



**CITY OF HELENA
Zoning Commission
June 11, 2024 – 6:00 PM
Meeting Minutes**

[Recording Available Here](#)

Members Present:

Rebecca Harbage (Chair), Kim Wilson (Vice-Chair), Nicole Anderson, Alyssa Sorenson, Betsy Story,

Staff Present:

Michael Alvarez, April Sparks

Call to Order and Roll Call

(0:00:00) It was noted that a quorum was present with five members in attendance.

Minutes

(0:00:32) It was noted that there had been an error with the minutes from the May meeting the commission would consider the draft minutes at the next meeting.

Regular Items

Item 1

Staff Presentation and Questions for Staff

(0:01:44) Michael Alvarez gave a presentation on the proposed revised sign code outlining the changes being made and reasoning behind said changes.

(0:13:08) Commissioners addressed questions to Mr. Alvarez at this time, specifically about political signs and the restrictions being proposed. Mr. Alvarez stated that the Commission could choose to restrict the total allowable sign size/number of signs of a certain size to prevent a proliferation of signs in a residential area. This was followed up by a question about putting a time limit on temporary signs. Mr. Alvarez stated that the state regulates the length of time for political signs, so the city does not have an independent regulation of those signs, and while the city would be able to put a time limit on other types of temporary signs, it is uncertain if that could be applied to political signs. Mr. Alvarez was asked another question about temporary signs and how that will relate to non-residential properties. Mr.



Alvarez responded that non-residential areas would be treated differently and that with the overlap between residential and non-residential uses in R4/RO it could be possible to limit the number of temporary signs, but he was unsure of how to separate that use from the residential area. It was also noted that political signage in non-residential uses could be handled with the aggregation of signs.

Public Comment

- (0:17:26)** Public Comment was opened. Four individuals connected to the sign industry made comments and asked questions about certain sections of the proposed code, notably those relating to billboards including the proposed annual permit fees on billboards, the credit system for billboards, and the allowable size of billboards along the interstate corridor. There were also comments about electronic signs, their value as an advertising mechanism, and that they are not as bright as people may think.

Commission Discussion

- (0:38:20)** Mr. Alvarez was asked if it was known how many electronic signs are close to residential uses. Mr. Alvarez responded that he would need to take a closer look at the Highway 12 corridor. There was another commission comment about how it may be difficult for a business owner to know whether they are within 300 feet of a residential use versus a district. There was another question for staff about the process for permitting for billboards and if it could be bundled for larger owners such as Lamar to alleviate the amount of paperwork. Mr. Alvarez stated that something like that could possibly be done. There was some final discussion about amending a certain portion of the proposed code to read district in place of use. Mr. Alvarez made amendments to the proposed motion language and the Commission spoke about the process getting to this point.

Motion

- (0:47:54)** Ms. Story a motion to recommend approval of an ordinance revising the regulation of signs by amending Chapter 23, Title 11 of the Helena City Code by repealing and replacing Chapter 23 General sign regulations in its entirety and adopting this new Chapter 23 sign regulations in lieu thereof with the condition that the area of allowable wall signage in Section 11-23-9 be changed from 8% to 15%. Additionally, the further condition that Section 11-23-6H be amended to read any on premise electronic message centers that is located within 300 feet of any residential zoning district must automatically turn off between the hours of 11:00 PM and 6:00 AM daily unless the business is operating during these hours, and the further condition that Section 11-23-7E be amended to read a non-conforming



on premise sign shall cease to be used when the business activity and so on. Ms. Anderson seconded the motion. There was some discussion about the amount of work that had been put into getting to this point and the Commission wanted to stress the importance of the City Commission knowing the quantity of on premise signs within 300 feet from a residential zoning district when this goes before them for review. A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously.

General Public Comment

(0:50:46) There was no general public comment.

Member Communications / Proposals for next Agenda

(0:51:08) It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, July 9 and that there may be an item ready for the Commission to consider at that time. There was also a reminder that tonight's item would go to City Commission on July 15th.

Adjournment

(0:53:06) The meeting was adjourned.