
ALEXANDRIA TOWNSHIP

PLANNING COMMISSION

MEETING PACKET FOR
June 26, 2017



PRELIMINARY AGENDA
Alexandria Township Planning Commission
June 26, 2017
6:00 p.m. – Township Conference Room

Call to Order

Adopt Agenda

Approve Minutes

Public Hearing

1. Zoning Ordinance Amendment to Section V.A. (Signs) to allow electronic changeable copy signs in the rural commercial, urban commercial and light industrial zoning districts as a conditional use.

Zoning Administrator's Report

Old Business:

New Business:

1. Discussion – Mini-storage zoning
2. Update/Discussion – Douglas County ordinance amendment discussions/hearings

Adjournment

****NOTE:** This is a preliminary agenda, subject to change at any time.

STAFF REPORT

Application: Zoning Ordinance Amendment to Section V.A. (Signs) to allow electronic changeable copy signs in the rural commercial, urban commercial and light industrial zoning districts as a conditional use.

Agenda Item: Public Hearing - 1

Background Information:

) **Issue:** The Alexandria Township Zoning Ordinance currently does not allow for “Electronic changeable copy” signs anywhere in the Township. This was the result of discussions in 2012, when the sign ordinance was last updated in coordination with Douglas County as they updated their ordinance. While the County allowed for such signs in certain zoning districts, the Township decided to not allow them. Staff’s recollection is that the Township felt that its more rural setting made electronic changeable copy signs less appropriate and consistent with the character of the area.

Since that time, changeable copy digital signs have become more prevalent around the state and country and their cost has decreased somewhat. The Township was recently approached by an organization with facilities in the Township (Rainbow Rider) with a request for such a sign. Staff expects such requests would not be uncommon going into the future.

The Town Board was approached on this issue by Rainbow Rider and a local sign company and directed that a public hearing be held by the Planning Commission to determine if there is any public input on this issue and to come up with a recommendation for whether electronic changeable copy signs should be allowed in the Township’s commercial and light industrial zoning districts only.

Planning Commission Direction: The Planning Commission, at a minimum, will need to take public comment and hold some initial discussions regarding its thoughts on this issue. It could either recommend that “electronic changeable copy” signs be allowed in certain zoning districts, that they continue to be prohibited, or table the matter for more discussion.

Staff Comments: If the Commission feels that allowing for such signs is appropriate, it could consider allowing for electronic changeable copy signs, but restricting them in several ways:

1. Imposing a maximum size that is less than what would be allow for other signs.
2. Imposing a more restrictive height limit than would apply to other signs.
3. Imposing a period of time at night where they must be dimmed, made so that they do not change, or are turned off completely.

Applicable Ordinances:

SECTION V. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

A. SIGNS¹

1. Findings, Purpose, and Intent.
 - a. Findings. Alexandria Township hereby finds as follows:
 - (1.) Exterior signs have a substantial impact on the character and quality of the community.
 - (2.) Signs provide an important medium through which individuals may convey a variety of messages.
 - (3.) Signs can create traffic hazards, aesthetic concerns, and detriments to property values, thereby threatening the public health, safety, and welfare.
2. Purpose and Intent. It is not the purpose or intent of these sign standards to regulate the message displayed on any sign; nor is it the purpose or intent of this Ordinance to regulate any building design or any display not defined as a sign, or any sign which cannot be viewed from the outside of a building. The purpose and intent of this Section is to:
 - a. Regulate the number, location, size, type, illumination, and other physical characteristics of signs within the County in order to protect and promote the public health, safety, and welfare.
 - b. Maintain, enhance, and improve the aesthetic environment of the County by preventing visual clutter that is harmful to the appearance of the community.
 - c. Improve the visual appearance of the Township while providing for effective means of communication, consistent with constitutional guarantees and the Township's goals of public safety and aesthetics.
 - d. Allow a wide variety of sign types in commercial zones, and a more limited variety of signs in other zones, subject to the standards set forth in this sign ordinance.
 - e. Allow certain small, unobtrusive signs incidental to the principal use of a site in all zones when in compliance with the requirements of this sign ordinance.
 - f. Prohibit signs whose location, size, type, illumination or other physical characteristics negatively affect the environment and where the communication can be accomplished by means having a lesser impact on the environment and the public health, safety and welfare.

¹ Entire section replaced 8/4/2014 (Resolution #14-02)

- g. Provide for fair and consistent enforcement of the sign regulations set forth herein under the zoning authority of the Township.

3. Definitions.

The following words and terms, when used in this Sign Ordinance, shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

Changeable copy sign, Non-electronic - A non-electronic sign or portion of a sign which is characterized by interchangeable letters and figures.

Changeable copy sign, Electronic - An electronic sign or portion thereof with characters, letters, or illustrations that can be changed or rearranged without altering the face or the surface of the sign. Such signs include, but are not limited to, signs using cathode-ray tubes (CRT), light-emitting diode (LED) displays (including organic LED screens), plasma displays, liquid-crystal displays (LCD), projection screens or other similar technologies.

