

CITY OF COUNTRYSIDE

*803 Joliet Road
Countryside, IL 60525
www.countryside-il.org*



Meeting Minutes

Regular Meeting of the Plan Commission

Zoning Board of Appeals

Tuesday, February 4, 2025

7:15 P.M.

City Hall

Board Members

**Chairman Robert Schwarz, Secretary Tina Grotzke,
Marco Gutierrez, Ronald Ward, Steve Kehr, Jack Benton,
Tom Geraghty, Danielle Edenfield, Jonathan Gertsmeier**

Meeting called to order at 7:15 p.m. by Chairman Schwarz.

Roll Call: Secretary Grotzke called the Roll of Members physically present:
Present: Chairman Robert Schwarz, Steve Kehr, Tina Grotzke, Tom Geraghty, Ronald Ward
Danielle Edenfield, Jack Benton, Marco Gutierrez
Also Present: City Attorney Erik Peck, Planning Manager Richard Trent, Rec. Secretary Prokop
Absent: Jonathan Gertsmeier

Approval of Minutes -- The Regular Meeting Minutes of January 7, 2025 were previously distributed to Board Members. There were no corrections; motion made to approve the minutes as presented.

A motion was made by Mr. Gutierrez, seconded by Ms. Grotzke, that this matter be APPROVED as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 Schwarz, Geraghty, Grotzke, Ward, Kehr, Gutierrez, Edenfield, Benton
Nay: 0
Absent: 1 Gertsmeier

Chairman's Comments - None

Action Items:

1. CASE #PZV25-0001: Consideration of a Variance

- a. To consider granting a Variance to exceed the maximum Height for monument signs from 6' to 19'-10" in height for the construction of a new monument sign in the B-3 Zoning District; and
- b. To consider granting a Variance to exceed the maximum area for monument signs from 65 square feet to 98.33 square feet per side (a total surface area of 198.33 square feet) for the construction of a new monument sign in the B-3 Zoning District at the subject property of 5901 S. LaGrange Road.

Mr. Geraghty moved to open the Public Hearing in this matter, seconded by Mr. Gutierrez and carried by unanimous voice vote. The Community Development Department has received the required Proof of Notice. Attorney Zachary Blair appeared on behalf of the Applicant, Gerald Honda.

PM Mr. Trent presented the Staff Report. The subject property is zoned B-3, Service & Wholesale Business District. Mr. Blair, on behalf of Gerald Honda, is seeking a Variance to exceed the maximum height for a monument sign from six feet (6') to nineteen feet - ten inches (19'-10") in height. Also, Mr. Blair is seeking a Variance to exceed the maximum surface area for a monument sign from sixty five (65) sq. ft. to ninety eight and thirty three hundredths (98.33) sq. ft. – a total surface area of 198.33 sq. ft. The subject property has two (2) PINS (a front and back half); it is located north of Joliet Road on the east side of LaGrange Road; and approximately 264,790 sq. ft. or 6.07 acres in size. The four (4) elevations (surrounding the subject property) were shown, which included extensive renovations currently taking place, both interior and exterior; and the view of a new elevator being installed. The Honda dealership has adopted new identity standards which is part of a nationwide branding effort.

The west elevation shows the existing monument sign, which was originally installed in 2013 (as a result of **Ordinance No. 13-59-O**).

The 2024 Comprehensive Plan has described this area and the subject property as “Commercial and Industrial,” with no specific Subarea Plan in place but with a Goal and Recommendation worth noting: The Goal being to “*Continue to enhance the economic viability, productivity and uniqueness of the City’s primary commercial corridors.*” The Recommendation being to “*Continue to support the City’s auto dealerships by ensuring they occupy areas that are attractive, convenient for customers and have the necessary parking and utilities to maintain a high-quality business that attracts regional customers.*” Also, another note worth mentioning is that Countryside is considered a regional automobile dealership destination, providing a stable sales tax base. The area (along LaGrange Road) should continue to support automobile dealerships and site design should complement vehicular traffic on LaGrange Road, while increasing pedestrian safety and mobility.

Gerald Honda is seeking to construct a new monument sign. The dealership is going through a rebranding and as a result they are redesigning their existing building, which also includes their signage. They wish to build a new monument sign, in somewhat the same location – approximately 20’ from the LaGrange Road R-O-W and property line (a minimum of 5’ is required from the property line/R-O-W) and approximately 3’6” from the edge of the sign to the existing concrete sidewalk. The new sign would be slightly smaller in height, from 20’-6” to 19’-10”, and somewhat smaller in surface area from 100 sq. ft./203.33 sq. ft. total surface area to 98.33 sq. ft./198.33 sq. ft. total surface area.

