



**Meeting of the Planning Commission
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Tuesday, April 22, 2025**

Members Present:

Chair Perry Beise, Commissioner Eric Johnson, Commissioner Robert Rydberg, Commissioner Dennis Booth, Commissioner James Zahler, Commissioner Dornan Bland

Members Absent:

Commissioner Anthony Kaba

Staff Present:

Community Development Director Zack Carlton, Senior Planner Chris Leeseberg, and Sr. Administrative Assistant/Recording Secretary Jennifer Green

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting was called to order at 6:50 PM.

2. CONSIDER AGENDA

Moved by Commissioner Booth and seconded by Commissioner Rydberg to approve the agenda. Motion carried 6-0.

3. CONSIDER MINUTES

Moved by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Booth to approve the following consent items as outlined in their respective staff reports. Motion carried 6-0.

3.1 Draft Minutes - March 25, 2025

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

4.1 Interim Use Permit: Residential Occupation, Benjamin Gomez, 14270 201st Ave. NW

Mr. Leeseberg presented the staff report.

Chair Beise opened the public hearing. There being no one present to speak, Chair Beise closed the public hearing.

Moved by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Booth to recommend approval of the Interim Use Permit with the following conditions to satisfy the standards set forth in Section 30-654:

- 1. All openings to the accessory structure shall be closed when the business is in operation.**
- 2. There shall be no outdoor storage of any business products or equipment.**
- 3. The building must meet all commercial building requirements.**

4. There shall be no customers/retail sales on site.

Motion carried 6-0.

4.2 Conditional Use Permit: AEGIR Brewing Company LLC, 19050 Industrial Blvd. NW

Mr. Leeseberg presented the staff report.

Chair Beise asked for clarification about what is considered parking areas. Mr. Leeseberg outlined the business's parking areas with an aerial photograph.

Chair Beise opened the public hearing.

Tim Jones, 13284 Island View Drive NW, Elk River, stated he was one of the owners of AEGIR Brewing Company, and explained when the parking was approved by the City Council in 2024, he thought parking was allowed for day-to-day operations, but the parking was only allowed for special event permits. His request is to reset the parking conditions back to the original CUP. He stated he is open to restricting the number of days they can hold events, and currently only have 4-5 events per year, such as car shows and kids events. He stated they are also open to closing the back half of the taproom if necessary to account for more parking.

Chair Beise asked about proof of parking and if the brewery had plans to add additional parking spaces.

Mr. Jones indicated that if the industry starts doing well again, they would add additional parking spaces. He stated they have a quote for seal coating the parking lot and hopes to be able to afford to complete that this year.

Chair Beise asked if additional parking could be placed closer to the road.

Mr. Leeseberg stated they could expand parking while maintaining a 10' setback from the roadway.

Chair Beise asked if they could limit the number of events to 4 per year.

Mr. Jones stated that would be fine.

Commissioner Johnson asked if all parking spots will be utilized for events.

Mr. Jones stated yes, especially for car shows, where they would like to drink near the cars on display.

Commissioner Bland asked if their events take place during the business hours of the surrounding businesses.

Mr. Jones stated his events take place on weekends, with an occasional Friday night. He doesn't believe any area businesses operate during those times. He stated he hasn't heard of any parking complaints from area businesses.

Commissioner Bland stated his only concern was the parking affecting the area businesses. He stated he has enjoyed seeing the business full of patrons as it is near his house.

Commissioner Booth stated he was in support of amending the CUP.

There being no one else to speak, Chair Beise closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Johnson stated he was comfortable with 12 events per year since that's the city's standard, but limit events to Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

Commissioner Bland would like to see hours restricted on Fridays, suggesting after 5:00 p.m. on Fridays.

Commissioner Rydberg noted AEGIR's business was located at the south end of the industrial park and the only business that may be impacted by traffic would be the one located across the street.

Commissioner Johnson suggested amending Condition 7 to read: "Parking areas shall be used for events 12 times per year based on receiving a special event permit and limited to Fridays after 5:00 p.m., Saturdays, and Sundays."

The commissioners discussed the limitations with including those days of the week in the condition.

Commissioner Rydberg suggested having the special event permit define the days/times of the events.

Mr. Leeseberg stated the Administration department manages the special event permitting process, forwards the permit to various city departments for review, and suggested having the Administration staff define the specifics of the event's days and times rather than a condition of the CUP.

Commissioner Bland asked if this CUP would restrict AEGIR's activities on holidays.

Mr. Leeseberg stated they could apply for a special event permit for an event to take place on a holiday, allowing them to shut down their parking lot for the event, no matter the day of the week.

Moved by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Booth to recommend approval of the amended Conditional Use Permit with the following conditions to satisfy the standards set forth in Section 30-654:

- 1. The Conditional Use Permit shall not be recorded until the city building official and fire marshal have inspected, and approved, the building for compliance with all state and local building codes and all applicable conditions of approval have been completed.**
- 2. The space labeled "Event Space" shall only be used for corn hole/corn bag toss lanes and any other uses shall require a special event permit.**
- 3. All comments on the Comment Letter dated July 20, 2023, shall be addressed.**
- 4. No tap room operations or expanded brewery operations can occur until:**
 - 1. The Conditional Use Permit has been recorded.**
 - 2. The building has received a Certificate of Occupancy.**
- 5. A taproom license shall be obtained from the state and city.**
- 6. No more than 20,000 barrels of its own brands of malt liquor may be brewed annually.**

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7. **Parking areas shall be used for parking only, except for the 12 special events per year.**
 8. **Any outdoor patio area shall be delineated with a permanent fence and shall not be in required parking areas.**
 9. **No demolition or construction activities can occur within or on the exterior of the building until the Conditional Use Permit is approved and a building permit has been applied for and issued.**
 10. **Conditional Use Permit CU 23-17 shall become void.**

Motion Carried 6-0.

