

REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CULVER CITY
PLANNING COMMISSION
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

June 25, 2025
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Reilman called the regular meeting of the Culver City Planning Commission to order at 7:03 p.m. in Council Chambers and online.

Present: Andrew Reilman, Chair
Darrel Menthe, Vice Chair
Stephen Jones, Commissioner
Alexander van Gaalen, Commissioner

Absent: Jen Carter, Commissioner

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Pledge of Allegiance

Allison Faris led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Public Comment - Items NOT on the Agenda

Chair Reilman invited public comment.

Ruth Martin del Campo, Current Planning Secretary, reported that no requests to speak had been received.

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Receipt of Correspondence

Ruth Martin del Campo, Current Planning Secretary, reported that no correspondence had been received.

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Consent Calendar

Item C-1

Approval of Draft Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of February 26, 2025

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER JONES AND SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR MENTHE THAT PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVE THE DRAFT PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 26, 2025.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: JONES, MENTHE, REILMAN
NOES: NONE
ABSENT: CARTER
ABSTAIN: VAN GAALEN

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Order of the Agenda

No changes were made.

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Public Hearing Items

Item PH-1

Consideration of a New Comprehensive Sign Ordinance (Citywide)

Emily Stadnicki, Current Planning Manager, introduced the item.

Laura Stetson, MIG, provided background on the project; discussed the new Citywide sign ordinance; the need for content neutrality; signs as a form of protected speech; aspects of signs that the City has jurisdiction over; the requirement that any sign regulations have a legitimate government purpose; sign types; required master sign plans; lack of regulations for real estate signs; a suggestion for a permit program for temporary real estate signs to provide control and oversight by Culver City; nonconforming abandoned signs; changing the character and aesthetic of the City;

administration modification provisions; and CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) compliance.

Emily Stadnicki, Current Planning Manager, discussed the staff recommendation noting that minor numbering errors would be corrected before the item goes before the City Council.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding clarification on the process; the recommendation to the City Council including changes proposed by the Planning Commission vs. sending the Planning Commission recommendations separately; and looking at how extensive the suggestions would be.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER JONES AND SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR MENTHE THAT PLANNING COMMISSION OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: JONES, MENTHE, REILMAN, VAN GAALEN
NOES: NONE
ABSENT: CARTER

Discussion ensued between MIG representatives, staff, and Commissioners regarding luminosity regulations; the prohibition on digital signs in the code; signage on the Kirk Douglas Theater; defining digital and LED signage; onboarding realtors to legal sign usage; Code Enforcement; outreach and education; allowing A-frame signage in pedestrian districts; A-frame signage other than in business districts as considered illegal; ensuring that A-frame signs leave four feet of clearance; proposed requirements allowing A-frame signage on private property within four feet of the entrance to a business; the new proposal to allow signage on public property with an encroachment permit from the City within two business districts; the annual permit available through Public Works; and clarification that requirements are the same whether signs are on private property or in commercial areas.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding A-frame signage on sidewalks; the fact that there is no private property in front of the door of a business; concern with requiring an encroachment permit for things people are regularly doing right now; the intention to regularize a common practice; sign restrictions waived during COVID; general rules for the use of public right of way;

allowing signage with an over-the-counter encroachment permit from the Public Works Department; alerting people as to what the rules are; signage that is exempt from the sign code, but requires a permit; cost; creation of a specialized sign encroachment permit fee that is less than a standard public right of way encroachment fee; establishing a fee-by-fee resolution; realtor signs vs. store signs; signs put up in Town Plaza vs. signs put up adjacent to businesses; and the ability to discuss concerns with businesses vs. the ever-changing real estate signage placement.

Laura Stetson, MIG, discussed rationale used by other cities for signage on city property that includes assignment of liability if someone trips over a sign.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding shifting liability from the City to the business owner; encroachment permits that carry insurance or indemnification and wavier; compliance; reducing the fee to a level where people will pay it; cost of other encroachment permits; enforcement; providing longer term permits; right of way needs; having the Downtown Business Association (DBA) educate businesses about new sign rules; sidewalk issues; support for recommending a nominal fee and education of business owners; and geographic limitations.

Chair Reilman invited public comment.

Ruth Martin del Campo, Current Planning Secretary, indicated no requests to speak had been received.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding signage complaints received in other areas; the focus on pedestrian oriented areas; support for less regulation if it is not needed; letting businesses that are not in the designated districts abide by the same rules; yard signs; election signs as a non-commercial message; allowing people to put up multiple non-commercial yard signs; the First Amendment; allowable square footage; concern with making decisions upon aesthetics; cumulative total vs. total number of signs; and Commission consensus to limit total square footage of allowed signage to 24 square feet.

Responding to inquiry, Laura Stetson, MIG, discussed reasoning for providing limits; signs associated with elections; and other signage that does not have time limits.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding findings for community consistency for aesthetics; preventing real estate signs from sitting out every day of the week; specifying a specific day during the week to allow real estate signs; Code Enforcement; regulation of current practices; the standard Brokers' Caravan on Tuesdays in California; and a suggestion to cross-reference the definition of City sponsorship.