Staff recommends approval of granting Variances to exceed the maximum height and to exceed the maximum surface area as requested, subject to the four (4) conditions as presented in the Planning and Zoning Memorandum dated February 4, 2025.

Chairman Schwarz asked whether the signs of various dealerships along LaGrange Road are all in the same range (size/height) as the proposed sign. Mr. Trent indicated that they are and explained the difference between “Freestanding” and “Monument” Signs. All the lighting for the proposed sign would be internal. Detailed discussion ensued re: proximity of the sign to the sidewalk and to the road right-of-way. The submitted photographs of the existing sign are somewhat deceptive.

Attorney Blair was sworn in by Chairman Schwarz and testified as follows: Mr. Trent was so detailed in his presentation that there is no need to elaborate further. He is happy to answer any questions. The property has two (2) different zoning classifications – B-2 and B-3. Mr. Blair stated that Gerald Honda is undergoing a \$5.5M renovation project. He has the surveyor information for the proposed sign location – the distance would be approximately 20’ from the property line/R.O.W. and approximately 3’-6” from the sidewalk. There was an easement taken by the City in 2017, which is the reason for the sidewalk being where it is to connect to other sidewalks in the area, plus a utility easement was granted. Gerald Honda is requesting two (2) variances for the new pylon (monument) sign; the only differences are in the color reversal. The proposed new sign must be completely refabricated. Mr. Blair showed photos of other signs along the LaGrange Road corridor that are similar in size and height to the proposed sign.

The proposed sign would not be fabricated until the Variances have been formally granted; production time is about 60 days – depending on world circumstances. Gerald Honda would use the existing base/foundation for the proposed new sign. There are bollards around the existing sign. Mr. Blair stated that brand standards change from time to time and his client is undergoing a change at this time.

Chairman Schwarz declared that the Petitioner's Application would be entered into evidence as **Exhibit 1** for the purpose of this hearing, and the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated February 4, 2025 would be entered into evidence as **Exhibit 2**. Ms. Grotzke moved to close the Evidentiary Portion of the Public Hearing, seconded by Ms. Edenfield and carried by unanimous voice vote.

PM Mr. Trent stated that two (2) individuals came into his office inquiring about the lighting for the proposed sign. He indicated to them that any lighting would be internal only; both individuals had no objection to the requests. There were no comments from Interested Parties – none present.

Ms. Grotzke moved to approve both Variances – one (1) to exceed the maximum height for monument signs from 6' to 19'-10", and one (1) to exceed the maximum surface area for monument signs from 65 sq. ft. to 98.33 sq. ft. per side on the property commonly known as 5901 S. LaGrange Road, subject to the four (4) conditions as set forth in the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated February 5, 2025.

A motion was made by Ms. Grotzke, seconded by Ms. Edenfield, that this matter be APPROVED as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 Schwarz, Geraghty, Grotzke, Ward, Kehr, Gutierrez, Edenfield, Benton

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 Gertsmeier

Chairman Schwarz stated that this matter will come before the City Council at its Regular Meeting on February 26, 2025.

2. CASE #PTA25-0002: Consideration of a Text Amendment

- a. To consider amending Zoning Code Section 10-1-3 (Definitions) to include electric vehicle (EV) charging station language in the Code;
- b. To consider amending Zoning Code Chapter 2 (General Zoning Provisions) to include electric vehicle (EV) charging stations to be permitted as an accessory use in all zoning districts; and
- c. To consider amending Zoning Code Section 10-10-5 (Schedule of Parking Requirements) to include electric vehicle (EV) charging station language in the Code.

Ms. Grotzke moved to open the Public Hearing in this matter, seconded by Mr. Ward and carried by unanimous voice vote. PM Mr. Trent presented the Staff report: The Community Development Department is initiating this Text Amendment request – to consider amending Zoning Code Section 10-1-3 to include electric vehicle (EV) charging stations as an accessory use; to consider creating a new

section – Section 10-2-20 to include EVs as an accessory use in all zoning districts; and to consider amending Section 10-10-5 to include EVs and associated parking spaces to be counted toward satisfying the minimum parking space requirements.

In 2024, the City’s Sustainability Committee directed Staff to apply for an Electric Vehicle (EV) Readiness Program from the Metropolitan Mayors’ Caucus (MMC). The EV Readiness Program is a unique initiative which helps communities such as ours plan for the growing demand for electric vehicles and charging stations. The City is currently working towards being awarded a “Bronze” designation. Some of the requirements to meet that designation include amending the City Code to specifically address the use of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. The City currently has one (1) EV charging station on site; other EV charging stations include Ettleson Hyundai and Autobarn Volkswagen – four (4) locations are noted in the City. Private residents have either installed solar panels or equipped their homes to accommodate charging EVs. These uses/structures have been treated as accessory uses – it just wasn’t memorialized in the City Code. In the eyes of MMC, the City must memorialize these guidelines in the City Code. Staff has crafted language that would not only meet and exceed the requirements of MMC, but also meet the guidelines necessary for the “Bronze” designation.

