

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING ON FEBRUARY 9, 2009

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bacarella at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of East Tawas City Hall.

Members Present: Bacarella, Eklund, Leslie, Millard, O'Neil and Council Representative McMurray

Members Absent: Cotter (excused) and Pehrson

Staff Present: Zoning Administrator Chartier, City Manager Leslie and Deputy Clerk/Treasurer Klinger

Members Jim Bacarella and Dave Leslie took the Oaths of Office.

Millard, moved, Leslie seconded, CARRIED, to approve the minutes from the January 12, 2009 regular meeting as presented.

Doug Newenhouse of Tawas Bay Beach Resort, 300 East Bay Street, 121-O40-999-005-80, and John Acres of Sign Image were present to discuss the LED sign request for Tawas Bay Beach Resort and amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Newenhouse explained that the LED sign is not a request, but a need. There are times when he has four businesses running at his location and he needs an effective tool to get information out. Members have been discussing LED signs over the past few months and conveyed that their goal is to do what is right for the community and they need to ensure they are careful in drafting an ordinance amendment. There is a difference between distraction and attention and there is concern that an LED sign has the potential to be more of a distraction. It was the consensus that the electronic message centers (which includes LED and LCD signs) should only be allowed on US-23 in the HSC and WF zoning districts and that the size should be limited to half the allowable size for a free standing sign, but not exceed 32 square feet. No off-premise advertising should be allowed and the signs should have self-dimming properties. Zoning Administrator Chartier will draft an ordinance addressing those issues and will have the draft ready for a public hearing at the next meeting. Millard moved, Eklund seconded, CARRIED, to move forward with the ordinance amendment and schedule a public hearing to be held at the next Planning Commission meeting on March 9, 2009.

Millard moved, O'Neil seconded, CARRIED, to allow Chairman Bacarella to abstain from discussion and action regarding the sign permit request from KFC/Long John Silvers due to his attorney-client relationship with the applicant.

Vice-Chairman Leslie assumed the chair.

Jim and Mike Russo presented a request for a 4x8 changeable copy sign for their business located at 600 West Bay Street, 121-N30-006-001-00. They have had the sign approved as a temporary sign over the last couple of weeks and have been very impressed with the response to the messages and, as a result, are requesting the sign be allowed on a permanent basis. The sign as proposed is considered temporary and would have to be permanently mounted to the ground.

Members discussed the current number of signs and, since the property fronts three public rights-of-way, the number of allowed signs can be increased. To meet the 5-foot setback requirement, the sign would have to be located either in the grass median or in a parking space. Upon review of the approved site plan for the property, the number of parking spaces already exceeds the amount required by the Zoning Ordinance so locating the sign in a parking space would not compromise that requirement.

O'Neil moved, Millard seconded, CARRIED, to approve a sign permit request for KFC/Long John Silvers, 600 West Bay Street, 121-N30-006-001-00, for a 32-square-foot, 5-foot high monument sign set back 5 feet from the property line under Section 1008-E-3 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Chairman Bacarella reassumed the chair.

Zoning Administrator Chartier shared that she has been doing a review of the signs in town and sending letters to businesses who do not have permits on file for their existing signs. Over the next few months, members should expect to see a number of sign permit applications come through for existing signs.

Leslie moved, O'Neil seconded, CARRIED, to approve a sign permit request from O'Connor's, 116 Newman Street, 121-A30-005-012-00, for an existing 12-square-foot wall sign for which no permit was on file under Sections 1008-A and 1009 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Leslie moved, Millard seconded, CARRIED, to approve a sign permit request from Whitetail Restaurants, Inc., 221 Newman Street, 121-A30-019-005-00, for an existing 5-square-foot wall sign and 24-square-foot projecting sign for which no permits were on file under Sections 1008-A and 1009 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Leslie moved, Eklund seconded, CARRIED, to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Annge Klinger, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer