

Minutes of the City of Vandalia Planning Commission
March 25, 2025

Members Present:	Mr. Ron Atkins, Mr. Dave Arnold, Mr. Kevin Keeley Jr., Mr. Lucious Plant
Members Absent:	Ms. Kristin Cox
Staff Present:	Michael Hammes, City Planner
Others Present:	Jose Rodriguez

Call to Order

Mr. Atkins called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Attendance

Mr. Atkins noted that Ms. Cox had notified the Commission of her absence. Mr. Plant made a motion to excuse Ms. Cox. Mr. Keeley, Jr. seconded the motion. The motion carried 4-0.

Approval of Minutes of the Planning Commission

Mr. Plant made a motion to approve the January 14th, 2025 minutes. Mr. Arnold seconded the motion. The motion carried 4-0.

Swearing in of Attendees Wishing to Speak at Meeting

The attendees were sworn in.

Old Business

Mr. Hammes confirmed that there was no Old Business on the agenda.

New Business – PC 25-0003 – Site Plan Review – 234 W. National Road

Mr. Hammes introduced Case PC 25-0003, a request for site plan approval for the property located at 234 West National Road. The proposal involves the construction of a business office and equipment shop structure. He added that the 0.845-acre property is zoned Office Service (OS).

Mr. Hammes described the vicinity of the site. He noted that the properties surrounding the site are primarily Commercial in nature, with some residential to the west and south. Dayton International Airport and the 40 West properties are located to the north.

Mr. Hammes referenced the proposed site plan, describing the 1,250 square foot office at the north end of the site and the 2,500 square foot to the south. He noted that a fence would be constructed at the southwest corner of the site to screen this project from the nearby apartments along Gabriel Street.

Mr. Hammes described the signage proposed for the site, including a wall sign on the office building and a monument sign along National Road. Permits would be required for both signs, and the monument sign would need to meet the setback requirements for the OS district.

Mr. Hammes noted that any exterior lighting proposed for the site would require a photometric plan. Similarly, any dumpsters installed at a future date would need to include an enclosure.

Mr. Hammes reported that the applicant had submitted a revised site plan that addresses some minor issues identified by staff. He then confirmed that the revised site plan meets the requirements of the code.

Hearing no questions for Mr. Hammes, Mr. Atkins invited the applicant to address the Commission.

Mr. Jose Rodriguez, of Rodz Builders, addressed the Commission. He confirmed that he had submitted a revised site plan that addressed the comments provided during staff review.

Mr. Atkins asked about the proposed monument sign. Mr. Rodriguez replied that the detailed schematics for that sign would be reviewed as part of the permit application for the sign itself. Mr. Hammes added that the location of the sign meets the relevant standards.

Mr. Atkins asked about the lack of a dumpster. Mr. Rodriguez replied that the office would not generate enough trash to warrant a dumpster.

Mr. Atkins remarked that it was good to see something being built on this property, since the site had been vacant for more than 50 years. He added that the fence at the rear of the site will help with screening the property from the apartments.

Mr. Arnold asked about the style of the proposed buildings. Mr. Rodriguez reported that the front office would block most of the view of the building in the rear. Both buildings would have the same style of metal roof, but the rear building would be constructed of steel.

Mr. Arnold asked about the property to the west of the site. Mr. Hammes confirmed that the property is zoned Office Service, but the use is currently residential. He explained further that the residential use triggers a screening requirement, despite the similar zoning. While other standards may apply in other circumstances, in this case landscaping between the business and the adjacent residential structure would be sufficient.

Mr. Keeley, Jr., asked about the specific type of business proposed for the site. Mr. Rodriguez replied that his company is a custom homebuilder. This is reflected in the style of the office building.

Mr. Atkins noted that there were no other members of the public present.

Site Plan Review Criteria

Mr. Atkins read the Site Plan Review Criteria into the record. Pursuant to Code Section 1214.04(d)(1) “Site Plan Review Criteria”, the Planning Commission shall not approve an application for site plan review unless it finds the following:

- (1) That the proposed development is consistent with this code, and other related codes and ordinances enforced by the City;

Staff Comment: Staff feels the proposed development is consistent with the Code.

By a vote of 4-0, the Planning Commission agreed with the staff comment.

- (2) That the proposed development complies with the applicable zoning district regulations;

Staff Comment: Staff feels the proposed development will comply with Chapter 1226 (General Development Standards) and Chapter 1228 (Architectural Standards).

By a vote of 4-0, the Planning Commission agreed with the staff comment.

- (3) That the proposed development adequately provides for emergency vehicles access and circulation; and

Staff Comment: Staff feels this development will adequately provide emergency vehicles access and circulation, as shown.

By a vote of 4-0, the Planning Commission agreed with the staff comment.

- (4) If the project is to be carried out in successive phases, that each stage of the proposed development shall comply with the foregoing criteria.

Staff Comment: Staff feels this criterion does not apply. This is not anticipated to be a multi-phase project.

By a vote of 4-0, the Planning Commission agreed with the staff comment.

Mr. Hammes noted that every criterion does not necessarily apply to every project in the same way. He explained that criterion 4, relating to multi-phase projects, does not prevent the applicant from expanding the business later on, provided that they amend their site plan.

Mr. Atkins reported that staff recommended **approval** of the site plan for 234 West National Road as proposed, with the following conditions:

1. All landscaping and screening shall be installed in quantities and varieties compliant with Chapter 1232 of the Vandalia Zoning Code.

Mr. Plant made a motion to approve Case PC 25-0003 with the recommended condition. Mr. Keeley, Jr., seconded the motion.

By a vote of 4-0, the Planning Commission **Approved** Case PC 25-0003 with the recommended condition.

Mr. Hammes explained that the Commission's approval in this matter is final. He will submit a copy of the approval to the Building Department, which will allow them to approve permits and get the project moving forward.

New Business – PC 25-0004 – Code Amendment – Interstate Highway Sign Overlay

Mr. Hammes introduced Case PC 25-0004, a Staff-Initiated Code Amendment relating to the Interstate and Limited-Access Highway Sign Overlay District.

Mr. Hammes explained that billboards are not currently permitted in the City of Vandalia. Despite this, there are some legacy billboards that predate the current restrictions, including six billboards along Airport Access Road.

Mr. Hammes reported that the City leases a portion of two properties along Airport Access Road to Outfront Media. This company maintains a double-sided billboard on each of these properties. Recently, the company requested permission to upgrade the billboards to full-sized digital billboards.

Mr. Hammes noted that all existing billboards along Airport Access Road are nonconforming, due to the existing restrictions. Any structural alterations to nonconforming signs need to bring them into compliance with the code – meaning that a billboard would need to be reduced to 200 square feet, or less than a third of its current size. He added that only 70 square feet of the sign could be electronic, which would not work for a full-sized digital billboard.

Mr. Hammes observed that the Interstate and Limited-Access Highway Sign Overlay provides additional standards for signs found along various highways within the City. The boundaries of the overlay include a 400' area surrounding Interstates 70 and 75 and the Airport Access Road. Generally, the overlay allows for larger and taller freestanding signs than those permitted by the underlying zoning districts. The overlay permits both monument and pole signs, but does not specifically allow billboards.

Mr. Hammes noted that a code amendment would be required to allow existing billboards along Airport Access Road to be upgraded. He pointed out that amending the overlay, rather than the sign code, would allow the City to allow billboards on a limited basis in areas around major highways without impacting parcels outside the overlay.

Mr. Hammes described the Interstate Highway Sign Overlay, highlighting the areas included in the overlay. He explained that staff proposed dividing the overlay into three major areas, so that standards could be applied narrowly to one area without impacting others. As proposed, Area A would include Airport Access Road, Area B would include the east side of I-75 south of I-70, and Area C would include the east and west sides of I-75 north of I-70.

Mr. Hammes pointed out several areas where the Interstate Highway Sign Overlay overlapped other overlays. In Area A, two parcels along National Road fall into the National Road Sign Overlay. In Area B, the area west of I-75 and south of Benchwood Road would be in the Interstate Highway Sign Overlay if it were not already in the Miller-Benchwood Overlay. In both cases, the stricter overlay remains in place.

Mr. Hammes noted that there are no billboards in Areas B and C. He pointed out that there are multiple pole signs in Area B, but these signs comply with the current standards.

