

Zoning codes are scrutinized by planning commissioners

By SUSAN AVERILL.

The Farmington City Council Monday night tabled consideration of a packet of proposed zoning ordinance revisions until they could study them in more detail.

"The whole document is the consensus of the planning commission," City Manager Robert Deadman said. The purpose of the alterations, he said, was to better define some of the terms in the ordinance, provide for supplemental regulations in the site plan review, remove inapplicable portions, and permit additional uses within some zoned districts.

"The ideas came from the planning commission, the building department and the administration. The end result is a consolidation of terms," Deadman said.

Among the proposed changes is the addition of three definitions to that section of the zoning ordinance. Landscaping, commercial recreation and mechanical amusement devices are now defined.

THE PROPOSAL ALSO indicates C-3 commercial uses in certain industrial districts.

"Our industrial district borders the main street in several cases. Because of that, we've allowed C-2 general commercial use along the main arteries. The C-3 would allow more types of uses such as paint stores and auto and bump shops. It allows more uses and affects mostly those industrial districts on Nine Mile and Farmington and Eight Mile and Farmington."

Amendments to the central business district portion of the ordinance would allow city council to temporarily grant permission for art shows, sidewalk sales and carnivals for up to eight days.

Changes in the requirements of fences, walls, hedges and greenbelts would allow screening walls and greenbelts to be located off the property line "if they would better screen the nonresidential use from the residential use." A nonresidential property owner would be responsible for maintaining the screening walls and landscaping required by the ordinance as long as the adjacent property is residential.

"They (the planning commission) felt that if you're going to stick a big box on top of a building and call it a refrigeration unit or whatever, that you should have some kind of screening around it," Deadman said. Another proposed amendment would require that mechanical equipment located around a commercial or office building be screened from public view.

MECHANICAL AMUSEMENT devices were not included in the definition of commercial recreation because the planning commission didn't want such devices in certain city districts, according to a memo Deadman gave the city council.

A change in the site plan application review procedure would give the city tighter control over proposed construction. The planning commission suggested that all new construction, excepting in single family residential districts, be reviewed.

Indicated on the new construction plan should be information clarifying the proposed use of the property, the location of pedestrian walkways, signs, rubbish storage areas, screening walls, landscaping lighting, building elevations and the type of material to be used on the building.

The location of all outdoor mechanical equipment will also have to be indicated on the site plan, if the council approves the package recommendation.

"It's much stricter," Deadman said. "The planning commission decided it should have more control over the site plans if the community is going to be developed in accordance with the master plan."

"Things are changing in the way commercial businesses do business and buildings are built," he explained. Commercial recreation has been excluded from the central business district by the proposed plan. This would prohibit the construction of bowling alleys, skating areas and arcades in this area.

A DEVELOPER MAY request permission from the planning commission and the city council to construct a building over 35 feet in height, according to the proposed ordinance variation.

The planning commission has developed guidelines for the councilmembers' deliberation about what buildings should be allowed the variance in the central business district.

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Included in the guidelines is the consideration of adequate parking, either externally or internally provided, and the stipulation that 25 per cent of the land may be covered by the building unless the building is contiguous to public parking facilities or structures.

The proposal would require the planning commission and the city council to hold public hearings before the site plans are approved if they call for a building more than 35 feet tall.

Mechanical amusement devices, mechanical amusement arcades and coin-operated mechanical amusement devices may no longer be located in the smaller mall areas. They are, however, permitted in the major shopping centers.

"They (the planning commission) felt that kind of operation is detrimental to small business districts, so they put them in the major shopping centers. Mini-theaters are included in this," Deadman said. The proposal, he said, was for new businesses and wouldn't require compliance from any of the existing facilities.


Once included in the permitted principal uses section of the zoning ordinance for R-1 one family zoning, schools and nurseries must now get a special exception permit from the board of zoning appeals.

SCREENING MUST also be done on residential or multi-family dwellings if mechanical equipment is installed on the roof.

Other zoning changes would stipulate that commercial or recreational vehicles only park in multiple family districts within areas designated by the planning commission.

As for storing these vehicles, the planning commission proposed that they be stored behind the front building line, but not in a side yard open space adjacent to any street, whenever they are to be stored on a corner lot within a residential subdivision. Instead of "motor supply stations" and "service garages," the planning commission suggested the references be made to "filling stations," "public garages" and "commercial garages."

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