

**PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES
RIVER PARK EVENTS BUILDING – WEST ROOM
11:30 A.M.
FEBRUARY 15, 2011**

On roll call, the following Commissioners were present: Walton Maurras, Salvatore Salamone, Steve Griffin, Mike Lorenz, Travis Stephens, Jennifer Parks, Keith Lau and Marshall Sharpe. Commissioner John Huffman was absent.

Mr. Bailey noted the following points of discussion relative to revisions to the Landscaping and Screening – Section 27-602 of the Unified Development Ordinance.

1. **Landscaping strip of 10 feet.** Mr. Bailey stated that the purpose of this item is to clarify and identify that all required landscaping, whether perimeter or parking lot screening, can be placed in the same 10 feet wide strip along the property frontage. Mr. Bailey noted that there seemed to be consensus on this issue.

Chairman Griffin asked if the Commissioners or any person in the audience wished to voice any concerns or questions relative to this item. No one expressed any concerns or questions.

Chairman Griffin called for the vote on this item. The vote was unanimous to approve this item.

2. **Exception for small parking lots.** Mr. Bailey stated that the question was whether there should be an exception for small parking lots such as those with 4 or fewer spaces. No decision or consensus seemed to exist as to whether there should be an exemption or what should be the threshold. Mr. Bailey noted that regardless of whether an exemption would be provided, it should be noted that the perimeter landscaping requirements would still exist so there would still be some landscaping provided. Mr. Bailey stated that there has been varying opinions on this topic and, therefore, recommend the Planning Commission vote on this specific issue. Mr. Bailey noted the following sample language for any proposal, should one be preferred, would read as follows: “Parking lots of _____ or more parking spaces shall comply with the parking lot screening requirements of Section 27-602-3(D).”

Chairman Griffin then called for any discussion or concerns relative to this item.

Mr. Roger Winton noted that by taking away so much land on small commercial businesses that it could potentially stop development.

Mr. Pat Mickle, Mickle-Wagner-Coleman, addressed the Commission. Mr. Mickle stated that he felt this language should be inserted in Section 27-602-2(E) as well as Section 27-602-3(D).

Following a discussion by the Commission, the Commissioners voted unanimously to use the number 5 or more parking spaces in the above noted language proposal, as well as to place the same language in Section 27-602-2(E).

- 3. Exception for Auto and Vehicle Dealers.** Mr. Bailey stated that after researching the ordinances of other cities, it was determined that almost all cities give an exception from the interior landscaping requirements but there seems to be a split on the screening/buffering requirement against the rights of ways. Where the exception exists, the consensus is that the vehicles for sale are considered as outdoor display of merchandise and in all cases perimeter landscaping is still required. Mr. Bailey noted that staff is recommending the Planning Commission consider an amendment that exempts auto and vehicle dealers from the interior landscaping and parking lot screening requirements but does not exempt them from the perimeter landscaping requirements. Mr. Bailey stated that the change would occur in the applicability Section 27-602-3 *“Parking lots used solely for the display of vehicles at an approved auto and vehicle dealer are required to provide perimeter landscaping only.”*

Chairman Griffin then called for any discussions or questions relative to this item.

No one expressed any concerns relative to this item. Chairman Griffin then called for the vote on this proposed amendment to the Ordinance. The vote was unanimous to approve this change to the Ordinance.

- 4. Non-Opaque Fencing.** Mr. Bailey stated that after discussion on this item, it was determined there was no need to mention non-opaque fencing as an option since the requirement to install non-opaque fencing also includes the requirement to install the dense vegetative buffer.

Chairman Griffin then called for any discussions or questions relative to this item.

No one expressed any concerns relative to this item. Chairman Griffin then called for the vote on this change to the Ordinance. The change was unanimously approved by the Planning Commissioners.

- 5. Fence height.** Mr. Bailey stated that after doing some research of other ordinances, staff would offer a statement be added to the fencing option that would read as follows: *“Where masonry or vinyl fences or walls are used, they shall be no more than 4 feet in height except for fences that are constructed as part of a comprehensive security fence.”*

During discussion of this item, the Commissioners expressed their desire to add the language *no more than 4 feet in height to be measured from the surface of the parking lot.*

Mr. Chuck Mackey, 3212 South 93rd Circle, addressed the Commission. He stated that he agreed with this change.

Chairman Griffin then called for the vote on this item as amended. It was unanimously approved by the Commission.

6. Height at time of planting and deadline for maturity of plants. Mr. Bailey stated that the proposal presented at the Commission's work session was that all approved landscaping materials be at least 30 inches tall at the time of planting and the materials must reach the required height within twelve (12) months after the initial installation. After significant discussion during and after the meeting, Mr. Bailey stated that other options have been explored. He noted that after some research, the following is a sample comparison of ordinances in other cities:

A. Fort Smith: the current codes does not have a minimum height requirement only that the approved materials be adequately spaced to form a solid continuous visual screen within three years after installation.

B. Fayetteville: Shrub size at the time of planting shall be a minimum of three (3) gallon containers with an expected height of three (3) feet or more within two (2) years of installation. (We recommend adding a height of 24 inches for the 3-gallon plants).

C. Conway: Where shrubs are used they shall be evergreen in nature, be at least 30 inches tall at the time of planting, and be spaced closely enough together so as to create a seamless row of hedging.

Mr. Bailey stated that the Planning Department staff is recommending either option B or C. He noted that testimony from the design professionals and landscapers seemed to indicate option B was an acceptable compromise when comparing the current code requirement and the 30" – 1 year proposal.

Following a discussion by the Commission, the following language was unanimously approved to be placed in the Ordinance:

Where shrubs are used they shall be evergreen in nature or approved deciduous material, be at least 24 inches tall at the time of planting, and be spaced closely enough together so as to create a seamless row of screening/buffering and reach the required height within twenty-four (24) months after the initial installation.

Chairman Griffin then called for the vote to recommend to the City Board of Directors all of the above noted amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance. The amendments were unanimously approved by the Commission.

Mr. Bailey noted that these amendments would be forwarded to the City Board of Directors for their review at their March 1, 2011, meeting.

Meeting Adjourned!