr. Christ swore in those persons who expressed interest in providing testimony for public hearing on the agenda.

- 1. PC 13-09 Public hearing for a request from the Illinois Quad City Civic Center Authority (d/b/a "iWireless Center") for a variance to Sec. 3-2104 and Table 3-2105.2 of chapter 3 of the Moline code of Ordinances to allow installation of a dynamic display sign which will include animated characteristics and will comprise 84% of the total sign area, exceeding the 50% allowance in a B-2 zoning district on property located at 1201 River Drive.**

Chairman McConaghy opened the hearing for PC 13-09. Mr. Christ began by stating that the Commission members received the staff report, miscellaneous applications and copies in their packet and asked that the recording secretary enter the items into the report for the case. Mr. Christ then stated that the Public hearing notice was published in the Dispatch on July 28th.

Mr. Christ started his presentation by showing a map with an aerial photo showing the subject property along the river front and along river drive, the property is zoned B-2 which is the central business district. Mr. Christ also stated that the location of the existing sign is near the arena's main entrance on River Drive and 12th Street. Mr. Christ then showed a copy of the tax parcel map, and showed the property boundary, and the prior property lines, which existed before the arena was built. Mr. Christ then showed pictures of the existing sign which is original to the building that was built in 1993, to Mr. Christ's understanding the sign has outdated technology, and the parts are not available and the iWireless Center would like to upgrade to new LED technology. Mr. Christ continued by stating the dimensions of the current sign as 12 ft x 5ft for the total of the dynamic or electronic sign, and there is a blank black panel below the electronic sign, then a static sign panel that shows the name of the arena below. The arena would like to replace the electronic portion and the black panel with the new dynamic display sign. Currently the dynamic portion is 42 sq ft, the black divider is 21 sq ft and the iWireless panel is about 30 sq

ft with a total of about 93 sq ft in size. This would be the size of the replacement dynamic sign, all within the existing frame. Mr. Christ stated that with those dimensions, the new dynamic sign would be 84% of the total sign area. The portion of the sign below that says iWireless will remain static. It will be electronic but will remain static. Mr. Christ stated that there are three review criteria that must be considered for a variance. The first criterion is special circumstances which in affect cause unreasonable or unnecessary hardship. Mr. Christ continues by stating that the site is very large, it is 16 acres in size and if the frontage were broken down, the amount of frontage determines the amount of signage and the number of signs that they are allowed to have on their street front. The iWireless Center has 1300 ft of frontage and in the downtown district businesses are allowed 1 sign per every 100 ft of frontage so this site could accommodate up to 13 free standing signs. Mr. Christ stated that the iWireless Center is unlike a number of other business, their success is critical to Moline, there is a long planning history, which is important not only Moline but to the Quad City region. The arena draws large crowds and need to attract top acts and national concerts. Contemporary marketing and advertising techniques are needed, and this sign is a big component of that. Mr. Christ stated that he read the comprehensive plan and it does have goals for business development and economic development all within the down town area.

Mr. Christ stated the second criteria is no substantial injury to property value and can't be detrimental to public safety or the welfare of the neighborhood. This is located in the center of the downtown business district; it is the hub of the downtown. There are, way finding signs that direct traffic and tourist to that area, and it is part of the John Deere Commons tourism destination, there are entertainment land uses, hotels, offices, corporate offices, transit help across the street and industrial land uses just to the west, there are no residential dwellings in this vicinity with the exception to the hotel which does have guestrooms next door. There are very few driveways with access points out onto the street. It is also replacing the existing sign, they are not proposing the sign be increased in size, and the public is accustom to that sign which is electronic, and is changing and animated presently.

Mr. Christ then stated the third criteria which must be offsite or onsite conditions which would mitigate any adverse impacts. As said earlier, the sign replacement will occur within the existing structure there is no increase in the overall size a portion of that sign will remain static and display the arenas name.

Mr. Christ stated that if there are any concerns about the increase size or the animation, conditions can be included on the site. The purpose of that would be to preserve the integrity and the character of the downtown. That could be utilized to mitigate any potential adverse impacts that we see. There were some concerns about animated signs, distractions were one concern and the other was ascetics, so standards were created that talked about the size, for instance the sign must be balanced with a 50% ratio and minimum scroll time, so signs can't continue to flash or animate. The question is if that is appropriate for the arena downtown. One of the things that Mr. Christ stated he considered as he wrote the report is if animation is allowed on this sign, must it continue 24 hours a day 7 days a week, is this necessary for the arena to market and draw a crowd to the arena site. This is something that is important in this case, can the arena still accomplish goals with the sign that is fully animated of this size.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends that Plan Commission approve the variance with the following conditions:

- Proposing that the animated characteristics would only be allowed between the hours of 8:00 am and 11:00 pm or until the parking lots clear at night and that would be 7 days a week. Beyond those hours the animation would need to cease, in other words it can't flash or strobe and it can't display video. But it could display illuminated messages over night as long as those messages comply with city ordinances, essentially they would need to display a message with a minimum of 12 seconds then could change to another message no flashing no strobe lighting, but it could be illuminated and it can run overnight.
- Secondly it must meet noise and brightness standards, the noise standards should still apply, particularly with the hotel next door, the brightness standards, are reasonable, it will still allow the sign to be visible and legible in all weather conditions but the limitations would still apply particularly for a sign of this size.
- Last in exchange for that, consider limiting the amount of free standing signs on their property, staff is proposing 3 signs, staff would consider other suggestions if the Commissioners think there might be a better number than that, which would also be something to consider with this variance for a larger sign and fully animated, that having a limitation on the number of signs would be appropriate.

Commissioner Kelly asked what the rationale for not allowing animation from 11 p.m. to 8 a.m. but allowing it the rest of the day, if it was because of the people in the hotel.

Commissioner Nelson pointed out there is no line of sight between the Radisson and the sign.

Mr. Christ explained it's not really an issue with the hotel but more a matter of the City's concerns with distraction and community aesthetics with dynamic signs, and if the animation is necessary during the overnight hours when they are closed for business.

Commissioner Wermuth asked if the signs on John Deere Road stop overnight. Mr. Christ replied the billboards don't animate; we only have two signs in Moline that animate lawfully: Mills Chevrolet, who has a sign variance; and Moline High School, who is operating under a nonconforming grandfather clause.

Commissioner Nelson asked if this is an audio sign. Mr. Christ replied he doesn't believe it will have sound. Commissioner asked about complaints regarding the high school sign's animation. Mr. Christ replied he has received 6 or 8 complaints regarding sign's wild display at all hours of the day, given the nature of the school and its location.

Commissioner Wendt asked if there was any discussion regarding the proposed limit of 3 free standing signs. Mr. Christ responded there was no direct discussion but we forwarded our staff report for review and comment and they did not respond with any concerns specific to the sign limit.

Commissioner Trevor asked about the sign technology and the "iWireless Center" name panel; could it be changed? Mr. Christ replied the technology will allow the center's name to change but the applicant has said it will not change. Commissioner Trevor commented we don't know

how long the iWireless Center name will be around. The Commission generally agreed that whoever has the naming rights will likely want the arena's name constantly displayed on the panel.

Chairman McConaghy asked if there were any other questions or comments on the staff report. Hearing none, he asked for comments or questions from the audience.

Scott Mullen, Executive Director for the iWireless Center, mentioned he didn't think about the shift change at the adjacent John Deere and Arsenal buildings and thought a 7 am start time would be better to reach those employees. Commissioner Crotty said 6 a.m. might be best. Commissioner Wendt asked about future signs, any issue with a limit of 3, 4, or 5 signs? Mr. Mullen said future expansions might warrant an additional sign or two, but a three sign limit shouldn't be a problem.

Chairman Nelson asked if it is a talking sign. Mr. Mullen replied no, there will be no audio.

Chairman McConaghy asked Mr. Mullen to explain the need for animation. Mr. Mullen replied the technology allows graphic images for an event and helps sell it better. Chairman McConaghy asked if they could live with 12 seconds the way the code is written. Mr. Mullen replied they would rather not; they could live with it but want to get their money's worth without taxpayer support. Chairman McConaghy asked if they considered traffic danger implications with an animated sign. Mr. Mullen said no, but this type of sign is not an issue, citing other examples in Dubuque and Bettendorf.

Commissioner Nelson commented that competing facilities all have comparable signs, including the River Center and other convention centers in Chicago they compete with. This is a competitive edge issue based on the location. Mr. Mullen said some arenas build animated walls on the buildings.

Commissioner Kelly asked if the animation will be like stadium scoreboards, similar to a movie or video? Mr. Mullen said it has that capability but their goal is to display pictures of the artists and acts. Commissioner Kelly said he understood they were asking for continuous animation and asked staff to clarify their proposal. Mr. Christ said they are asking for a full waiver of the limit on animation, and read the definition of "animated sign" found in the sign code.

There being no further comments, the public hearing was closed.

2. Approval of minutes – June 26, 2013

Motion by Kelly, seconded by Wermuth, to accept the June 26, 2013 minutes. Both complimented Secretary Marty Wessels for a great job. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Consideration: PC 13-09

Commissioner Crotty stated that he feels 6 a.m. would be a better animation start time for employees heading to work at John Deere Seeding, Cylinder, and the Arsenal. Commissioner

Nelson stated we didn't put limitations on the billboard hours of operation in commercial areas, others agreed.

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Wendt, to approve the sign variance and include staff's recommended conditions 2 and 3, but eliminate condition 1. Commissioner Wermuth asked about the delay time and Commissioner Nelson mentioned there would be no time limitation.
Motion carried unanimously.

4. Review upcoming meetings

Mr. Christ stated that August 28th would be the next meeting and that there is no business and suggested that the meeting be cancelled unless there are objections from the Commission, then stated that on September 11th there is a rezoning application so there will be a hearing.

5. Other

Mr. Christ stated the subdivision code that had been mentioned in the past, that the city budgeted money to update the subdivision code, and are moving ahead with that, but not sure which consultants are qualified do that work, which consultants are able to steer us in development codes and infrastructure standards. Mr. Christ stated that the city did issue a request for qualifications; they are due the end of next week. Once the statements are received, then we will be revealing that, and come up with a short list and then send a targeted request for proposals, at this point there has not been much of a response, there were a couple of out of town firms stating they wouldn't respond and one Chicago area firm that said they did some work in Peoria so we are expecting to receive some interest to this. Mr. Christ stated at this point I would open it up for the Commission on how much involvement you would like in the subdivision code recently without planning documents and studies, if there is any interest from the group we can have 1 or 2 individuals sit in and be involved in some key meetings. Mr. Christ stated that perhaps the Commission would like to be a part of the consultant selection; this will be something that will be fairly technical, the engineering employees will be involved as well, there will be talk about street and infrastructure standards. Mr. Christ stated that if anyone is interested feel free to let himself know and they can certainly be accommodated. When the project is done it will go to Plan Commission with a proposal and recommendation to amend and then go to City Council.

Commissioner Nelson asked since Bi-State worked on a Joint Subdivision Code for Illinois Quad Cities, will you continue along that path or will you start something new?

Mr. Christ stated that we would be reviewing that as well and will ask the consultant to do that. There are some specific needs that we will want to make sure that we incorporate some early things that were identified, the street lights for instance and the planning and approval process.

Commissioner Wermuth asked if there is any movement with Southpark, are they talking anymore, and that she heard Sears was moving.

Mr. Christ stated that Sears had announced they are closing in October. The last he heard the mall owners are trying to get access to John Deere road, a right in right out access point, front and center near the Gordman's building and feel that it would be necessary to help with the

redevelopment. Ray Forsythe has been involved in a number of meetings as well as the city administrator, Lew Steinbrecher. They are really trying to get that done at this point and that will involve IDOT. The rumor is, and there is not a confirmation, that the Sears store will be demolished and made into parking.

Mr. Anderson stated he had a quick update for the commission that a couple of members are participating on the advisory committee for the update of the Moline Centre plan and Florencia Neighborhood Plan and the Edge Water Neighborhood Plan so essentially the riverfront from East Moline to Rock Island and there is a kick off meeting scheduled at the end of this week, and work will begin in earnest. The consultant selected was the Lakota Group and with the participation of the Plan Commission, Renew Moline and City staff, the Lakota Group has worked in the area since the early 90's for various clients and seems to have a pretty good familiarity with our community and currently working on at least one additional project in the area. So there will be a number of public meetings that will be encouraging Plan Commission participation if you have time and opportunity, we will be back with periodic updates. Based on state funding this project is scheduled to close out April 30th, so this will be a pretty tight time frame to get all the work done, but will be back with more information for you.

Chairman McConaghy thanked Mr. Anderson for the update and asked for a motion for adjournment.

No other items were discussed.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:34 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Marty Wessels
Recording Secretary