

**Athens City Planning Commission
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Thursday, June 15, 2023 12:00 p.m.**

The regular meeting of the Athens City Planning Commission was held in City Council Chambers, third floor of City Hall, on June 15, 2023.

Attendees: None

1. Call to Order

Steve Patterson called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 12:01 p.m. and quorum was established with five members present. With no attendees, an oath was not administered.

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Steve Patterson, Chair	Present
John Kotowski, Vice Chair	Present
Nancy Bain	Present
Austin Phillips	Present
Andy Stone, Service-Safety Director	Present

STAFF:

Paul Logue, City Planner	Absent
David Riggs, Code Enforcement Director	Present

2. Disposition of Minutes

John Kotowski moved to approve the May 4, 2023 minutes. Austin Phillips seconded. All present voted aye, motion passed 5:0.

3. Cases

None

4. Communications

Proposed Zoning Amendment. City administration's recommended changes to the temporary sign portion of the zoning code.

David Riggs

Seeking changes to Title 23, 23.03.13 Sign regulations, to keep in step with changing signage types, particularly "feather flags". Feather flags don't fit in the existing code very well. East State Street and Richland Avenue have these types of signs. The suggested changes are to (L) (1) (a) as per the attached document.

Discussion

- Steve P. asked what category inflatable signs fit under in our code. David R. noted that these types are not permitted in Athens.
- Andy S. asked what the typical size of the feather flags was. David R. noted that usually 2'X10', 20 sq. ft., some smaller/some larger. Andy S. noted that two signs per property would be roughly 40 sq. ft.
- Austin P. asked about the regulation of political signs. David R. noted that political signs aren't regulated other than not being allowed in the city right of way.
- Andy S. commented that additional changes to code are going to be suggested so before the commission moves forward on this, we will wait for the other suggested changes to be submitted and then the commission will consider them all together.
- John K. mentioned that the size of political signs are regulated in the city. David R. said these size regulations can't be enforced because federal regulations supersede city regulations.

Business Use of Animals

David Riggs

Another suggested change to Title 23 will be submitted regarding the business use of animals. A resident inquired recently with the code office about being able to use goats to maintain the sloped backside of his property. This type of use is not mentioned in Code. Accessory use and the keeping of farm animals, are not allowed in an R-1 zone except if you can keep them in a building 100' from property lines. City does allow pets, so you have to separate the two and have a definition of a pet and a definition for a farm animal. Current code, 23.04.01 (B) (10), doesn't fit well with what this resident wants to do. Goats would be first allowed in a B-3. He could issue him a temporary permit for uses that aren't allowed in any other zone as long as it is for under 60 days. He recommends a temporary special use permit from the zoning administrator.

Discussion

- Austin P. asked what the suggested language would look like. David R. commented that time limits and noise regulations could be part of the language.
- Andy S. observed that this isn't really different from hiring a pony for a child's birthday party. It would take more than a day for a goat to eat the brush, so it is the "keeping of animals". Temporary special use zoning permits sounds judicious – the topography is the constraint. You can also argue control of invasives and the decreased use of herbicides for the public good.
- John K. commented that there is a property on Lancaster landscaped entirely with rocks. David said that there is nothing in our code prohibiting a rock surface.
- Chickens are not allowed in R-1's (foul or farm animals not allowed). B-3, general business zone, allows an enclosure to keep animals 200' from any residential zone. Andy S. commented that the Health Department is against keeping chickens. Austin P. wondered if you could be allowed if you had your neighbors to sign off on it. David R. said that the roosters would be a problem. Andy S. noted that Bexley allows chickens.

Pets

- David R. commented that animal shelters are allowed in B-3 zones or M zones. It has to be in a building at least 200' from any residential zone.
- John K. asked about restrictions in the uptown area. David R. said that variances are required if you want a use not permitted in the code. The process would be to get a variance, which would allow a business owner some relief. If you have a business or industrial use that is not permitted you can go to the Planning Commission and then the BZA for a variance. The PC would look at it and determine how it compares to/impacts the Comprehensive Plan. Recommendation from PC to BZA that would then decide.
- John K. observed that he has seen more dogs with students lately and the shelter is struggling to find homes for them. There are a lot of feral cats as well. He asked if the Comprehensive Plan says anything about this issue. David R. read from 23.07.12. Andy S. thought that the Comprehensive Plan was silent on this issue. David R. said that 5 or more dogs constitutes the commercial keeping of pets.

6. **Report from City Planner and Director of Code Enforcement**

No reports

7. **Opportunity for Citizens to Speak**

None

8. **Announcements & Other Business**

- Next meeting July 6, 2023
- Andy S. mentioned that Athens City Council held a Special Meeting and Public Hearing regarding the Ridges Community Authority, and that they voted to approve. Redevelopment will be going forward and will come through the Planning Commission (the zoning changes that the CA recommends).

9. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:32 p.m.

23.03.13. Sign regulations.

- (L) Temporary signs. All temporary signs shall be maintained in a safe condition and in good repair or be removed immediately.
- (1) Advertising signs. Except in the Downtown Business District (B-2D), in zones where advertising signs are permitted, temporary advertising signs announcing sales, new products or special business events may be permitted in addition to the maximum sign face area of a permanent business sign.
- (a) Special sales and special events. Advertising banner, posters, ~~feather flags~~, pennants, ribbons, streamers, strings of lights, or other similar devices, with or without letters, words, numbers, logos or graphics, for the purpose of advertising or attracting attention to a special sale or to a special event upon the premises may be permitted for a period not to exceed 30 consecutive days, if approved by the zoning inspector. No more than four permits shall be issued for the erection of a temporary sign by any person on any one building or premises in any year. ~~The maximum total signage of temporary signs shall be the same as the maximum size of a permanent free-standing sign allowed in the zone. The maximum number of temporary signs shall not exceed two (2) per property. For multiple businesses operating on one property the maximum number of temporary signs shall be one (1) per business. The maximum total signage area for all temporary signs shall not exceed 50 sf.~~
- (b) Downtown Business Zone (B-2D). Temporary advertising is allowed without permit application when the total sign/signs face area does not exceed ten square feet, is not placed on or above the public right-of-way and does not encumber the public sidewalk. Signage is limited to posters, chalk boards, grease pencil boards and the like, advertising daily specials or special events, and does not include banners, pennants, ribbons, streamers, strings of lights or other similar devices. All other temporary advertising is prohibited.
- (c) Temporary project free-standing sign. One temporary project free-standing sign not exceeding the regulations of the use district in which it is located shall be permitted if it is located on the lot of a proposed building or a building under construction. Permits for such signs shall be for a period not exceeding one year. However, such permits may be renewed while construction is pursued diligently. Project signs shall be removed within 14 days of the commencement of the intended use.

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