

OSHTEMO CHARTER TOWNSHIP

PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD MARCH 28, 2013

Agenda

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS REGARDING TEMPORARY SIGNS

A meeting of the Oshtemo Charter Township Planning Commission was held on Thursday, March 28, 2013, commencing at approximately 7:00 p.m. at the Oshtemo Charter Township Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kitty Gelling, Chairperson
Frederick J. Antosz
Wiley Boulding, Sr.
Dusty Farmer
Terry Schley

MEMBERS ABSENT: Richard Skalski
Millard Loy

Also present were Greg Milliken, Planning Director, and Attorney James Porter.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Gelling at approximately 7:00 p.m., and the "Pledge of Allegiance" was recited.

Agenda

Chairperson Gelling asked if there were any additions, deletions or corrections to the Agenda. Hearing none, she called for a motion to accept the Agenda. Mr. Antosz made a motion to accept the Agenda as presented. Mr. Boulding, Sr. seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Chairperson Gelling called for public comment on non-agenda items. Hearing none, she proceeded to the next item on the agenda.

Approval of Minutes of March 14, 2013 Regular Meeting

Chairperson Gelling asked if there were any additions, deletions or corrections to the minutes of March 14, 2013. No changes were noted. Mr. Schley made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Antosz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion of Potential Zoning Ordinance Amendments Regarding Temporary Signs

The Chairperson opened this agenda item and turned it over to the Planning Director to review the staff report provided to the Commissioners.

Mr. Milliken indicated that in February, Staff presented a variety of possible amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. The changes to the fence requirements for multi-family residential districts will be addressed at a public hearing at the April 11th meeting. The next item he suggested they address was the issue regarding temporary signs and multiple tenant developments.

Mr. Milliken indicated that the current ordinance allows businesses to have a special event sign for 14 days for the first six months of the year and 14 days for the last six months of the year. This is limited to one sign per lot, parcel, or building site. Therefore, a development with multiple tenants is still limited to only one such sign and the tenants within such development use that sign on a first come first serve basis. When last presented, he suggested that it seemed from the comments of the Planning Commission that there was a desire to provide greater flexibility for these tenants.

Mr. Milliken presented three options that were spelled out in the Staff report. One would give the tenants similar ability to have a special event sign as any other business with the only limitation being that only one such sign could be in place at a site at a time. The second would limit tenants to only one special event sign per year as opposed to two like other businesses. And the third would allow all special event signs for 30 days per year.

Mr. Antosz asked under the third option if someone could have six signs for five days each. Mr. Milliken indicated there is no limitation on number of signs per year, so yes they could.

Chairperson Gelling asked Texas Township treats temporary signs. Mr. Milliken responded that his analysis was fairly limited so he did not look at how other communities regulated temporary signs.

Ms. Farmer indicated that with the additional 15 days for a Grand Opening plus 30 days for option three, that would allow a business to occupy a site's signage for a long time.

Ms. Farmer stated that she leaned more toward the first option as it was simple, similar to the current approach, fair, and did not result in much change.

Mr. Antosz stated he was good with the first or third option in order to show equality. Businesses would probably like the third, but he was concerned about enforcement and administration. Mr. Milliken confirmed that the third option would be more challenging from an administrative standpoint.

Mr. Boulding, Sr. indicated that nothing stood out as a burden on the merchants with these options. He wondered if the ordinance prevents balloon or floating signs. Mr. Milliken indicated there are limits on such signs and are included with special event signs. Mr. Boulding, Sr. stated he is in agreement with option three.

Mr. Schley stated that the sign ordinance sets the overall intent for signage in the community, and the commercial areas are much denser today than when the ordinance was originally drafted. He wondered if the ordinance has provided enough permanent signage, and if so, then the temporary signage opportunities should only be provided when absolutely necessary. As a result, he stated he is in favor of the second option that is more limiting. He also suggested Staff be careful with the phrase "building site" in the proposed amendment language.

Mr. Schley also pointed out that there have been issues in the past with vehicle signs, some of which have been addressed, but others that continue to be challenging.

Chairperson Gelling stated that she is leaning more toward the first option. She feels the second is too discriminatory and the third does not break the periods up enough. She also suggested that the Commission look at other examples and see how other communities address this topic.

Mr. Milliken indicated that would be expanding the scope of the analysis and the potential changes being made.

Chairperson Gelling concurred and indicated she would get a couple samples and suggested the Commission review these and others.

Mr. Milliken distributed some additional changes that had been prepared in the days leading up to the meeting. He indicated that Staff had held an internal meeting to discuss some recurring sign violations and how to address them. In discussing the enforcement matter and reviewing the Ordinance, it was clear that some of the definitions and standards needed to be clarified so there was no issue as to how they should be interpreted. He reviewed the memo, which included revised definitions, references to prohibited signs, and standards.

Mr. Milliken raised the issue of A-frame signs. He stated that the Ordinance does not address these except in the Village Form Based Code. They were interpreted as

Incidental Signs, but Staff felt this should be clarified. He reviewed one way this could be done.

Mr. Schley indicated he had a concern with providing further opportunities for temporary signage and clutter in the commercial districts.

Chairperson Gelling did not feel that the A-frame signs were a problem.

Mr. Boulding, Sr. felt that a small sign would be ok and was not in disagreement with the idea.

Mr. Schley said it has not been a problem because these signs are not allowed. Adding this type of signage is not what he is in favor of.

Ms. Farmer asked if the sign is there just for people walking into the business, why it had to be there because those people are already going into the business.

Mr. Boulding, Sr. suggested talking to people in business to get their opinion.

Chairperson Gelling asked Mr. Milliken what he thought of that idea.

Mr. Milliken indicated that most businesses would suggest that the sign standards are too strict, that they should be made more flexible, and that the Township is very challenging to work with. We are working on those perceptions, but that is not a reason to change the Ordinance. However, if you invite them to participate, that is the feedback that will be received.

Mr. Schley agreed and stated that with participation comes some expectation that their input will result in changes. He stated that the Ordinance sets a high standard of expectation and that has been clearly established over time. Commissions may change but the standards should not radically change. If changes are made, they should be made in a consistent manner. Therefore, the community has a clear expectation of the character that is desired.

Chairperson Gelling indicated that the Commission changes and new members have new ideas. Circumstances change and we have to be able to change with it.

Ms. Farmer confirmed that Oshtemo is still a place where businesses can succeed.

Old Business

With there being no old business to discuss, Chairperson Gelling directed the Commissioners to proceed to the next agenda item.

Any Other Business

Mr. Milliken reminded members of the training session scheduled for April 30th at the Township Hall and indicated that any members that wished to attend should let him or Linda know.

Planning Commissioner Comments

Mr. Antosz thanked the Commissioners for making him feel welcome and a part of the group as a new member.

Chairperson Gelling thanked the Planning Department, the Attorney, and the Code Enforcement Officer for spending time on the sign issues and putting together the information for their meeting. She also distributed information from the County Conservation Office regarding their Native Plant Sale.

Adjournment

Having exhausted the Planning Commission agenda, and with there being no further business to discuss, Chairperson Gelling adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:32 p.m.

Minutes prepared:
April 2, 2013

Minutes approved:
April 11, 2013