



**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
AUGUST 23, 2023 7:30 AM
CITY HALL -- 1245 WEST HIGHWAY 96**

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Rob Williams, Julie Gronquist, Jud Murchie, Ted Brausen, Frank Cupery, Sreya Subramanian, and Katherine Schneider

Also Present: Community Development Director Jessica Jagoe, Senior Planner Elena Fransen, Customer Service Specialist Amy LaMere, City Administrator Dave Perrault (introductions only), and Council Liaison Emily Rousseau.

1. INTRODUCTIONS

2. OATH OF OFFICE

Commissioners Williams, Gronquist, Murchie, Brausen, Cupery, Subramanian and Schneider took the Oath of Office.

3. ORIENTATION

Senior Planner Fransen provided a quick overview of the Ordinances, Duties and Functions, Structure, Rules of Order and relation to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Economic Development Committee (EDC).

4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was unanimously approved (7-0).

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5.A. 02-05-20 EDC Minutes

The minutes were unanimously approved (7-0).

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.A. Calendar for Meeting in 2023 (Verbal Update)

Senior Planner Fransen presented that the EDC meetings are outlined to be every other month. The Committee can decide to increase the number of meetings to monthly. Next meeting is scheduled for October 25, 2023 at 7:30 AM. Probable complication with following meeting on December 27, 2023 was discussed.

- Three options were arrived at: Meet in November and skip December, Move December meeting to Dec 6th or 13th, or Move meeting to very early January.

It was decided that Committee members would come to the October meeting with schedules and then vote on December meeting change.

6.B. Sign Ordinance Review

Senior Planner Fransen presented the Requested Action from the EDC to consider Chapter 12 – Sign Code of the City’s Code of Ordinances and make recommendations for potential form and content revisions to the chapter.

Senior Planner Fransen presented the Background on potential ordinance amendments such as Setbacks, EV Charging Stations and Signage.

Senior Planner Fransen presented the full Chapter 12 – Sign Code document. The Sign Code Districts were listed, noting that some districts are zoning specific and others are based on location and street frontage.

The Arden Hills Sign Code table was presented with an explanation of Sign Types. The Signs Types are Wall, Freestanding, Graphic, Window or Auxiliary. Signs may be permanent or temporary and the type of lighting (Internal, External or Backlit) were discussed. A unique sign category, Dynamic Signs (signs that change information, allowed only at a restaurant drive-thru menu board) was defined.

Commissioner Gronquist asked what “I-Flex” was on the Sign Table.

Senior Planner Fransen said it was a Zoning District that is characterized by industrial uses with some additional flexibility.

Commissioner Brausen said that we should look to other cities and see what their ordinances say. Personally having experience in several cities, he expressed that Arden Hills’ is the most confusing. He referenced Shoreview or Blaine as potential communities with which to compare sign codes.

Commissioner Cupery said he works as an Inspector for Shoreview and they just redid their Sign Code. He presented a printed copy to **Senior Planner Fransen**.

Commissioner Williams asked what the trigger was to bring this to the EDC.

Councilmember Rousseau stated that the Planning Commission and City Council have recently reviewed multiple requests from businesses seeking flexibility from the sign code. It was a recommendation from the Council that the Economic Development Commission review the code.

Commissioner Brausen said at the last City Council meeting specifically there has been push back on the ban on LED's, as the technology has moved past the current ordinances that do not allow LED's.

Commissioner Brausen said he also feels that it is very difficult to change the type/design of a sign after the initial sign is complete.

Community Development Director Jagoe said there is some flexibility granted, based on the Master Plan from the original development. But this definitely is something that should be discussed further.

Senior Planner Fransen presented possible Next Steps: Commission to review Arden Hills Sign Codes and identify points for discussion. What do you like, not like, find confusing? Staff will follow-up with Sign Codes from neighboring, similar communities, Commission to bring comments to next EDC meeting.

Commissioner Williams said as the only Commissioner who was on the previous EDC he felt that in the past EDC recommendations were ignored and there was little communication with the Council. He asked if the EDC's recommendations would be respected and considered.

Commissioner Brausen said that after attending Council meetings since the election in 2022 this new Council is more open to businesses and growing economic opportunities.

Councilmember Rousseau said that there has been a real shift and the Planning Commission does have businesses in mind. The hope is that EDC and PC will work together to modernize some of our ordinances. There are a lot of opportunities to increase quality communication between the City and Businesses.

Commissioner Williams said that the perception of Arden Hills is one of exclusion and slow to change. He stated that there will need to be an effort to overcome that image.

Commissioner Gronquist said in order to move things along quickly, it would be helpful to know the common themes of the requests for sign flexibility. She agreed there should be rules/parameters in place to keep a uniformity and avoid overcrowding and excessive signage that is distracting. However, the current ordinances do not make sense, when the limits on signs result in confusion and something that is not aesthetically pleasing. Simplifying the ordinances will result in more compliance. For example, the Pop Culture Frozen Yogurt store is allowed two wall signs as it has two frontages. The City's sign code requires that if there are two wall signs that the total square footage of both signs shall not exceed the maximum square footage for a wall sign.

Commissioner Gronquist said it would be a good practice to provide signage information in the information sent out for business licenses.

Commissioner Williams stated it is interesting that the more pleasing Backlit sign is not allowed in some districts though it was agreed that this may be a factor of technology moving faster than the ordinances.

Councilmember Rousseau asked when we should discuss other Economic Development Commission priorities as the Commission works through the sign code review.

Senior Planner Fransen said yes there will be opportunities to work on other items at the same time as the Sign Code review. It was agreed that Commissioners will bring their priorities to the next meeting to discuss and staff will compile suggestions that came up during interviews with commission members.

Discussion ensued about creating more meaningful communication with business leaders. Networking events and surveys were discussed.

7. COMMENTS AND REPORTS

7.A. Report From The City Council

Councilmember Rousseau said that as the liaison with the Council she will provide information to and from the Council and other Committees. The State of the City will be January 20th at City Hall. Open House notifications will be shared with the Commissioners so they will be able to provide a Commission presence at local business events.

7.B. Economic Development Commission Comments

Commissioner Cupery asked if the city has a business directory.

Commissioner Gronquist responded that there a list is on the website, but it should be more dynamic with links to businesses and perhaps put into logical groups instead of alphabetically.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.