

**MINUTES OF THE ALTOONA, WI  
REGULAR PLAN COMMISSION MEETING  
December 11, 2017**

**(I) Call Meeting to Order.**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Brendan Pratt at 6:00 p.m. held in the Council Chambers at Altoona City Hall.

**(II) Roll call.**

Members present: Mayor Brendan Pratt, Barbara Oas Holmes, Andrew Schlafer, Dean Roth, Bill Hoepner, Red Hanks, Andraya Albrecht.

Also Present: City Planner Joshua Clements  
Management Analyst Roy Atkinson  
City Clerk Cindy Bauer (left after roll call).  
Paul Holzinger (member of the public)

**(III) Citizen Participation Period.**

Motion by Oas-Holmes/Hoepner to close Citizen Participation Period. **Motion carried.**

**(IV) Approval of minutes.**

Motion by Hanks/Roth to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2017 Plan Commission meeting. **Motion carried.**

**(V) Unfinished Business**

**(1) Presentation on Final Site Plan for Arnie's Service Center, property located at 2351 Spooner Avenue, Altoona.**

City Planner Clements explained that, as discussed at the November 13, 2017 Plan Commission, the Commission approved modifications to the Conditional Use Permit and Site Plan for 2351 Spooner Avenue (Arnie's Service Center) with conditions. As directed, City Staff is following-up with the revised illustration that reflects the approval conditions.

The action taken from the November 13, 2017 Plan Commission meeting to approve modifications to the Conditional Use Permit and Site Plan for the property located at 2351 Spooner Avenue, Altoona, parcel #201-2065-06-000 and lots 3 – 8, block G, Altoona Park Addition with the above specified conditions in addition to the following amendments:

- Remove the permit for the impounded vehicles from the lot (*modify existing Conditional Use Permit to remove vehicle impoundment as permitted use*).
- Modify the landscape/green area in front to 15 feet from the sidewalk at both sections as shown on the site plan (see correction in bold in the above specified conditions).
- Use recycled asphalt in the front next to the fuel tank and 15 feet in the back area in front of the grass as shown on the modified proposed site plan.
- Site plan to be completed in phases in 2018 and 2019 within 24 months of approval.

**Motion carried.**

**Three phases of implementation, as proposed by Mr. Johnson and approved by the Commission:**

- (1) Bring in some structural fill and/or recycled asphalt in 2017 to place in low places where water pools creating mud, subsequently tracked into the roadway.
- (2) No later than November 2018:
  - a. Complete paving of 50% of the total of the final extent illustrated in the Site Plan
  - b. Complete screening fence along the southwest property boundary

- c. Complete screening gate of dumpsters and scrap storage area behind building, as illustrated on Site Plan
- (3) No later than November 2019:
  - a. Complete remaining extent of pavement area illustrated in the Site Plan.

Member Oas-Holmes questioned if there was a date when the impound cars need to be removed. Members agreed that there should be a final date to have the impounded cars removed. Discussion by Commissioners resulted in general agreement that impounded vehicles should be removed by the November 2018 implementation benchmark, upon which enforcement would proceed if not completed.

No action. Information purpose only.

#### **(VI) New Business**

##### **(1) Discuss/consider recommendation to Council regarding modification to the Specific Implementation Plan as proposed for Woodman's Food Market regarding addition tenant panels to a previously approved pylon sign larger than allowed by the River Prairie Design Guidelines.**

City Planner Clements explained that at the Altoona Plan Commission (Oct 9, 2017) and Council (Oct 26, 2017) approved the modification of the Woodman's Crossing Specific Implementation Plan to permit a pylon sign taller and greater in copy area than allowed by the River Prairie Design Guidelines and Standards. The request also included changeable copy for the gas station pricing. The request was for a sign with 100 feet total height with fixed copy area (Woodman's) of approximately **210 ft<sup>2</sup>** and the gas station LED portion of **160 ft<sup>2</sup>** (8 feet tall by 20 feet wide).

This proposal is to revise the approved sign by adding four tenant panels each with a total of 16 foot tall by 20 foot wide **320 ft<sup>2</sup>** rear-lit cabinet.

The River Prairie Design Guidelines and Standards outline requirements for sign design, size and placement. The Plan Commission and Council have ultimate discretion over applicability of the Design Guidelines and Standards, and in particular, how specific sign standards are applied (IX 5 B 2):

- "The height of freestanding signs should be designed consistent with the need to be viewed from highway 53, but in no case may exceed a maximum height of **25 feet**" (IX 5 C 5 E 7 b)
- Permitted Sign Area: **100 ft<sup>2</sup> per panel** (IX 5 C 5 E 7 e)
- Sign panels shall be limited in size to the width of the architectural support elements of the sign (IX 5 C 5 E 7 e).
- Display up to 5 tenant signs and the name of the center (IX 5 C 5 E 7 d) [*Meets*].

Discussion followed. The general consensus of the Plan Commission was that the additional tenant panel signs would create negative image for River Prairie as a whole, and also specifically within the viewshed of existing residential development to the south and east.

Motion by Hanks to approve modification to the Specific Implementation Plan for Woodman's Food Market pylon sign to add tenant panel signs. There being no second, motion fails due to lack of second.

Motion by Hoepner, seconded by Roth to not recommend to Council modification to the Specific Implementation Plan for Woodman's Food Market pylon sign to add tenant panel signs. 6 ayes, 1 nay, Hanks against. **Motion carried 6-1.**

**(VI)(2) Discuss/Consider recommendation to Council regarding amending Title 19 of the Altoona Municipal Code “Zoning” more specifically to repeal Chapter 19.38 “Corner Lots, Side and Rear Yards and Setbacks” and repeal and replace Chapter 19.56 “Yards and Open Spaces” pertaining to non-conforming setbacks, double-frontage and corner lots, fences in front yards, and structure encroachments into yards (Public Hearing at the December 14, 2017 Council Meeting).**

City Planner Clements referred to the following enclosures:

- Chapter 19.38 “Corner Lots, Side and Rear Yards and Setbacks” – Current, Proposed Repeal
- Chapter 19.56 “Yards and Open Spaces” – Proposed Repeal/Replace
- 2009 City of Altoona Comprehensive Plan, Section 2.8 “Community Design Principles”.

Summary purpose and rationale for these proposed changes:

- Each Chapter, 19.38 and 19.56, cover the same or substantially similar objectives: regulate how buildings are placed on property, and in particular setbacks under a variety of contexts.
- For simplification, this action would repeal Chapter 19.38, amend/update the content, and move to replaced Chapter 19.56.
- The most substantial change: 19.56.045 “Nonconforming Setbacks”
  - Presently, if a structure exists within a nonconforming setback, meaning closer to the street or property boundary than would be permitted of a new project, additions to that structure are permitted.
  - Proposed language would allow new buildings to be constructed to existing nonconforming setbacks of properties along the same frontage. Essentially, if there is a vacant “infill” lot, and one or more buildings within the immediate vicinity have nonconforming setbacks (which is typical), this provision would allow new construction to meet this setback. In cursory staff estimation, there are approximately two dozen known vacant lots this would impact.
    - Does not allow new construction or additions to existing structures within 10 feet of street (19.56.045 A 3) or five feet of side yard, which is fire separation distance (19.56.045 A 4).
    - Greatly improves developability of existing urban lots, especially corner lots.
  - Proposed: Garage door setbacks must be six feet behind the building face, and no closer than 20 feet to a public right-of-way (19.56.045 A 1, 2). This proposed language is consistent elsewhere in this ordinance, as well as proposed changes to standard setbacks in zoning classifications (next agenda item).
    - This provision implements policy of the 2009 Comprehensive Plan 2.8 Community Design Principles.
    - The rationale is three: (1) provide sufficient space for a typical vehicle to park in front of a garage; (2) provides visual warning of a vehicle leaving a garage prior to accessing the public space; (3) meets accepted traditional and contemporary neighborhood and housing design (visual emphasis is on dwelling and active people space, rather than on garage doors and vehicle space).
    - Several ordinances studied have similar provisions, including:
      - Sun Prairie: 20’ house setback, 30’ garage setback (Low density zones)



- Clarifies use of temporary fences during construction activities (Sun Prairie / La Crosse language).
- Provides process for consideration of alternative fence materials (Sun Prairie language).
- Creates condition that fences have gates, which may be locked and secured, for the purpose of allowing egress in the case of emergency.
- Clarifies requirements for fence gates and prohibition of signs attached (consistent with 19.58 “Signs”).
- Modifies 19.56.070 B.1. to continue prohibition of privacy or screening fences in the front yard or street-side yard by maintaining minimum 30-foot setback, unless the structure is located closer.
- Moves “Fences on Corner Lots” from 19.38 to this Chapter, continuing the condition of allowing a fence taller than would otherwise be allowed in side yards in corner lots where the property has nonconforming interior side or rear setbacks.
- Updates several cross-references.

