

**MINUTES
CITY OF AMES
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

Date: September 5, 2018	Matt Converse, Chairperson	2020
	*Carlton Basmajian, Vice Chairperson	2020
Call to Order: 7:00 PM	Anuprit Minhas	2019
	Doug Ragaller	2019
Place: Ames City Hall Council Chambers	Mindy Bryngelson	2021
	Jon Emery	2021
Adjournment: 9:13 PM	Carol Spencer	2021
	[*Absent]	

MAJOR TOPICS DISCUSSED:

1. Major Site Development Plan for 2151 Cottonwood Road
2. Zoning Text Amendment for DSC for Height and FAR Exceptions
3. Zoning Text Amendment for Interior Climate Controlled Storage
4. Zoning Text Amendment to Change Parking Lot Landscaping Requirements
5. Zoning Text Amendment to allow Remote Parking in NC Zoning District

CALL TO ORDER: Matt Converse, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION: (Ragaller/Emery) to approve the Agenda for the meeting of August 1, 2018.

MOTION PASSED: (6 - 0)

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AUGUST 1, 2018:

MOTION: (Emery/Ragaller) to approve the Minutes of the meeting of August 1, 2018.

MOTION PASSED: (6 - 0)

PUBLIC FORUM: None

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE MAJOR SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR 2151 COTTONWOOD ROAD

Kelly Diekmann, Planning Director, presented to Commission the approved plans for an apartment complex and parking lot built at 2151 Cottonwood. Mr. Diekmann stated the amendment presented was similar to one for an apartment complex built across the street from 2151 Cottonwood that was approved by both Commission and Council. The changes requested by the property owners are to alter the configuration of the garage to make it slightly larger and to change the siding material from metal to detailing them with a brick wainscot and trim. Mr. Diekmann stated this is consistent with both the current environment of the neighborhood and

the property's previous approval. It does not change the findings from the prior site development plan that was approved.

Ms. Minhas asked why the change in material is being proposed now. Mr. Diekmann replied that the change in size is due to code requirements and that the material changes are because of the builder's preferences.

Mr. Emery asked if the proposed changes were similar to those Commission previously debated about over the apartment complex across the street. Mr. Diekmann said that these changes were consistent with what Council approved for that property after they heard Commission's comments. He said it was essentially the same design as the previously approved garages across the street.

Ms. Minhas asked if this design was the same as the one previously approved for the apartment complex across the street. Mr. Diekmann stated that in terms of material, trim treatment, and siding, yes it was. Ms. Minhas stated that if this matches Commission's previously approved recommendations, she approved of them this time as well.

Mr. Diekmann clarified that there is a minor difference. The garage has one detailed side and one plain side due to a small break between the garage buildings. The break has no visible façade. This is consistent with the previous plans. Planning wanted to address only the visible sides, not all four.

Mr. Emery confirmed that the previous project in the area had a wraparound facing the walkway as well. Mr. Diekmann agreed and stated there was a requirement with the North and South Cottonwood sides which were adjacent to a walking path that did not exist yet. This is fundamentally consistent with the proposed plan. Emery asked if the plantings were going to be the same as the previous project. Mr. Diekmann replied it is slightly different. One side has a requirement of a 10-foot landscape treatment because it is next to mostly single family homes. The North side is Government Zoning due to it being adjacent to a city park.

Ms. Minhas asked for a better visualization of what the façade would look like from the park perspective. Mr. Diekmann described the orientation and explained the layout. He reiterated that this design is similar to what was approved previously.

MOTION: (**Spencer/Ragaller**) to accept Alternative #1, which states: that the Planning and Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council approve the Major Site Development Plan Amendment for 2151 Cottonwood Road, as proposed, to allow for revisions to the garage siding material, and changes to the dimensions of each garage.

MOTION PASSED: (6 - 0)

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT FOR DSC FOR HEIGHT AND FAR EXCEPTIONS

Kelly Diekmann, Planning Director, presented to Commission a proposed Text Amendment that was initiated by City Council as a result of a workshop in June. Kurt Friedrich had addressed Council at that time requesting more flexibility in design regulations for Downtown Service Center Zoning. This resulted in Council initiating an exception process amendment.

The exception process amendment would focus on the perimeter of Downtown, specifically 6th Street. The proposed amendment does not remove the requirements for a two-story building or one-hundred percent floor ratio development to Downtown. It would allow an exception process for someone who was submitting a development that did not meet the current standards. The exception has been limited to only Downtown's 6th Street area and requires approval from the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Developers cannot, however, utilize this exception to build a parking lot in the area. The current question is if this amendment should be applicable to strictly additions or be expanded to new developments in the area as well. The FAR exception still would suggest buildings that are not a full two stories have a taller height requirement to maintain appearance consistency with both Contemporary Commercial and Historic Downtown. There should be an expectation of a second story element for the same reason.

Mr. Emery asked that if they were developing anything behind the post office on the corner of 6th and Burnett, would it have to have its storefront on 6th Street. Mr. Diekmann stated since that is a corner lot, it would not have to have its door on 6th Street. It would, however, have to have windows for means of transparency.

Ms. Minhas asked if this zoning text amendment stemmed from one individual's request to Council. Mr. Diekmann stated that, in the past five years, three developers have come to staff for projects that didn't meet the current requirements. Mr. Friedrich was the first to go before Council with the issue. Ms. Minhas said she struggled with a text amendment affecting an entire zoning area for one individual situation. Mr. Diekmann replied that Council was very specific that this should apply to the 6th area only and would not risk negatively affecting Main Street or 5th Street.

Ms. Minhas asked for some clarification for those businesses that would possibly have frontage on both 6th and 5th Street. Mr. Diekmann stated that the 5th Street side would have to maintain the restrictions of being a two-story building. It could utilize the exception for its 6th Street side, but not for the whole structure. Ms. Minhas asked if they could recommend language that assures that construction on 5th Street maintains the two-story requirement and the exception only applies to the 6th Street side.

Ms. Spencer reminded Commission that, regardless of any language change, all exceptions still must go to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. She suggested less-restrictive language so that the Zoning Board of Adjustment has the ability to make an appropriate decision.

Ms. Minhas said it appears City staff would greater define this ordinance as it prepares to go to Council, and Mr. Diekmann confirmed.

MOTION: (Bryngelson/Emery) to accept Alternative #1, which states: The Planning & Zoning Commission can recommend to City Council that an exception to the minimum height and minimum FAR be allowed for existing structures on lots with 6th Street frontage. The criteria for authorizing such exceptions by the Zoning Board of Adjustment would include design standards focused on street design features, minimum height, partial FAR reduction, and overall site design.

MOTION PASSED: (6 - 0)

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT FOR INTERIOR CLIMATE CONTROLLED STORAGE

Kelly Diekmann, Planning Director, explained that this text amendment was a response to a developer request in regards to ministorage standards, specifically dealing with climate control. Currently there is a three-story height restriction and one-story if it is adjacent to a residential area. In this situation, a developer is looking at repurposing the former K-Mart property partially for storage space as part of an overall retail project. The developer believes they can add a second floor within the building since it is over twenty feet tall, but current code regulations would not allow this since a section of the property is adjacent to a residential area.

Council initiated this amendment and staff is asking Commission to define the term "adjacent". Staff recommends that 50-feet is an appropriate setback for this area. Mr. Diekmann elaborated that there are a lot design standards with ministorage being considered. It is normally viewed as industrial use and typically not recommended for commercial areas. The proposed amendment is still subject to the Zoning Board of Adjustment to ensure that its purpose is appropriate to the area. Commission is simply defining the setback as 50-feet in lieu of the term "adjacent".

Ms. Bryngelson asked how staff settled on a setback of 50-feet. Mr. Diekmann explained that 20-feet is the norm for setbacks adjacent to residential and 50-feet is the minimum lot width. In this situation, staff felt the minimum distance of a full lot width seemed appropriate.

Mr. Converse asked if there had been any communication with the neighbors West of the property. Mr. Diekmann stated not yet due to the way the project is developing. The project is subject to Commission and Council review. Eventually, they will be notified of the whole project. They will also be notified individually a second time once a special use permit comes through for it.

Mr. Emery asked if this was going to allow motor home storage behind the building, and Mr. Diekmann said no. The storage has to be enclosed.

MOTION: (Emery/Ragaller) to accept Alternative #1, which states: The Planning and Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council adopt the proposed text amendment regarding a 50-foot setback for multi-story interior climate controlled mini-storage facilities adjacent to a residential site.

MOTION PASSED: (6 - 0)

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT TO CHANGE PARKING LOT LANDSCAPE REQUIREMENTS

Justin Moore, Case Planner, presented to Commission a text amendment in regards to parking lot tree planting standards in nonresidential parking lots. Mr. Moore began by explaining how the current standards are in place. Approved last year, the current standards were in place after being initiated by Council to be reviewed. Staff met with developers, engineers, and others within the community for input. Goals included greater flexibility, sustainability, aesthetics, and other issues pertinent to those involved with landscaping standards. Mr. Moore continued by presenting to the Commission visual differences between the current standards and the amendment being proposed.

Mr. Moore then presented the options being brought to Commission by City staff. This included reducing front yard tree plantings from 1/50 linear feet to 1/100 linear feet, reducing parking lot planting requirements by 25%, or leaving the current standards as they are.

Mr. Emery asked if this is being proposed due to a developer request. Mr. Diekmann stated this is being brought forth by City staff due to the frequency it is brought up in their review process. Mr. Emery asked how many sites have conformed to the current standards. Mr. Diekmann said all sites are currently conforming to it.

Ms. Bryngelson asked for an example of the proposed amendment. Mr. Moore presented three slides visualizing the current ordinance versus the proposed changes.

Ms. Spencer asked, in regards to the examples, what is the net change in parking spaces between the original and proposed standards. Mr. Moore and Mr. Diekmann explained that it varies on how the developer would redesign the lot. Mr. Diekmann continued that the question proposed tonight is if there is room to provide more flexibility or if the current standards should remain as-is.

Mr. Emery asked if there was a visual of alternative #2 and Mr. Moore presented the comparison between the second alternative and the current standards.

Ms. Spencer asked if there was an option for developers to request an exception under the current standard. Mr. Diekmann replied by stating no. In the state of Iowa, if you cannot meet a standard unless an exception process is created for the Zoning Board of Adjustment to review, it's construed as a variance. The variance standard is too high in Iowa for those to request an exception for a preference.

Mr. Converse asked if Mr. Diekmann found the standards before the 2017 change that was requested earlier by Mr. Ragaller. Mr. Diekmann said yes. The primary difference between the form and current standards was the parking lot was defined by how it was striped. For example, depending how you striped the lot, one could get out of having any trees within it. Our current standards don't reference striping. It's a clear 10% of the parking lot size that determines the total planting.

Scott Renaud, Fox Engineering, requested to table this discussion and return it to staff for further review. He says developers are having issues with utility and light pole placement. The tree standards can further complicate this issue. Mr. Renaud referenced a property he is working on currently. Right now he doesn't get credit for certain trees that are used as a windbreak. He believes wind is a greater issue than the current standard's focus on heat and shading. Mr. Renaud said he would like to pull this back and meet with staff to tweak some of these issues.

Ms. Bryngelson asked Mr. Renaud if he is requesting the entire ordinance to be revisited. He said no, but there are some items that can be smoothed out. Ms. Bryngelson asked for clarification from staff that the proposed amendment is just for corner lots. Mr. Diekmann concurred, and stated Council narrowly verified this issue.

Mr. Emery asked if they do not allow evergreen trees in parking lots. Mr. Diekmann explained that they are allowed, but not credited as a parking lot tree due to the fact they are not encouraged be used as such.

Mr. Diekmann addressed Mr. Renaud's request to table the amendment by stating that would have to be addressed at a different time. It cannot be tagged on to the current item.

Ms. Spencer asked, when this revision happened, did staff have a specific list of design patterns in mind when creating the current standards. If so, was it presented in a public forum. Mr. Diekmann said it was presented publicly several times and that it was an 18-month process.

Mr. Emery asked if the ordinance that was put in place last year was well-thought out and what Council wanted. Mr. Diekmann stated it was a complete rewrite and a lot of time was focused on getting improved standards adopted.

Mr. Emery noted how it may be confusing if the ordinance keeps changing. Mr. Renaud then clarified he isn't asking for a complete change. He is only asking for refinement on the ordinance.

Mr. Renaud asked Mr. Diekmann how this amendment got presented. Mr. Diekmann explained that the Fareway in Downtown is looking at renovating their site. They requested a number of changes to Neighborhood Commercial sites and this was addressed along with that project.

Ms. Minhas acknowledged Mr. Renaud's concerns with the text amendment. She agreed that there are times when issues can be found when new ordinances are put in place. There is value in looking at these issues. She also acknowledged the amount of time and focus that went into the recently adopted ordinance. She suggested Commission should keep the ordinance as-is, and possibly review it after a longer period of time.

Ms. Bryngelson thinks the current ordinance was a great improvement to the one previous. She agreed that there could be some reduction of trees in parking lots, but her focus would be in the frontage.

Mr. Emery suggested they keep the ordinance as-is.

Mr. Converse allowed Mr. Renaud to return to address Ms. Bryngelson's concern of frontage trees.

Ms. Spencer stated she feels most comfortable keeping the ordinance as-is, but added she would recommend reviewing it after it has been in place for a longer period of time.

Minhas agreed with Ms. Spencer's recommendation to review for process improvement at a later date. Mr. Diekmann explained how this would be approached from a City Council perspective, and how these issues are addressed through a work plan.

MOTION: (Minhas/Emery) to accept Alternative #3, which states: The Planning & Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council not make any changes to the standards if it finds the current standards are an appropriate balance of landscaping and parking expectations.

