



MEETING MINUTES

Planning and Zoning Commission

Thursday, October 30, 2014

4:00 PM

City Hall, 200 Rusk Street, Council Chambers

Members Present: Emanuel Albarado, Nathan Dempsey, William Koontz, Teresa McElreath, and Bill Williams
Members Absent: Lynn Monden
Staff Present: Linda Ames and Julie Smith
Visitors Present: Carter Thurmond and Dwain Coffey
Chair: Bill Williams

Item 1 - Declaration of Quorum

With a quorum present, Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm.

Item 2 - Approval of Minutes for September 23, 2014

Commissioner McElreath moved to approve the minutes from the September 23, 2014, meeting as presented by staff, and Commissioner Albarado seconded the motion. All present voted AYE. Motion carried unanimously.

Item 3 – Consider a Variance Request from Sign Ordinance

Chair Williams read the work session item into the record and invited the applicant to speak about his request.

Carter Thurmond with Comet Signs presented the request for a sign variance for Lowe's Market located on California. He also introduced Dwain Coffey, the store manager in Gainesville. Mr. Thurmond shared pictures of Lowe's Market and said the store needed the additional signage (more square footage than the Ordinance permitted) and also a much taller pole sign so they could easily be seen from I-35. The Commissioners requested clarification of the calculations. Community Services Director Julie Smith addressed the questions posed by the Commissioners, and explained how the calculations work under the sign ordinance. CSD Smith explained that other neighboring businesses have taller pole signs than what is now permitted by ordinance, because the signs are grandfathered in and are legal non-conforming. The Commission is limited by Article 1, Section 1.14.05, in what it may consider for variances; economic hardship may not be considered. Consequently, staff's recommendation was to deny the request for the variance.

Though the Commission could not find grounds for granting the variance, Chair Williams encouraged Comet Signs/Lowe's Market to revisit the variance request at a later date after staff has had an opportunity to draft language addressing pole height concerns. Commissioner Koontz moved to deny the variance with the consideration of revisiting the request and Commissioner Dempsey seconded the motion. All present voted AYE. Motion carried unanimously.

Item 4 – Consider Approval of a Final Plat for Phase 1 of the Gateway Industrial Park

Chair Williams read the item into the record and requested staff present their report.

CSD Smith explained the importance of developing the entryway into the Gateway Industrial Park for economic development of the Park. She outlined Phase 1 and explained that it included the entryway, part of the main road, and infrastructure related to the project. CSD Smith also highlighted the letter presented by Ron Sellman, Director of Public Services. As required by ordinance, the Public Services Director’s letter states that the City’s engineer (Eikon) determined the project does meet city requirements.

Chair Williams reiterated that without this initial phase it would be very difficult to develop the Park. Chair Williams then entertained a motion to recommend approval to proceed with the Gateway Project. Commissioner Dempsey moved to approve and Commissioner Koontz seconded the motion. All present voted AYE. Motion carried unanimously.

Item 5 – Adjourn regular meeting

Commissioner McElreath moved to adjourn the regular meeting and Commissioner Albarado seconded the motion. All present voted AYE. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 4:44 pm.

Item 6 – Open Meeting Work Session: Discussing zoning issues related to the Central Area District

CSD Smith suggested that the Commission may like to visit a larger city’s downtown are, such as McKinney or Denton, to help envision what might be applicable for Gainesville. She suggested focusing on the infrastructure of other squares like they had in Decatur. Commissioner Dempsey expressed concerns for adequate parking downtown for employees of downtown businesses. CSD Smith agreed that the concern would have to be addressed and managed as Gainesville continued to grow. Commissioner Dempsey requested to see before and after pictures of larger cities squares. CSD Smith also suggested bringing in a professional planner to discuss different experiences in different towns.

The Commissioners discussed I-35 corridor signage and how staff might amend the ordinance to address the recent concerns of applicants. Commissioner McElreath suggested increasing pole height along California, up the IH-35 corridor, and along Highway 82 at the I-35/Highway 82 intersection. Staff agreed to draft language for the Commission’s consideration at the next meeting.

Item 7 – Adjourn Work Session

Commissioner McElreath moved to adjourned work session meeting and Commissioner Dempsey seconded the motion. All present voted AYE. Motion carried unanimously. The work session adjourned at 5:20 pm.

Signature of Chairman: *Paul Williams* Date: *12-9-2014*
Signature of Secretary: *Linda May Ames* Date: *12-9-2014*