4.3 Ordinance: Permit Off-Premise City-Owned Advertising Signs, City of Elk River

Mr. Carlton presented the staff report.

Commissioner Rydberg asked if the city was restricting this ordinance to publicly-owned government buildings.

Mr. Carlton indicated the ordinance was intended specifically for government-operated signs.

Commissioner Dornan asked if it would be a permanent sign.

Mr. Carlton stated yes, a permanent sign.

Commissioner Zahler asked questions about billboard sizes.

Commissioner Dornan asked if the advertising was specific to the events happening at the facility and not general government usage.

Mr. Carlton stated yes, advertising would be specific for events at the facility, and it was not a sign for general government use or a general community sign.

The commission discussed the advertising and the consensus was to make the language specific to the facility.

Chair Beise opened the public hearing. There being no one to speak, Chair Beise closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Rydberg asked who would monitor the advertising language.

Mr. Carlton stated the communications department with staff from the FT Center will determine advertising language.

Moved by Commissioner Eric Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Robert Rydberg to recommend approval of an ordinance allowing off-premise advertising signs for government facilities with the condition that the sign will only be used for advertising and marketing events at the FT Center. Motion carried 6-0.

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

5.1 Review Downtown Small Area Plan

Mr. Carlton presented the staff report. He introduced **Mike Thompson** and **Andrew Dresener** from Bolton & Menk, who provided a presentation of the highlights and key recommendations of the draft downtown small area plan. The plan will come before the Planning Commission next month, for consideration and action, and then for consideration before the City Council.

After the presentation, the Planning Commission provided questions and comments about the plan.

Commissioner Rydberg asked about changing traffic at Jackson and Main Street to have it be right in, right out only. He stated he felt that adding parallel parking cuts down on the number of current parking spaces.

Mr. Thompson stated closing off Jackson Street was considered and felt having as many accesses open to Main Street was important.

Commissioner Johnson asked how many spots a parking ramp would hold.

Mr. Dresener stated the reduction of on-street parking spots was minimal when changing to parallel from diagonal parking. The ramp would more than make up for the difference in the loss of on-street space (less than 20 spaces) and double the amount of parking on the current lot. He asked the commission to consider the parking be more than just looking at a number, but rather creating a different experience of being downtown, by parking and walking to a store.

Commissioner Rydberg felt it would be tough watching people parallel-park.

Mr. Dresener stated he heard a similar comment in the Open House, but he also felt that watching people back out from diagonal parking onto Main Street was also tough.

Commissioner Johnson asked where the farmers market would be located should a ramp be constructed where the current market takes place.

Mr. Carlton stated they had discussed ideas with Karen Wingard, who manages the Farmers Market, and considered numerous opportunities for a different Farmers Market experience. A few suggestions were having the market linear using the wider sidewalks, locating the vendors at the top of the ramp, on the backside of the Jackson Street or Main Street buildings, or shutting down Main and King Avenue/Jackson.

Commissioner Rydberg noted the potential for employee parking to be displaced.

Mr. Carlton stated the committee spent hours discussing parking and while there is a loss in the number of spaces with some of these changes, there would be street improvements with a wider pedestrian area and benches, all of which contribute a more enjoyable public space experience and provide opportunities for people to spend more time downtown. Other ideas include parking limits, but that can create other needs such as enforcement.

Commissioner Johnson stated he liked the overall concept.

Commissioner Booth asked about the city-owned property at King Avenue and what would happen if someone came in with a hotel proposal.

Mr. Carlton stated if someone were to approach the city with a downtown development plan for the parking lot, they would bring the plan to the city council for consideration and incorporate parts of this plan to support it. He stated there was also some feedback at the open house with comments about the area known as Uptown, and creating a smoother transition between single-family homes to taller buildings, and the importance of keeping the green space in the downtown area.

Commissioner Bland asked if there are cosmetics guiding this plan; what it looks like and how that is addressed. He explained he likes the "vibe" of Elk River's downtown. He went on to describe how he feels about the downtown and it being a personal experience for him and his family, with visits to the book store, coffee shop, and attending Halloween and Christmas events. He didn't want to risk not continuing with any of these plan components if there would be a loss of that vibe, turning into a commercial or a low-dollar attraction, but rather have it remain a local, small town feel where you know the name of the small business owners.

Chair Beise asked how architectural requirements are put in place to create an aesthetically pleasing town.

Mr. Carlton stated the architectural requirements for downtown building storefronts are outlined in the ordinance and guides any new construction. He stated an action step could include building design guidelines, but that could restrict some developers.

The Planning Commission continued to discuss the downtown 'vibe' and ensure the importance of continuing it with any new development opportunities.

The Planning Commission then discussed the challenges of getting people across the highway, with the railroad and MnDOT restricting those opportunities, both financially and feasibility with grades and elevations.

The Planning Commission will discuss this item at next month's meeting.

6. COUNCIL LIAISON UPDATES

Councilmember Wagner provided a brief update to the Planning Commission.

7. MOTION TO ADJOURN REGULAR MEETING

Moved by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Rydberg to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried 6-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 P.M.

Minutes prepared by Jennifer Green.



Perry Beise, Chair



Tina Allard, City Clerk