Planning Department Staff is examining possible modifications to the Site Plan ordinance (to occur in January or February 2018) to further refine site elements for residential property, including the relationship of garages to public streets.

Paul Holzinger, attending and speaking as a citizen involved in the construction industry, testified that modifying setbacks as proposed would remove arbitrary constraints preventing investment in existing smaller lots and to adding on to existing homes.

Discussion by Plan Commissioners regarding garage setback provisions and their purpose. Clements shared that this design approach encourages a streetscape where active portions of residences, such as windows, doors, porches, etc., face the public realm (street), rather than architecture dominated by garages. The garage setback also provides for vehicle parking in the driveway, and visual warning of a vehicle movement prior to crossing a sidewalk or entering the street. Mr. Holzinger further shared that garage setbacks are customary and create no hardship for builders and improves visual interest of the structure.

**Commissioners changed minimum garage setback to 24 feet, instead of 20 feet,** in response to preponderance of large trucks, averaging approximately 19 feet in length.

Commissioners raised concerns regarding proposed 10-foot minimum setback. Clements shared that setbacks really do not create public nuisance or concern, however some individuals have aesthetic preference and concerns when their residence is close to sidewalk. Clements cited historical development patterns which were predominately very little setbacks, and that enforcing setbacks are largely a period concern that arose in the 1930s and 1940s in response to fire and air quality. Clements expounded that contemporary development regulations either have very limited setbacks, or are eliminated for most development types. Holzinger added that his observations and customers are seeking more semi-urban development typical of short setbacks. Clements added that most streets that may some day have sidewalks already do have sidewalks, so the potential concern about sidewalk construction around existing structures would be in very limited cases.

**Minimum 15 ft setback on the side and the front** rather than 10 feet; except as reviewed through variance hearing. Motion by Schlafer/Hoepner to amend. **Motion carried..** 6-0 Unanimous

**No corner lot sliding scale. A flat 15ft.** Remove this subsection as proposed.

Member Hanks added concern about detached garages that are subsequently connected to a residence by a breezeway creating a potential 'loophole'. Clements suggested including language that **attached garages mean that there must be a shared wall between the house and the garage**. Included as amendment to proposed ordinance.

Motion by Schlafer/Hoepner to recommend to Council approval of amending Title 19 more specifically to repeal Chapter 19.38 and repeal and replace Chapter 19.56 with the amended modifications noted above in bold. **Motion carried.**

**(VI)(3) Discuss/consider recommendation to Council regarding amending Title 19 of the Altoona Municipal Code "Zoning" more specifically to amend Chapters 19.28, 19.32, 19.36, 19.37 pertaining to building setbacks and lot area requirements (Public Hearing at the December 14, 2017 Council Meeting).**

City Planner Clements referred to the following enclosures:

- 19.28 "R-1 Single Family Dwelling District"
- 19.32 "R-2 One-Family and Two-Family Dwelling Districts"
- 19.36 "R-3 Multiple Family Dwelling District"
- 19.37 "TH Twin Home District"
- 2009 City of Altoona Comprehensive Plan, Section 2.8 "Community Design Principles". (see previous agenda item)

The proposed changes to the enclosed Chapters revolve around:

1. Relaxed Building Setbacks
2. Reduced Minimum Lot Sizes
3. Clean up duplicate text entries and cross-references

The purpose and rationale for these proposed changes:

- This is a "band-aid" proposal to increase development flexibility, and to enable development character slightly more similar to existing developed areas and "traditional neighborhood development". This is the first small step, with other(s) required for full implementation.
- Remedy the most pressing challenge regarding inflexible setback requirements that frustrate development and do not meet contemporary development expectations.
- Altoona's setbacks are *minimum* standards, and as currently written, property owners have the choice to construct new buildings with greater setbacks if they desire. Some communities have "build-to" lines instead of setbacks, which ensure greater predictability.
- Improves flexibility in overall land development and ability to invest in existing property and neighborhoods.
- Increases the permitted buildable footprint of all residential lots.
- Enables a greater proportion of property to be allocated to rear yards.
- Reduces barriers to improving and investing in existing properties.
- Moves existing zoning classifications closer to observed development trends without re-writing entire Chapters or dramatically changing zoning classifications.
- Modifies existing zoning to be more consistent with the 2009 City of Altoona Comprehensive Plan design guidelines, as well as policy priorities to encourage development flexibility and creation of affordable units.

These proposed changes *do not* implement a traditional neighborhood development strategy. This would require a more holistic and comprehensive overhaul of zoning regulations.

“In today's development context, Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is somewhat of a misnomer. TNDs are "traditional" only as they revert to the designs more common in pre-automobile cities and neighborhoods. In fact, the compactness and versatility of TNDs often make them distinctly innovative when compared to many postwar suburbs. Though the criteria and specifications of a good TND can vary, they tend to line up under four headings: compact development, a mix of land uses, clear and convenient transportation alternatives, and a demonstrated appreciation of community character and context” (Ohm et. al. 2000).

Select benefits of traditional neighborhood development (TND):

- Encourages development flexibility
- Maintains and promotes character of traditional neighborhoods
- Enables development of smaller lots
- Enables larger rear yards with same amount of property
- Protects open space
- Increased efficiency of infrastructure and reduces infrastructure per household
- Maintains distinction between developed and rural areas

#### **19.28 “Single Family Dwelling District”**

- Modifies minimum setbacks to approximately reflect the character of existing development, contemporary expectations, and more align with “traditional neighborhood development”.
- Modifies minimum lot sizes to reflect existing platted properties in the City of Altoona, enabling new development at similar scale as existing developed areas.
- Updates Chapter/Section references.

#### **19.32 “R-2 One-Family and Two-Family Dwelling Districts”**

- Modifies minimum lot sizes to reflect existing platted properties in the City of Altoona, enabling new development at similar scale as existing developed areas.
- Updates Chapter/Section references.
- Removes duplicate conditions for Tourist/bed and breakfast homes.

#### **19.36 “R-3 Multiple Family Dwelling District”**

- Modifies setbacks to be similar to proposed changes to other residential zoning classifications.
- Updates Chapter/Section references.
- Removes duplicate conditions for Tourist/bed and breakfast homes.

#### **19.37 “TH Twin Home District”**

- Modifies setbacks to allow character more similar to “traditional neighborhood development” and those recently constructed in Altoona, to improve development return-on-investment, and public revenue-to-expense ratio.
- Proposed setbacks and lot size are more similar to standards found in comparison communities (Sun Prairie, etc.), but are generally more generous (greater lot sizes, width, etc.)
- Removes duplicate conditions for Tourist/bed and breakfast homes.

City Planner Clements noted that it is the intent of Planning Staff to comprehensively examine City of Altoona zoning following the next completion of the Comprehensive Plan. Preparation and process planning has begun, with a project completion horizon of approximately 12-18 months. The current zoning Title 19 was predominately written in 1970, based off of Euclidean “separated uses”

suburban zoning raising in that time period that required relatively large lots, large setbacks, and strict separation of land uses.

Clements suggested **removing the alley-accessed garage setback minimum of 10 feet** due to how the conversation proceeded on the previous agenda items.

Clements confirmed that these standards would apply to new neighborhoods as well as existing lots, whereas the action on the previous agenda item would relate only to existing neighborhoods where new buildings or additions may be constructed near existing structures with non-conforming setbacks.

Holzinger confirmed this would not create a hardship in construction of new neighborhoods. More consistent with contemporary development expectations.

Motion by Oas-Holmes/Hoepner to recommend to Council approval of amending Title 19, more specifically amending Chapters 19.28, 19.32, 19.36, 19.37 with the above modifications in bold. **Motion carried.**

**(VII) Miscellaneous Business and Communications.**

None.

**(VIII) Adjournment.**

Motion by Hanks/Roth to adjourn at 7:47 p.m. **Motion carried.**

Minutes transcribed by Cindy Bauer, Altoona City Clerk