Staff recommends the following: 1) Update Title 10, Chapter 1, Section 10-1-3 to **add** language under Definitions; 2) Update Title 10, Chapter 2 to **add** a new section – Section 10-2-20 – under General Zoning Provisions; and 3) Update Title 10, Chapter 10, Section 10-10-5 to **add** language under Schedule of Parking Requirements.

The proposed language is the result of working with MMC to achieve the “Bronze” designation by adding the following language to the City Code:

- 1) Section 10-1-3 would be amended to add “electric vehicle (EV) charging stations” as an accessory use;**
- 2) A new Section – Section 10-2-20, would be added to specifically identify “electric vehicle (EV) charging stations” to be considered an accessory use in all zoning districts; and**
- 3) Section 10-10-5 (F) would be amended to add “electric vehicle (EV) charging stations” and associated parking spaces to be counted toward satisfying the minimum parking space requirements” – provided an EV space would not diminish the amount of parking on site.**

Mr. Gutierrez asked whether new construction would require the installation of EV charging stations. The current Building Code requires providing the electrical components for future EV charging stations. The City will not require installation at this time; that is a requirement for the “Gold” or “Silver” designations. The City is working towards the “Bronze” designation. The MMC goal is to create more awareness and visibility. The MCC will conduct a ceremony in May, which will include all 20 member Cohort communities receiving their Designation Plaques at that time. A designation would open the door for future grant funding. Discussion ensued re: current and future EV charging stations. If the parking spaces are not being used, they should remain empty, similar to ADA parking spaces. Future enforcement is being discussed with the Police Department.

Discussion ensued re: “accessory uses” and the use of solar panels; also, discussion re: EVs and their capabilities in cold weather. Mr. Trent referenced the “Definitions” found in Section 10-1-3 of the Code for accessory uses and accessory buildings and/or structures. He noted that the language for the proposed Text Amendment would meet the established goals and objectives of the 2021 Sustainability Plan. The current City Electrical Code for new residential buildings does require owners to have the appropriate electrical components in place. Ms. Grotzke moved to close the Evidentiary Portion of the Public Hearing, seconded by Mr. Gutierrez and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Ms. Grotzke moved to approve the proposed language of the Text Amendment (in **bold** as noted above), seconded by Mr. Gutierrez and carried by unanimous Roll Call vote.

A motion was made by Ms. Grotzke, seconded by Mr. Gutierrez, that this matter be APPROVED as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 Schwarz, Geraghty, Grotzke, Ward, Kehr, Gutierrez, Edenfield, Benton

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 Gertsmeier

Public Comments - None

Other Business

Ticket Statistics for January 2025 - No statistics were provided for January; they will appear along with the February ticket statistics next month.

2018-25 Zoning Cases -- New items were updated for the calendar year. The former City Hall project is now officially null and void (proposal has **EXPIRED**). The City will re-advertise the property as available commercial property. There have been other inquiries in the past; the City will adopt a wait and see attitude. Mr. Trent hopes that Staff will be more involved in the next development proposal process.

Next Meeting: March 4, 2025 -- Spring is the time for the annual Zoning Map Update; to reflect the changes that occurred in the prior year. Each year there are changes and/or corrections to be made – there are **no** other items on the agenda.

Upcoming Cases: Questions about various projects – Mr. Trent provided an update – “Noto Event Center” – still has engineering issues to be resolved. Also, they are dealing with some financial issues; they are seeking alternative funding. The project has been paused. “Caraway’s Restaurant” – making some headway; they would like to open up this month. They have fifty three (53) parking spaces and they need every single one; as you may recall, the parking lot was reconfigured.

The “Intergovernmental Agreement with Hodgkins” project (formerly known as the Hoffmann Hodgkins/Countryside Development Project and now “Duckee’s Travel Center”) is moving forward on 75th Street; work is progressing along on utilities. Gina Fisher’s property re: the expansion of the

Autobarn VW parking lot and reduction in the “size” of parking spaces for their inventory – no news to report; the Variance will expire **March 25, 2025**. “Tavern on LaGrange” – soon to be “Revel Supper Club” – is still pursuing a liquor license. “Time Out Restaurant” is still working with their insurance company to address the roof repairs.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Mr. Gutierrez, seconded by Ms. Edenfield, that this meeting be ADJOURNED; motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 8 Schwarz, Geraghty, Grotzke, Ward, Kehr, Gutierrez, Edenfield, Benton

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 Gertsmeier

Chairman Schwarz declared the meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

APPROVED:

Respectfully Submitted,



ROBERT SCHWARZ, CHAIRMAN

/fp