

**City of Alma
Planning Commission Minutes
July 11, 2022**

Chairperson Heather Therrien called a regular meeting of the Alma Planning Commission to order at 6:00 p.m. at the Alma Municipal Building. A quorum of the Planning Commission was present.

Present: Andrew Bare, Jessica Gilkins, Greg Mapes, Michelle Pitts, Ellen Richter, and Heather Therrien.
Absent: Justin Fonley, Sonia Gibson, and David Justin.

Chairperson Therrien led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Mapes, seconded by Gilkins, to reconsider the minutes of September 13, 2021, previously approved on November 11, 2021, and approve an additional correction in the final motion of the minutes as follows: “Yes: ~~Wheeler,~~ Mapes, Therrien, Pitts, Richter, Schooley, Ayers”. Motion to approve correction carried.

**Yes: Bare, Gilkins, Mapes, Pitts, Richter, and Therrien.
No: none.
Absent: Fonley, Gibson, and Justin.**

Motion by Pitts, seconded by Bare, to approve the minutes of June 6, 2022, as presented. Motion carried.

**Yes: Bare, Gilkins, Mapes, Pitts, Richter, and Therrien.
No: none.
Absent: Fonley, Gibson, and Justin.**

Site Plan Review

Therrien noted Mitten Mini Storage/Geers Properties LLC has submitted a site plan to expand the mini storage facility located at 340 Elmwood. Mitten Mini Storage proposes a new 30' x 100' self-storage building on parcel #51-021-290-00 which will match the three units to the north. The new building will be located on a vacant lot.

Ripley explained the zoning change from R2 to B2 would be in front of the City Commission for approval on July 11, 2022. The site plan is before Planning Commission for approval, and then the plan will go to the Zoning Board of Appeals regarding a request for a setback variance. Ripley provided the following information:

- Mini Storage is permitted in the B2, General Business District with the issuance of a special use permit.
- Mini Storage – 3,000 sq. ft.

Setbacks:

Front - West (Elwood Street) – 8' from property line, required 35' (will require a variance from the ZBA)

Rear – East – 33' 7" from property line, required 30'

Side – North 12' 5" from property line, required 5'

Side – South 20' from property line, required total of both sides 10'

Lot Coverage: Maximum Lot Coverage 40%

Lot Size – 7085 sq. ft.

Structure Size – 3,000 sq. ft.

Lot Coverage – 42% (will require a variance from the ZBA)

Driveway Width – 25' between buildings provided, required 24'

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Ripley said the vacant parcel was a former driveway to the MRP (Refinery Site) property to the east and this is a positive reuse for the property. A driveway permit will be required from the Public Services Department as well as a building permit. Any signage will also require a sign permit.

Commission members noted they were aware of the requests from the zoning change and didn't have any additional questions about the site plan.

Motion by Pitts, seconded by Mapes, to approve the site plan, as submitted by Mitten Mini Storage, for the addition of a 30' x 100' self-storage building on parcel #29-51-021-290-00, as part of an expansion of the self-storage facility at 340 Elmwood. Motion carried.

**Yes: Bare, Gilkins, Mapes, Pitts, Richter, and Therrien.
No: none.
Absent: Fonley, Gibson, and Justin.**

Public Hearing-Zoning Ordinance Amendment

Therrien explained the purpose of the scheduled public hearing was for consideration of an ordinance amendment to allow ground floor residential use in the downtown as a permitted use. Currently, the use is allowed under a special use permit. The change has been recommended by the MEDC as part of Alma's attempt to become certified as a Redevelopment Ready Community.

Motion by Pitts, seconded by Gilkins, to open the public hearing regarding a zoning ordinance amendment at 6:10 p.m. Motion carried.

**Yes: Bare, Gilkins, Mapes, Pitts, Richter, and Therrien.
No: none.
Absent: Fonley, Gibson, and Justin.**

No public comment was offered.

Motion by Pitts, seconded by Bare, to close the public hearing regarding the zoning ordinance amendment at 6:11 p.m. Motion carried.

**Yes: Bare, Gilkins, Mapes, Pitts, Richter, and Therrien.
No: none.
Absent: Fonley, Gibson, and Justin.**

Motion by Mapes, seconded by Pitts, to recommend approval to the Alma City Commission of a zoning ordinance amendment to allow residential uses in the downtown B-1 Central Business District as a permitted use, provided certain conditions are met. Motion carried.

**Yes: Bare, Gilkins, Mapes, Pitts, Richter, and Therrien.
No: none.
Absent: Fonley, Gibson, and Justin.**

Sign Ordinance Draft

Therrien noted the item was on the agenda for continued discussion of the draft language to update the sign ordinance to comply with the 2016 Supreme Court decision limiting community control over the message on a sign.

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Ripley explained that changes discussed at the previous meeting had been incorporated into the current draft. Changes included removing extraneous language describing “abandoned” signs, removing language prohibiting strings of lights/pennants for commercial purposes, correcting a typographical error in the language regarding projecting signs, and striking language referring to sidewalk signs left out later than 10:00 p.m. and projecting more than 40 inches.

Ripley asked if there were any other suggested changes. None were received. Ripley said the revised ordinance will be scheduled for review at a public hearing in August or September. Mapes suggested August to get it moving as soon as possible.

Set Public Hearing

Motion by Pitts, seconded by Richter, to set a public hearing for August 1, 2022, at 6:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the agenda allows, to consider revisions to the sign ordinance.

Yes: Bare, Gilkins, Mapes, Pitts, Richter, and Therrien.

No: none.

Absent: Fonley, Gibson, and Justin.

Other Business

No other business was presented.

Invitation to Public

No public comments were offered.

Adjourn

Motion by Mapes, seconded by Pitts, to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 p.m. Motion carried.

Yes: Bare, Gilkins, Mapes, Pitts, Richter, and Therrien.

No: none.

Absent: Fonley, Gibson, and Justin.

Sara Anderson, Alma City Clerk

Date of Approval