Mr. Hammes discussed the proposed standards for signs in the overlay. He noted that the only proposed changes would be the increase in maximum size for pole signs in Area A. This would permit billboards up to 672 square feet in size, with the full 672 square feet being digital.

Mr. Hammes added that no billboard would be permitted in Area A unless installing that billboard results in the removal of another billboard in Area A. This is intended to keep the number of billboards at the current level. This rule would not impact normal pole signs up to 200 square feet.

In summary, Mr. Hammes pointed out that no billboards along Airport Access Road can legally be upgraded or replaced under the current standards. The proposed amendments would allow some or all of the existing billboards to receive much-needed updates.

Mr. Hammes discussed one additional change proposed for the overlay. Larger Temporary Banners are permitted in the overlay if the underlying zoning is one of several industrial districts. In order to avoid confusion and make this provision more easily understood and enforced, staff recommends

Mr. Hammes clarified the rule requiring the removal of an existing billboard prior to the installation of a new billboard. He explained that the removal must happen within six months of the installation. In the case of double-sided billboards, both faces count as billboards – meaning that the removal of a double-sided billboard could result in two new billboards, whether or not they remain attached.

Mr. Atkins asked if this would result in additional billboards. Mr. Hammes replied that some double-sided billboards may become single-sided, since digital billboards must face toward the highway they serve. The removal of the second face could result in a new billboard elsewhere, so long as the permit for the new billboard is issued within six months.

Mr. Hammes also pointed out that Federal Highway Administration rules may dictate where billboards can be placed, due to the minimum distance required between billboards.

Mr. Keeley Jr. asked about rules regarding the brightness of digital billboards, which could cause concern for billboards facing residential properties. Mr. Hammes replied that electronic signs (including digital billboards) cannot face residential property. He added that the rules of the underlying district would govern brightness, transitions, and other standards for electronic signs.

Mr. Arnold remarked on trends in digital advertising, including the cost of leasing space on a digital billboard in the current economy.

Mr. Atkins asked if these rules would impact proposals such as the art installation at the I-70 / I-75 Interchange. Mr. Hammes replied that the ordinance could be adjusted to include such monuments if necessary.

Review Criteria

Hearing no further questions, Mr. Atkins read the Review Criteria into the record.

Recommendations and decisions on planning and zoning code amendment applications shall be based on consideration of the following review criteria:

1. The proposed text amendment is consistent with the comprehensive plan, other adopted City plans, and the stated purposes of this code;

Staff Comment: Staff feels that the proposed amendments are consistent with policies adopted by the City and with the existing text of the code.

By a vote of 4-0, the Planning Commission agreed with the staff comment.

2. The proposed amendment is necessary or desirable because of changing conditions, new planning concepts, or other social or economic conditions; and

By a vote of 4-0, the Planning Commission agreed with the staff comment.

Staff Comment: Staff feels that proposed amendments are necessary due to changing conditions resulting from improvements in technology relating to billboards.

3. The proposed amendment will promote the public health, safety, and general welfare.

Staff Comment: Staff feels that the proposed amendments promote the public health, safety, and general welfare.

By a vote of 4-0, the Planning Commission agreed with the staff comment.

Mr. Atkins reported that staff recommended that the Commission recommend approval of the proposed amendments to the Zoning Code, as listed in the staff report.

Mr. Keeley, Jr., made a motion to recommend approval of the proposed code amendments. Mr. Plant seconded the motion.

By a vote of 4-0, the Planning Commission recommended **Approval** of Case PC 25-0004 as proposed.

The recommendation of the Planning Commission will be forwarded to the Council Study Session of April 7th, 2025.

Communications

Mr. Hammes noted that a training session with the Law Director had been suggested by Council. The training may involve the Board of Zoning Appeals as well, with topics and schedule yet to be determined. Mr. Hammes will notify the Commission of any plans, and asked that any suggestions for such a training session be sent to his office.

Mr. Hammes reported that there may be additional text amendments later in the year. He advised the Commission that his office attempts to make the narrowest change to the code possible to accomplish whatever goal is set forth by Council, which may result in multiple small code amendments.

Adjournment

Mr. Atkins asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Keeley, Jr., made the motion. Mr. Arnold seconded the motion. The vote passed 4-0.

Mr. Atkins adjourned the meeting at 6:56 p.m.

Chairman