4. General Provisions.

- h. Electronic Changeable Copy Signs - Electronic changeable copy signs are not allowed anywhere within the Township.

10. Specific Regulations by Zoning District.

d. Rural Commercial/ Urban Commercial / Light Industrial Zones

i. Signs requiring an administrative permit

1. Wall, projecting or marquee signs between six (6) and sixty-four (64) square feet in size or Wall signs up to ten percent (10%) of a building façade which faces a street. Such signs may be internally or externally illuminated.
2. Up to two (2) permanent freestanding signs per property as follows:
 - a. Sign A: No greater than sixty-four (64) square feet in size and thirty five (35) feet in height.
 - b. Sign B: No greater than sixty-four (64) square feet in size and fifteen (15) feet in height.
3. Permanent off-premise directional signs advertising a business within two (2) miles of the sign not greater than thirty-two (32) square feet in size

ii. Signs requiring a conditional use permit

1. Wall, projecting or marquee signs greater than sixty-four (64) square feet in size or Wall signs up to ten percent (10%) of a building façade which faces a street.
2. Permanent off-premise directional signs advertising a business located within two (2) miles of the sign between

32 and 64 square feet in size (lesser sizes may be required by the Township in areas where normal and customary speeds are deemed to be slower than the posted or statutory speed limit):

3. Up to one (1) pole or monument sign no greater than one hundred (100) square feet in size when located along highways with a posted speed limit of greater than 65 miles per hour.
4. Illuminated freestanding signs
5. Non-Temporary Portable signs
6. Motion signs
7. Inflatable signs
8. Roof signs, Constructed
9. More than two (2) freestanding signs per parcel.
10. Signs with more than two faces

iii. Prohibited signs

1. Signs with a total height greater than thirty-five (35) feet above the grade of the adjoining roadway, unless a wall sign placed on a permitted building.
2. Off-premise highway signs
3. Electronic changeable copy signs
4. Signs identified in Section 6 of this ordinance.

iv. Setbacks and Height

1. Road:
 - a. Signs less than 10 feet in height: 2 feet from a road or railroad right-of-way or twenty (20) feet from the centerline of a traveled surface, whichever is more restrictive.
 - b. Signs from 10 to 20 feet in height: 10 feet from a road or railroad right-of-way or twenty (20) feet from the centerline of a traveled surface, whichever is more restrictive.
 - c. Signs greater than 20 feet in height: 20 feet from a road or railroad right-of-way or twenty (20) feet from the centerline of a traveled surface, whichever is more restrictive.
2. Other property lines: 10 feet or a distance equal to 110% of the height of the sign, whichever is greater.

3. Maximum height

- a. Along roads with a posted speed limit of 40 miles per hour or greater: 35 feet
- b. Along roads with a posted speed limit of less than 40 miles per hour: 20 feet

STAFF REPORT

Issue: Update/Discussion – Douglas County ordinance amendment discussions/hearings

Agenda Item: New Business - 2

Background Information: Douglas County is in the process of reviewing and amending several areas of its ordinances. They are going through them one at a time and holding public hearings on each item before it moves on to the next.

This past week, the Douglas County Board adopted the first set of changes – regarding regulation of detached accessory buildings. A copy of the ordinance, as adopted, is attached.

The Township will need to review each of the ordinance amendments that the County adopts and decide if it wants to adopt the same or different language. The Township must remain at least as restrictive as Douglas County in its ordinances, but can choose to be more restrictive. In this case, most of the changes made by the County are less restrictive than they were before, but several of the changes Staff would consider to be more restrictive.

Planning Commission Direction: The Planning Commission will need to hold public hearing(s) on any ordinance amendments. It may either choose to schedule a public hearing on each item separately as the County adopts changes or it may choose to wait until it can consolidate several changes into one hearing.

Staff's understanding is that the County will be working on their sign ordinance next.

Applicable Ordinances (Current Township Ordinance):

SECTION V. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

J. ACCESSORY BUILDING

To provide a higher development standard and to control the size and number of accessory buildings in a residential setting. This section shall be applicable to all parcels of land within the Urban Residential¹ or shoreland districts that contain five acres or less.

