

**MELROSE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2024– 6:00 P.M.**

A.I. #1 CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Melrose Planning and Zoning Commission met in a Regular Meeting on Monday, October 28, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. pursuant to due notice being given thereof. Present were Commission Members Shawn Mayers, Dave Berscheit, Jean McDonald, Joe Matt, and Community Development Director Sheila Hellermann. Commission Member Jason Seanger, Nick Shaw, and Joelene Wieling were absent. Vice Chair Dave Berscheit called the meeting to order.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

A.I. #2 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Mr. Mayers, seconded by Mr. Matt and unanimously carried to approve the agenda as submitted.

A.I. #3 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Mayers, seconded by Ms. McDonald and unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the Commission's September 30, 2024, Regular Meeting,

A.I. #4 PUBLIC HEARING

- a. The Melrose Planning and Zoning Commission acting as the Board of Adjustments and Appeals held a Public Hearing at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, October 28, 2024, for the purpose of giving consideration to changing the zoning ordinance to allow electronic billboards. The consideration is to delete Section 712.03 of Zoning Ordinance No. 1989-1-A as adopted with amendments in the Melrose Code of Ordinances and allow electronic billboard signs and adopt regulations regarding the same.

The Affidavit of Publication of the Public Hearing Notice, which was published in the Star Post on Wednesday, October 16, 2024, along with the Affidavit of Posting of Notice of Hearing is included in the supporting documents.

Community Development Director Sheila Hellermann provided an overview of the proposed changes to the zoning ordinance allowing electronic billboards.

Vice Chair Dave Berscheit asked if there was any additional public comment. There being no further comments, the Public Hearing was closed at 6:07 p.m.

A.I. #5 REPORTS

- a. Community Development Director Sheila Hellermann provided an update on Wobegon Crossing. Twenty-five of the forty-two units of phase I have been rented. All but one of the three-bedroom units are filled. The second phase will open in November. Riverside Flats has all but 2 units rented. There currently is no retail,

however there is interest. Main Street is now open. There is strong interest in the Highlands development.

A.I. #6 ACTION ITEMS

- a. The Commission earlier this evening held a Public Hearing for the purpose of giving consideration to changing the zoning ordinance to allow electronic billboards. Commission Member Mayers recommended to add the city logo to the billboard. The Commission reviewed the proposed electronic or mechanically activated changeable sign regulations. The Commission established the following regulations:

Melrose zoning ordinance/electronic billboards

Off-premise (billboard) signs which are Changeable Electronic Copy Signs, subject to the following conditions:

Findings and purpose. Studies show a positive correlation between electronic signs that display changing messages or graphics and driver distraction. Distracted driving can result in increased traffic crashes or other hazardous events. The standards within this section are intended to minimize potential driver distraction, hazards to public safety, and related nuisance characteristics associated with electronic signs.

Must be by conditional use permit.

The support structure for the sign shall conform to the City's design sample and include an illuminated logo of the City with name "City of Melrose" inscribed.

Setback from residential. The leading edge of an electronic sign must be located at least 500 feet from any parcel that is both residentially zoned and residentially used.

Operational requirements. Electronic signs are subject to the following operational requirements:

Dwell time.

(A) Electronic changeable copy signs with ten words or less must have a static display for a minimum of eight seconds.

(B) Electronic changeable copy signs with 11 words or more or electronic graphic display signs must have a static display for a minimum of 20 seconds.

Transition. The change sequence of any electronic sign must be accomplished by means of instantaneous repixelization. Fading, dissolving, scrolling, traveling, or any transition that creates the illusion of movement is prohibited.

Video, audio or pyrotechnics. Video, audio or any form of pyrotechnics are prohibited in association with an electronic sign.

Modes which cause the message to flash are prohibited;

Nighttime use. When located within 1000 feet of a site that is both residentially zoned and residentially used, an electronic sign must be static or turned off between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. The following sign types are exempt from the nighttime use limitation:

(A) Price signs designed to change infrequently; and

(B) Electronic signs that are oriented so that no portion of the sign face is visible from a permitted principal structure on a site that is both residentially zoned and residentially used.

After further discussion a motion was made by Mr. Matt, seconded by Mr. Mayers and unanimously carried recommending the City Council approve amending the zoning ordinance to include the regulations as stated above.

A.I. #7 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. At a work session on Wednesday, October 23, 2024, the City Council met to discuss a cannabis ordinance. The Commission has already discussed the zoning portion. We will need to set a public hearing for the zoning portion of the cannabis in Melrose. The Council will be doing the same for the licensing and enforcement. We had considered allowing Stearns County to handle this by deferring to their ordinance, but they have sent a letter to cities and townships stating that if we have staff and law enforcement, we need our own ordinance. City Council discussed modeling our ordinance to follow Stearns County since they handle our prosecution services.

The Commission by consensus concurred with the Council to follow Stearns County ordinance. Community Development Director will work on establishing regulations for cannabis events.

- b. At a work session on Wednesday, October 23, 2024, the City Council met to discuss changes to the proposed Vacant Building Ordinance, including extending the vacancy period to be at least 18 months, except in cases of health and safety. The time for fire damaged properties would remain at 90 days. Commission Members Shawn Mayers, Jean McDonald and Dave Berscheit are opposed to the 18-month vacancy period and would prefer a shorter vacancy period. Enforcement of the ordinance would be the City Administrator or designee.
- c. The work on the update of the comprehensive plan continues. There have been some recent challenges, including an individual speaking at the October 23, 2024, Council meeting with concerns about comprehensive plans. Staff have also had discussions with our consultant as the chapters are drafted. Community Development Director Hellermann stated that the city comprehensive plan will not contain a sustainability chapter.
- d. At the Commission's September 30, 2024, meeting Nate Hiltner came to discuss his ideas for 406 Main Street East to prevent the demolition of the structure. Mr. Hiltner is in the process of purchasing the property from Mr. Wiehoff. Mr. Wiehoff will contribute \$100,000 towards the rehabilitation project. MADA has approved a \$75,000 contribution on the back side of the project if warranted.

A.I. #8 NEW BUSINESS

- a. Staff has been approached by the owner of 313 Main Street East about the possibility of vacating the alley behind his property. The Commission by consensus was not interested in vacating the alley, however would be supportive of squaring off the property.

A.I. #9 INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- a. The Commission's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 25, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

A.I. #10 ISSUES BY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEMBERS

- a. Commission Member Matt brought forward a discussion about Inspectron, the city's building official, and recent challenges. Member Mayers echoed those concerns.

The Commission discussed Inspectron and alternative companies. A big challenge is workforce – and the limited number of companies who do this work. Also finding a company with the capacity to add all of Melrose to their existing business.

This was the challenge for Jeff Howe and his son when City Administrator Winter and Community Development Director Hellermann met with them last year. Hellermann will discuss this with Administrator Winter when she returns from leave.

A.I. #11 ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Ms. McDonald seconded by Mr. Mayers and unanimously carried that the meeting be adjourned at 7:00 p.m.


PATRICIA HAASE – CITY CLERK