

# CITY OF WASHINGTON, ILLINOIS

## Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting

Wednesday, October 2, 2024, at 6:30 P.M.

Washington Fire Department Training Room - 200 N. Wilmor Road, Washington

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**Call to Order** Acting Chairman Louis Milot called the regular meeting of the City of Washington Planning and Zoning Commission to order at 6:30 p.m. A quorum was established.

**Roll Call** *Present:* Commissioners Milot, Reeder, Shelton, Scott, Williams  
*Absent:* Commissioners Burdette, Ritter  
*Also present:* Planning and Development Director Oliphant, Building and Zoning Coordinator Boyer, City Clerk Brod and City Attorney Schryer

**Approve Minutes** Commissioner Reeder motioned to approve the minutes; Commissioner Shelton seconded.  
Motioned passed by voice vote.

**Public Comments** None provided.

**Public Hearing** At 6:34 p.m., Commissioner Milot opened the public hearing to consider proposed request of Robinson Outdoor for a large billboard variance at 1230 Peoria Street. Mr. Oliphant explained that the property formerly housed Todds Service Center, which was demolished in 2021 and is vacant. He noted that this is a corner lot with two front property lines, code only allows billboards to be placed on US24, regulations require a variance for billboards to be on a road with a speed limit less than 55, regulations state that a billboard should be not less than 20 feet from any property line and at least 500 feet away from residential properties. He also explained the proposed billboard is 30 feet tall and the tallest allowed on this road is 25 feet and this is proposed at 200 square feet but the maximum allowable square footage is 160 square feet. Most signs along this corridor are 100 square feet or smaller and lower than 20 feet tall. Mr. Oliphant noted the heavy school traffic in the area and the concern about the aesthetics along the corridor. He also noted the PZC is an advisory council on this item, but it will go to City Council for final consideration.

*Item A: Proposed request of Robinson Outdoor for a large billboard variance at 1230 Peoria St.*

1) *To allow a large billboard adjacent to a road with a maximum permissible speed limit of less than 55 mph;*  
2) *To allow a large billboard to be located less than 20 ft., from the property line;*  
3) *To allow a large billboard to be located within less than 500 ft., from the nearest lot line of any residential zoned lot.*

Danny Marler from Robinsons was present. He understands the code and feels this will benefit the community. He shared that this billboard will not be managed by them and not sold. He shared it can be used to alert the community for the National Weather Center, Amber Alerts, fire department reminders, public works information, city promotions, community events, and Chamber of Commerce information. He noted the setback and the height allows for big trucks. It also has an automatic dimmer they dim at dusk.

Robert Ruffle, the property manager was present. He is interested in the development of US 24 BUS. He feels the area is lacking. He has been approached by other sign companies and noted this type of signage is not currently in the community. He appreciates the alert functions and shared that they have some flexibility in the location. He doesn't find any research supporting that this sign would be a hazard to traffic. He feels this is a large-scale commercial area. He doesn't feel it should be declined due to being 500 feet from the residential requirement.

At 6:52 p.m. Commissioner Milot closed the public hearing. Commissioner Reeder motioned to approve the variance request; Commissioner Williams seconded.

Commissioner Scott expressed concern for the billboard size. Commissioner Reeder expressed concern for setting a precedent. Commissioner Scott and Mr. Oliphant clarified size allowances for signs on US 24 BUS. Commissioner Milot noted that code is designed to address distraction and aesthetics. He feels the density of signage is also an issue and if larger signs are allowed on smaller parcels, it can increase the density of signs. He expressed concern for gaining permission from IDOT. Mr. Marler explained that they would need a letter from the city stating that the city will approve it if IDOT approves it. Mr. Oliphant clarified that small ground signs cannot be animated and IDOT will probably be more restrictive. Mr. Marler noted they have a

smaller sign but is worried it is too small for our setback. He is concerned that setting it back further will cause people to take their eyes off the road.

On roll call the vote was:

0 Ayes:

5 Nays: Milot, Reeder, Scott, Shelton, Williams

Motion failed.

*Variance request of John Jason Hawksworth to allow for a ground-mount solar array to be placed on a parcel off Chrisendale Ln., without a primary structure*

At 7:08 p.m., Commissioner Milot opened the public hearing to consider a proposed variance request of John Jason Hawksworth to allow for a ground-mount solar array to be placed on a parcel off of Chrisendale Lane, without a primary structure.

Building and Zoning Coordinator Boyer shared that the property does not meet the two-acre minimum lot size mandated in the zoning code. His abutting property meets the minimum two-acre lot size but contains no primary structure. It is zoned AG-1 but contains a residential accessory structure. Mr. Hawksworth attempted to combine the properties but was unable to do so because they are in different elementary school districts. The purpose of the variance is to allow the property owner to install a ground-mount solar array on the larger, unimproved property. Staff recommends approval. He further noted that the unimproved property is landlocked and will likely not be able to be developed. Staff recommends approval.

At 7:09 p.m. Commissioner Milot closed the public hearing. Commissioner Scott motioned to approve the variance request; Commissioner Reeder seconded.

The property owner, Mr. Hawksworth was present and confirmed the information provided. Commissioner Scott noted that the array will meet all other recommendations but expressed concern if the lots were sold separately. He clarified that the variance would go with the lot. Attorney Schryer noted that it would be very difficult to sell the property because it is landlocked. He has no issue with this variance except if it causes selling issues. Mr. Hawksworth noted that the electrical could then be run to the adjoining parcel. Commissioner Reeder confirmed that it would need to be rewired if the parcels were sold separately. Commissioner Milot noted an electrical permit would then be needed. Joe noted that the permit for the electrical permit would be an easy process if needed.

On roll call the vote was:

5 Ayes: Milot, Reeder, Scott, Shelton, Williams

0 Nays:

Motion carried.

**New Business** Mr. Oliphant shared that there will be a November meeting.

**Commissioner/Staff Comments** None were provided.

**Adjournment** At 7:15 p.m. Commissioner Scott motioned to adjourn; Commissioner Reeder seconded. Motion carried by voice vote.

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Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk