

**MINUTES OF THE AVON LAKE
PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION
January 7, 2025**

A work session of the Avon Lake Planning Commission was called to order on January 7, 2025, at 8:10 P.M. in Council Chambers with Chairperson Ma presiding.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Haas, Dr. Ma, Mr. Leitch, Mr. Orille, Mrs. Raymond, Mr. Smith, Mayor Spaetzel, Director of Law Ebert, City Engineer Howard, Community Development Director Esborn, and Planning & Zoning Manager La Rosa were present for the roll call.

DISCUSSION ITEM:

Planning and Zoning Code Update

Community Development Director Esborn introduced the session, highlighting 11 proposed changes to the Planning and Zoning Code.

1. - 3. Minor Typographical Errors

Three minor typos in the code were highlighted, which require simple corrections. These do not involve significant policy changes and were presented for informational purposes.

4. Major Subdivision Review Process

Updates were proposed to align the code with long-standing practices. One update involves the addition of "improvement plans" to Section 1214.05(c)(8) and Table 1214-1, explicitly formalizing their review by the Planning Commission and City Council. Another update recommends the removal of Section 1214.05(c)(7)(D) to eliminate conflicting authority and ensure that decisions on improvement plans remain solely within the jurisdiction of the Commission and Council.

5. Expiration of an Approved Variance

The code requires construction to "start work" within a specified timeframe after a variance is approved. This ambiguous language has caused enforcement issues. The proposal replaces "start work" with "obtain a building permit," providing a clearer and enforceable standard.

6. Traffic Impact Analysis Requirements

The proposal broadens the scope of Section 1234.22(b)(4) to require traffic impact analyses for any application reviewed by the Planning Commission. This eliminates confusion stemming from the existing provision, which applies only to specific site plan reviews.

7. Side Yard Screening for Generators

The requirement for screening generators in the side yard (Section 1224.01(f)(8)(C)) has proven difficult to enforce due to space constraints and pre-existing installations. The proposal recommends removing this requirement.

8. Freestanding Signs in Business Districts

Section 1236.10(b) currently restricts freestanding signs to the B3 district when buildings are set back at least 10 feet from the right-of-way. This has been misinterpreted to exclude freestanding signs in B-1, B-2, and industrial districts. The proposed change clarifies that freestanding signs are allowed in all business and industrial districts, with specific conditions outlined.

9. Residential Driveway Width

To address concerns about excessive driveway expansions, a new regulation caps driveway width at 50% of the dwelling's width in residential districts. This ensures consistency and prevents overdevelopment on lots.

10. Rear Yard Projections

Current rules permit porch steps and open-air features to encroach into front and side setbacks but not rear setbacks. The proposal extends similar allowances for rear yard projections, addressing homeowner concerns and reducing the need for variances.

11. Corner Lot Setbacks in Industrial Districts

In industrial zones, the current 60-foot front yard setback for corner lots has led to unnecessary variances. The proposal reduces this setback to 30 feet, reflecting practical needs and existing development patterns.

Updates Rules and Regulations

Proposed changes to Article VI aim to streamline the application process by aligning the Planning Commission's procedures with the workflow enabled by OpenGov. Key improvements include requiring applicants to submit tentative site plans digitally through OpenGov for review before Development Review Committee meetings. This shift facilitates faster feedback by providing immediate departmental input, allowing applicants to make necessary adjustments within 20 days of submission. These updates enhance efficiency for both applicants and staff while maintaining thorough reviews.

Commission Feedback

During the discussion, the city engineer's role under the revised code was addressed, and a request for clearer language regarding freestanding signs was made. Concerns were raised about the potential overuse of traffic studies, with a suggestion to refine definitions to prevent unnecessary applications. It was also noted that the generator screening requirement might be more relevant to the Building Department.

A work session to refine the proposed changes will be planned for another date.

Dr. Ma adjourned the meeting at 8:38 pm.



Planning Commission
Chairperson Ma



Recording Secretary
Kelly La Rosa