

Minutes

Planning Commission Meeting

7:00pm December 9, 2025

Auditorium

Commissioner Roxanne Yurek called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Members Present: Commissioner Roxanne Yurek, Commissioner Amy Penaz, Commissioner Neil Syvertson, Commissioner Sarah Kahn, Commissioner Gary Klima, Clerk Diane Pedersen.

Others present: Bruce Bebo, Frank Koelfgrn, Tom Wicks (Leasing Agent for Summit Locations)

Consent Agenda:

1. Approve the minutes from August 12, 2025.

Motion by Commissioner Kahn second by Commissioner Penaz to approve the minutes from August 12, 2025. Vote For: Unanimous. Motion Carried.

New Business

1. Opened Public Hearing for 716 Hwy 7 sign variance request at 7:02pm
 - a. Summit Locations
 - i. Around since 2009
 - ii. Owner is Christian based, so they do not advertise for the following:
 1. Alcohol
 2. Gambling
 3. Strip Clubs/Sex Shops
 4. Marijuana or Vaping
 5. Political other than parties
 - iii. Mission Statement is to support local businesses, which is why they are located in smaller towns and not on the interstate.
 1. Try to give revenue dollars back to the city the billboards are in through the local businesses.
 2. Will benefit the city by giving local businesses the opportunity to advertise on the billboard. Real Estate Agents, Insurance Agents, companies wanting to hire and Agriculture Ads have been the top advertisers in other areas. If there were no local businesses that wanted to advertise, the radius would be expanded out further.
 3. They currently have two signs west of Litchfield, in Atwater.
 4. There is currently no established timeframe for pulling a sign down if there is no advertising on it.
 5. The location was chosen based on car count.
 6. Carry a million-dollar general liability insurance policy.
 7. Average leasing cost is around \$550 per month.
 - b. Variance Request
 - i. Steile Construction is requesting a variance on behalf of Summit Locations to construct a one-sided stacked unlit billboard sign that is 32 feet in height and has two 160-square foot sign faces facing West on the Eastern edge of the lot for a total of 320 square feet. Only traffic heading East will be able to see the sign.
 - ii. City Ordinance states that signs cannot exceed 20 feet in height above the mean centerline street grade and cannot exceed 100 square feet.
 - iii. The size of the billboard meets state regulations, but not city, which is why the variance is being requested.

- iv. The property is located is B-2 Highway Business and is requesting a variance for a Type 4 off premises sign due to the size requested.
- c. Resident Comments:
 - i. Frank Koelfgrn
 - 1. Length of lease
 - a. 1-2 years unless it is for a specific event
 - 2. Concerned sign will block driver's from seeing Molly's Café.
 - a. Due to the location of the sign, it will not block the view of drivers.
 - 3. Will it contribute to distracted driving
 - a. Don't believe so due to the size of the sign and the ease of reading the information.
 - ii. Letter from Hutchinson Coop – Cenex
 - 1. Not in support of the large billboard – block driver's view
 - a. The view of drivers coming from the East, heading West, will still be the tree line, the sign will not block the view of businesses West of the sign.
 - iii. Email from Duane Schermann – 317 Oliver Ave NW
 - 1. Have traffic studies been done for distractions
 - a. Yes, the company has done a study. Digital signs are more distracting than non-digital signs.
 - 2. Any lights on the billboard
 - a. No lights on the billboard, will just utilize light from the surrounding area.
 - 3. Impact on home prices when billboards are present.
 - a. Did not have an answer.
 - iv. Commissioner Question – are there different requirements for different zoning districts?
 - 1. Yes, Section 2.14 – Signs – in the zoning ordinance provides the information for the different zoning districts.
- d. Commission Discussion:
 - i. The feeling is it would be an eye sore.
 - ii. Size is larger than we want to allow even if it is located by the tree line.
 - iii. Don't believe it will benefit the city.
 - 1. Few if any local businesses would be able to afford to advertise on it.
 - iv. The ordinance has served the city well up to now, don't think it's necessary to allow a variance this large now.
 - v. Allowing a variance rather than a conditional use, the city retains no control over such things as how long the sign could sit empty or when it should be taken down.

Motion by Commissioner Kahn second by Commissioner Syvertson to recommend not approving the variance request for Summit Locations on the lot of Steile Construction to the city council at the December 15, 2025, council meeting. Vote For: Unanimous. Motion Carried.

- e. Public Hearing for the rezoning request was closed at 7:33pm.
- f. They will be informed that the Planning Commission is not recommending the variance to the city council but that they can come to the council meeting and appeal the decision.

Old Business: None

Open Discussion:

- 1. Stop Signs placed during the infrastructure project.

Motion by Commissioner Penaz second by Commissioner Klima to adjourn the meeting. Vote For: Unanimous. Motion Carried.

Adjourn 7:35 pm