Laura Stetson, MIG, clarified that City sponsorship was referred to for the purposes of the proposed section in the sign code and she asked about the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding the current sign code; iconic signs; content neutral regulations; the ability to maintain signage from defunct businesses; grandfathered signage; abandoned signs; historic sign designation; the need for clarification on certain sections; concern that there could be a sign that needs to be torn down before the ordinance is completed; the ability for City Council direction to delay enforcement; the staff-driven process; and the possibility of building in a master sign program where an extra amount of signage is allowed in the special circumstance.

Responding to inquiry, Laura Stetson, MIG, discussed the definition of an abandoned sign.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding the process to determine the length of time before a sign is deemed abandoned; adding a carve-out for signs that have existed for a certain period of time; whether building owners would be allowed to remove older signage; providing incentives to preserve historic signage; and support for adding a recommendation for a temporary stay of enforcement for abandoned signs that are more than ten years old until the iconic signs item comes back.

Laura Stetson, MIG, pointed out that the benchmark for considering something to be historic is 45-50 years old.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding the Historic Preservation Ordinance that defines 50 years as the standard threshold; iconic signs; support for choosing a timeframe where the signs of that era looked

different than current signs; support for changing the recommendation that abandoned signs that are more than 25 years old receive a temporary stay of enforcement; allowance of signage on architectural projections that do not extend above the roof line; signage as structural elements and speech; concern with the depth of regulation of speech; Homeowner Association regulations; elements with expressive meaning; regulation for the aesthetics of today; the living document that can be modified or amended; and appreciation to staff for their efforts to create an easy to understand document.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding concern with requiring signs to be taken down after a given time; content neutrality regulations; abandoned signs; rules for maintenance and safety; continuity; concern with the requirement that abandoned signage be taken down within 180 days; on-premises signs vs. off-premises signs; content-based rules; and clarification that the only commercial message allowable is related to the onsite business.

Discussion ensued between Ms. Stetson, staff and Commissioners regarding the requirement that signage be flat on the surface of the awning; method of area measurement; Commission consensus that temporary yard signage increase to 24 square feet, A-frame signage be allowed City-wide, and there be a delay of enforcement for non-conforming signs older than 25 years; the need for staff to research whether the selection of 25 years would withstand a challenge before making the recommendation to the City Council; and parameters for luminosity.

Chair Reilman moved to recommend the code as written with the three clarifying recommendations as discussed.

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR MENTHE AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER JONES THAT PLANNING COMMISSION CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: JONES, MENTHE, REILMAN, VAN GAALEN
NOES: NONE
ABSENT: CARTER

Vice Chair Menthe pointed out that the recommendation should include that the nominal fee for the encroachment permit be included for A-frame signage.

MOVED BY CHAIR REILMAN AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER JONES THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2025-P009, RECOMMENDING THE CITY COUNCIL MAKE A FINDING THAT THE PROJECT IS EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) PURSUANT TO CEQA GUIDELINES SECTION 15061(B)(3); AND APPROVE THE PROPOSED SIGN ORDINANCE (ATTACHMENT 1) WITH THE THREE CLARIFYING RECOMMENDATIONS AS DISCUSSED.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: JONES, MENTHE, REILMAN, VAN GAALLEN
NOES: NONE
ABSENT: CARTER

Chair Reilman thanked MIG for their work and for the clarifying questions.

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Action Items

Item A-1

(1) Discussion of Draft Written Report to City Council - Planning Commission Accomplishments and Proposed Activity/Upcoming Agenda Items for the Next Six Months; (2) Authorize Transmittal to City Council

Emily Stadnicki, Current Planning Manager, provided a summary of the material of record

Commissioner Jones questioned whether 11304 Culver Boulevard would come before the Planning Commission for a Site Plan Review.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER JONES AND SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR MENTHE THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION AUTHORIZE TRANSMITTAL OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PROPOSED ACTIVITY/UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS TO THE CITY COUNCIL.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: JONES, MENTHE, REILMAN, VAN GAALEN
NOES: NONE
ABSENT: CARTER

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Public Comment - Items NOT on the Agenda (Continued)

Chair Reilman invited public comment.

Ruth Martin del Campo, Current Planning Secretary, reported no requests to speak.

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Items from Planning Commissioners/Staff

Emily Stadnicki, Current Planning Manager, reported that there were no items for the agenda in July; she indicated that this was the last meeting for Chair Reilman who would be celebrated at a future meeting; and she thanked Chair Reilman for his work.

Chair Reilman discussed changes in staff over the years; indicated that it was a pleasure to serve; noted the important role in representing everyone in the community; he hoped that the Commission would continue on with housing; indicated that if there was a way to come back, he would try; discussed the spirit of peace in the world; war and hate; and he asked to adjourn the meeting in honor of the gentleman who sells ice cream with bells on his cart who is not there anymore.

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Adjournment

There being no further business, at 8:37 p.m., the Culver City Planning Commission adjourned to a regular meeting to be held on August 13, 2025.

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RUTH MARTIN DEL CAMPO
SECRETARY of the CULVER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED _____

ANDREW REILMAN
CHAIR of the CULVER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Culver City, California

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that, on the date below written, these minutes were filed in the Office of the City Clerk, Culver City, California and constitute the Official Minutes of said meeting.

Jeremy Bocchino
CITY CLERK

Date