

CITY OF FREMONT
MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE FREMONT CITY COUNCIL
AND THE FREMONT PLANNING COMMISSION

Tuesday, August 25, 2009
Fremont City Hall

Call to Order: A joint meeting of the Fremont City Council and the Fremont Planning Commission was held in the Council Chambers at the Fremont City Hall on Tuesday, August 25, 2009. The meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m. by Planning Commission Chair Don Henry.

At the outset of the meeting, Chair Henry welcomed the Fremont City Council and explained that the Council was invited to the meeting for the purposes of taking part in discussions on some issues (e.g., signs) in the Fremont Zoning Ordinance.

Fremont Planning Commission Members Present: Chair Don Henry and Commissioners Jack Butterick, Dennis Caplis, Jane Drake, Marcia Eib, Jim Krouse, Peg May, Jim Sloan and Lon Vredevel

Fremont City Council Members Present: James M. Rynberg, Jim Breinling, Dick Conley and Jane Drake

Fremont City Council Members Absent: Larry Breuker

City Officials Present: Bryan Gruesbeck, Fremont City Manager
Todd Blake, Fremont City Clerk
Michele Ribant, Fremont Zoning Administrator

Review and Approval of the Meeting Agenda

A motion was made by Jack Butterick, seconded by Jim Sloan and carried to approve the agenda as presented for the August 25, 2009 meeting.

Approval of the Fremont Planning Commission Minutes

Chair Henry indicated that Becky Tuuk's name was spelled incorrectly in the July 28, 2009 minutes. A motion was made by Marcia Eib, seconded by Jim Krouse and carried to approve the minutes from the July 28, 2009 Regular Planning Commission meeting with the correction as noted.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Public Hearing – Amendments to the Fremont Hybrid Form-Based Zoning Ordinance

Chair Henry opened the public hearing at 4:06 p.m. He explained that the purpose of the hearing is to receive comments on the proposed changes to the Fremont Zoning Code. He said the proposed changes were properly noticed, and he outlined the proposed changes as follows:

Section 4.05 – Downtown Main District Regulations – Projections: The proposed amendments will allow for a change in distance of projections (awnings, canopies, etc.).

Section 4.05 – Downtown Main District Regulations – Awning or Canopy Signs: The proposed amendments will allow for changes in the design criteria for awnings or canopy signs.

Chair Henry went over the proposed changes to the language under Section 4.05 dealing with projections and Signs (awning or canopy), and the language reads as follows:

Section 4.05

Projections

- No part of any building, except overhanging eaves, canopies, awnings, covered walkways, balconies, shopfronts and bay windows, as specified by this District shall project forward of the RBL.
- The sections of the building façade at the RBL may include jogs of not more than 18 inches in depth, except as specified by this district to allow shopfronts, bay windows and balconies.
- ~~Awning, canopies or balconies shall not project closer than 5 feet to a common lot line.~~
- Awnings or canopies that project over the sidewalk portion of a street space shall maintain a clear height of at least 8 ft. ~~and project a minimum of 6 ft. perpendicular to the façade.~~

Signs (Awning or Canopy)

- ~~An awning or canopy~~ sign may be painted, stenciled or otherwise affixed flat to the surface or fascia, ~~of the awning or canopy~~ and cannot extend vertically or horizontally beyond the limits of the awning. -
- ~~Characters and graphics can be no more than 12 inches in height take up no more than 50% of the awning or canopy surfaces that face the primary street.~~
- ~~No more than 2 awnings and/or canopies per frontage shall contain signs.~~
- ~~The combined area of all signs on one awning or canopy shall not exceed 40% of the awning area directly facing the street, or 25 square feet, whichever is less.~~
- One suspended sign may be suspended under an awning or canopy for each ~~business ground floor~~ establishment, not exceeding 4 sq. ft. in area and having a minimum clearance of 8 ft. above the sidewalk.

Chair Henry asked if anyone would like to speak to the issue, and no one from the public spoke to the issue of the proposed amendments to the Fremont Zoning Code.

Chair Henry closed the public hearing at 4:10 p.m.

A motion was made by Jane Drake, seconded by Jack Butterick and carried to approve the proposed changes to Section 4.05 in the Downtown Main District regulations dealing with Projections and Signs (Awning or Canopy) as outlined above.