MOTION PASSED: (6 - 0)

MOTION: (Spencer/Bryngelson) Ms. Spencer made a second motion that Council review landscaping standards after a period of time deemed appropriate to see if there are any areas for improvement.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT TO ALLOW REMOTE PARKING IN NC ZONING DISTRICT

Justin Moore, Case Planner, presented to Commission a text amendment initiated by Fareway to allow remote parking in a Neighborhood Commercial District. Remote parking allows commercial properties, or the city, to come to an agreement and allow off-site parking for businesses. Most Commercial Districts allow remote parking, but Neighborhood Commercial is one of the few that do not. Fareway has requested this amendment to have off-site parking while they are under construction.

Ms. Minhas asked if this is shared parking. Mr. Diekmann stated no, that is a separate area of the Code. Remote parking is allowing a company to move its parking off-site and the area cannot be used for any other purpose.

Ms. Minhas asked if there is a limit or percentage of how much a business's parking must be on-site or off-site. Mr. Diekmann stated no, a property could place 100% of its parking off-site if necessary. In Fareway's instance, they will have some spaces on-site.

Ms. Minhas asked about handicapped spaces on-site. Mr. Diekmann stated, if parking is provided on-site, they are required to have their first space be handicap-accessible. If it was fully off-site, then the on-site accessibility requirement would not apply.

Mr. Emery addressed his concerns about Fareway's off-site parking affecting the surrounding residential areas. Mr. Diekmann said that the off-site parking couldn't be on residential property. It has to be off the street and subject to Council approval.

Ms. Minhas asked for clarification if this would apply to all properties in the Neighborhood Commercial Zone. He said it would apply to them, but not to any property in a Residential Zone.

Scott Renaud, Fox Engineering, addressed his concern with this proposal. He has previously needed remote parking in the South Lincoln Mixed Use Area and it was not on the table for use. He stated Neighborhood Commercial, as a zone, is impractical and needs to be thoroughly reviewed.

Mr. Diekmann addressed Mr. Renaud's concern by stating that the area he wanted to utilize for remote parking actually could've been. He continued, saying that there are a lot of Neighborhood Commercial zoning requests at the upcoming meeting due to the Fareway's renovation.

Mr. Emery asked if it were possible to recommend a temporary approval of the amendment. Mr. Diekmann stated there isn't. Commission could recommend that staff look into a remote parking process related to temporary construction, but the Code doesn't currently allow him to authorize temporary remote parking at this time.

Ms. Bryngelson asked why Fareway's requests are broken up. Mr. Diekmann explained that Fareway's project is large and has several requests. It was easier for staff to break it up piece-by-piece for different sections of the Code.

Mr. Emery addressed his concern about recommending this to Council and causing future issues with Neighborhood Commercial. Mr. Diekmann stated businesses would still have to be approved by Council on a case-by-case basis, or Commission can motion for staff to look into temporary remote parking in regards to construction.

Ms. Minhas asked if a temporary remote parking for construction ordinance would apply to all zones or just Neighborhood Commercial. Mr. Diekmann stated he did not recommend this to just one zone, it would best to apply it to all zones.

MOTION: (**Ragaller/Bryngelson**) to accept Alternative #1, which states: The Planning & Zoning Commission can recommend to City Council that the standards for remote parking be modified to include Neighborhood Commercial zones in the list of permitted zones in Section 29.406(18)(a).

MOTION PASSED: (6 - 1) (nay: Emery)

COMMISSION COMMENTS:

MOTION: (**Emery/None**) that Planning Staff present the temporary remote parking for temporary construction to Council.

MOTION FAILS DUE TO LACK OF SECOND

Ms. Minhas asked staff, in instances with zoning text amendments, if Commission could have a map instead of a list to visually assist Commission members. Mr. Diekmann stated that they would in certain cases but they chose not to this time. Due to the large area covered, it wouldn't be legible information.

Mr. Emery suggested a longer period of time to review the agenda packets. Mr. Diekmann stated it would be very unlikely, but acknowledged the concern due to delays with mail delivery. The packet is online on Friday.

STAFF COMMENTS:

Mr. Diekmann pointed out at the last Council meeting, they went over the work plan and the items involved within it.

Mr. Ragaller asked about any updates on the K-Mart site. Mr. Diekmann stated it would most likely be presented to Commission at the next meeting.

Mr. Emery asked if there was anything coming in for the west mobile park. Mr. Diekmann explained that the Crestview Mobile Park is under Story County jurisdiction.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

MOTION: (Ragaller/Emery) to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:13PM.



Matt Converse, Chairperson
Planning & Zoning Commission



Ben Lievens, Recording Secretary
Department of Planning & Housing