1. General Provisions.²

¹ Amended 7/2/2007 (Resolution #07-09)

² Amended 3/21/2011 (Resolution #11-02), Amended 8/4/2014 (Resolution #14-02)

- a. No detached accessory structure shall be utilized for human habitation unless specifically approved as a guest cottage.
- b. A garage not exceeding 1200 square feet shall be considered an integral part of the principal building if it is attached to the principal building by a common sidewall and shares a common foundation. As such, an attached garage is not included as an accessory building and is exempt from the provisions in this subsection.
- c. The floor area of all accessory structures shall not exceed 1500 square feet total. Semi-enclosed or roofed structures, such as attached lean-tos, gazebos, screen porches/patios or other similar structures shall be considered accessory structures for the purposes of this section.³ Up to 1200 square feet of an attached garage shall not count against the 1500 square foot limit.
- d. No permit shall be issued for the construction of more than two (2) accessory storage buildings, even if the total allowable square footage (1500 square feet) has not previously been exceeded.
- e. The maximum sidewall height of a detached accessory building shall not exceed twelve (12) feet.
- f. The roof pitch of a detached accessory building is not to exceed 6/12. For roof styles other than pitched roofs, the peak of the roof shall not be greater than 20 feet.
- g. Galvanized surfaces shall be prohibited on all accessory buildings.
- h. No detached accessory structure shall be over one story in height. For the purposes of this requirement, any area with a floor truss is defined as a story.
- i. Any area within the rafters of the roof shall not be used for anything other than storage and shall not contain any windows or otherwise be designed as living space.

³ Amended 12/17/2007 (Resolution #07-20)

Proposal to repeal and replace Section V. J and to add definitions to Section VIII of the Douglas County Zoning ordinance as it pertains to accessory buildings.

J. ACCESSORY BUILDING

To provide a higher development standard and to control the size and number of accessory buildings in a residential setting. This section shall be applicable to all parcels of land within Residential or Residential Shoreland Districts that contain five acres or less.

1. General Provisions

- a. No detached accessory building shall be utilized as a residence or for human residential habitation.
- b. Semi-enclosed or roofed structures, such as lean-tos, gazebos, screen porches, or other similar structures, shall be considered accessory buildings or part thereof for the purposes of this section.
- c. A garage not more than 1600 sq ft shall be considered an integral part of a dwelling, and not an accessory building or part thereof, if it is attached to the dwelling or is connected to it by a covered passageway. Up to 300 additional sq ft may be included as part of an attached garage but the sq ft exceeding 1600 shall be subtracted from the allowable amount of accessory building in the table below.
- d. Unpainted galvanized surfaces shall be prohibited on all accessory buildings.
- e. In shoreland areas only:
 - i. No detached accessory building shall be over one story in height. For the purposes of this requirement, at a minimum, any area with a floor truss is defined as a story. No detached accessory building shall have a basement or other sub-grade level in addition to a main floor level.
 - ii. Dormers within the roof of a detached accessory building shall not exceed three (3) feet in width and there shall not be more than three (3) dormers per side of the roof.
 - iii. There shall not be any direct exterior access to or from the attic or other upper level storage area of a detached accessory building.
 - iv. Attic or other storage areas within the rafters of a roof shall be accessed only by attic ladders or pull-down stairways if the storage areas is fully separated from the main level. This requirement shall not apply to lofted or other storage areas that are open to the main level.
- f. In non-shoreland areas:
 - i. A detached accessory building may have a second level provided that such second level is contained completely within the roof rafters.

2. Dimensional Limits

The maximum dimensions of detached accessory buildings shall be no greater than as listed in the following table:

Lot Size:	Maximum footprint (individually or combined):	Maximum sidewall height:	Maximum roof pitch:		Maximum number per parcel:
			Shoreland	Non-Shoreland	
0 – 60,000 sq ft	1,500 sq ft	12 feet*	6/12	No limit**	2
60,001 sq ft – 2.5 acres	2,400 sq ft	14 feet*	6/12	No limit**	3
2.51 – 5 acres	3,200 sq ft	16 feet*	8/12	No limit**	4
Greater than 5 acres	No limit**	No limit**	No limit**	No limit**	No limit**

* For roof styles other than gable roofs, the peak of the roof shall not be greater in height than what would be achieved with the highest allowable roof pitch and sidewall in the table above.

**Subject to other applicable ordinance limitations, such as overall height limits and impervious coverage limits.

New Definitions:

Garage: A building or structure, or part thereof, used or designed to be used for the parking and storage of vehicles and equipment. A space within a building shall be considered part of the dwelling space, and not the attached garage, if it shares a wall with the dwelling, is separated by a full wall from the garage portion, and is not accessible from the outside by an overhead door or other opening 7 feet in width or greater.

Residence/Residential use: Any building or dwelling which includes, or is intended to include, sleeping spaces, cooking areas, eating areas and sanitation facilities so as to allow for human occupation. When used in this ordinance, the word residential shall mean that a dwelling or building is being used as a residence.

Sidewall Height: The vertical distance between the lowest exposed floor and the point where the wall meets the roof truss. Wall dormers, whose facial plane is integral with the facial plane of the wall that it is built into, shall be considered part of the sidewall height if they are greater than 4 feet in width. The lower portion of a “tuck-under” garage shall not be considered part of the sidewall height provided only one wall is more than 25% exposed and the exposed wall is no more than twice the allowable sidewall height.