Site Plan Review – Gerber Wastewater Pumping Station (405 State Street)

Cynthia Irving of Fishbeck, Thompson Carr & Huber, Inc. presented the site plan to the Commission on behalf of the Gerber Products Company. She explained that the Gerber Products Company is proposing to build a new 1045 sq. ft. accessory building to the Gerber campus located at 405 State Street. She said the building will house a waste water pumping system. Michele Ribant reviewed the staff report and indicated that the proposed new building satisfied zoning code requirements. She went on to say that subsequent to the agendas being disseminated, she received word from the County Drain Commissioner's office that there are no stormwater management issues; and therefore, there are no outstanding issues that need to be addressed.

A motion was made Jack Butterick, seconded by Lon Vredevelde and carried to approve the site plan to house a waste water pumping system as outlined on Sheet No AS-1 for the addition of a 1045 sq. ft. accessory building at the Gerber Processing Plant campus located at 405 State Street.

Discussion on Regulations in the Current Fremont Zoning Ordinance

Chair Henry welcomed the Council's input in the discussion of the following Fremont Zoning Ordinance issues:

Storage of Recreation Vehicles: There was some discussion on the current regulations on the storage of recreation vehicles, but no action was taken.

Garage Sale Signs: There was some discussion on the use of garage sale signs in the City. It was pointed out that not only does the Fremont Zoning Ordinance preclude people from placing garage sale signs in the right-of-way, but the Michigan Department of Transportation also does not allow signs to be placed in their right-of-way. The idea about the City coordinating a city-wide garage sale was brought up, and it was viewed positively by many of the Commissioners. Michele Ribant said she would discuss the idea at a staff level to see if it could be coordinated.

Sidewalk Signs: Michele Ribant indicated that the Fremont Area Chamber of Commerce has requested that the City allow them to use sidewalk signs to advertise the Fremont Farmers' Market. She said the Chamber felt that the number of patrons were noticeably down this year at the Market, and they felt that other than the economic downturn, they can only attribute the decrease in sales to the lack of the sidewalk signs. At the meeting, Michele Ribant showed the Commission/Council one of the sidewalk signs that the Fremont Farmers' Market has used in the past, and she pointed out that it is slightly larger than the size allowed by the Code. She indicated that the examples of the sidewalk signs that were presented by Larry Breuker at the last meeting were also larger than what was allowed in the Code. The question was posed whether the size of sidewalk signs should be amended in the Code. No changes to the Code pertaining to the size or design of sidewalk signs were proposed.

Michele Ribant indicated that the DDA would be considering amending the Façade Improvement Program Guidelines to cover design services for signs and to extend the Program to allow sidewalk signs to be covered under the Program. She indicated that it is only being proposed and that there is no guarantee as to the outcome.

The question was also posed as to whether the language in the agenda packet that supported the Chamber's request to allow sidewalk signs to be used for special events (e.g., Fremont Farmers' Market) downtown should be recommended. The language makes it clear that the placement of the signs would have to be approved by the Fremont Zoning Administrator. Ray Arnett, Director of the Fremont Area District Library, said that he uses sidewalk signs to advertise their book sale a couple times of year, and he would like the Ordinance amended so he could be allowed to do this. The Commission/Council was open to the idea and asked staff to fine-tune the proposed language to allow for special events in the downtown that would allow an entity such as the District Library to use a sidewalk sign. Staff was asked to come back with language at the next meeting that would allow for this.

Special Event Signs: The regulations on special event signs were reviewed. The question arose as to whether a portable sign for one of the local churches could be used until the church created a new one, and Michele Ribant said that while she recognizes the importance of the sign, she cannot permit the church to use it because she has to apply the rule consistently and because they have had time to order another sign.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

There was no new business.

Commissioners' Discussion

Jim Sloan asked that at the next Fremont Planning Commission meeting that the Commission review the language in the Fremont Zoning Ordinance in residential districts pertaining to the placement of garages.

Staff Update

The Commission was invited to attend the next Fremont Community Joint Planning Commission meeting. At that meeting Ryan Coffey from the MSU Extension Office will speak on Farmland Preservation. It was announced that 3 education credits will be given if a planning commissioner attends this meeting. The meeting information is as follows:

Fremont Community Joint Planning Meeting

Monday, September 28, 2009

5:00 p.m.

Sheridan Township Hall

Next Meeting

Fremont Planning Commission

September 22, 2009

Fremont City Hall

Council Chambers

4:00 PM

Adjournment

There being no further business of the Fremont City Council and the Fremont Planning Commission, a motion was made by Jane Drake, seconded by Jack Butterick and carried to adjourn the meeting at 5:22 p.m.