



PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION WORKSESSION MINUTES

Tuesday, September 30, 2025
6:00 PM

Iowa Colony City Council Chambers, 3144 Meridiana Parkway Iowa Colony, Texas 77583
Phone: 281-369-2471 • Fax: 281-369-0005 • www.iowacolonytx.gov

Members present: Les Hosey, Terry Hayes, Brenda Dillon, Demond Woods and Robert Wall

Members absent: David Hurst

Others present: Dinh Ho

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Brenda Dillon called the worksession to order at 6:00 P.M.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Terry Hayes Vice President of the Sterling Lakes POA, addressed the gate on Sterling Lakes Drive at the Eastes. He mentioned that Starwood told Land Tejas that they will finish the road, but they are not obligated to finish the gate because it is not on the plat. The POA will put an emergency gate there and block off the road all together. Dinh Ho; City Engineer stated they received a call from Josh Wadley and Starwood is required to meet the requirements to the Plan of Development. The gate is the responsibility of the developer and the if this is not met the City has options to take in response to this.

He read a letter aloud regarding bringing Amazon Fresh Grocery to Iowa Colony.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discussion on revisions to the Subdivision Monument Sign regulations in the City's Sign Ordinance.

Dinh Ho stated that staff was directed to review several development regulations, including subdivision monument sign requirements within the Sign Ordinance, transparency requirements within the City's Unified Development Code (UDC), and build-to-line standards within the UDC.

He explained that the current subdivision monument sign regulations are limited, creating challenges for master-planned subdivisions. In recent months, the City has received requests for master signage plans, including monument signs and wayfinding signs, for developments such as Creekhaven and Ellwood. As part of the evaluation process, staff reviewed the existing signage limitations and the allowable effective sign area.

Dinh stated that staff compared Iowa Colony's monument sign regulations with those of Pearland, Manvel, and League City, as those communities also contain state highways and major corridors similar to Iowa Colony. He presented information comparing the regulations of those cities to Iowa Colony's standards and reminded the Council and Planning Commission that the planning consultant utilized by Iowa Colony also assisted with the development of Manvel's

regulations. He also displayed the proposed Creekhaven monument sign included within the submitted master signage plan.

Councilmember Varlack asked whether the discussion specifically related to the effective text area of monument signs and sought clarification as to whether the focus was limited to residential monument signage.

Brian Johnson asked whether the proposed changes would apply to both commercial and residential developments.

Mayor Pro Tem Greene-Scott asked whether the City should also review commercial signage standards if commercial developments are experiencing similar challenges under the current regulations.

Terry Hayes stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission has encountered several variance requests because applicants are seeking larger and taller signs than are currently permitted.

City Attorney Natasha Brooks noted that the matter was not an agenda item for action but could be considered for discussion on a future agenda.

Les Hosey asked about the proposed signage for Caldwell and inquired about the allowable sign size.

Dinh stated that staff is recommending revisions to the effective sign area requirements while continuing to allow architectural creativity to enhance subdivision entrances. He explained that signs located along State Highway 288 need to be larger due to higher travel speeds and visibility requirements. Staff recommended allowing up to 150 square feet of effective sign area along the Highway 288 corridor, with a maximum text wall height of 12 feet. Along Highway 6 and other major thoroughfares, staff recommended reducing the maximum effective sign area to 100 square feet.

Brian Johnson asked whether the effective sign area is measured from the ground elevation or from the base of the sign wall.

Les Hosey stated that he would like to see a maximum sign height of 16 feet measured to the top of the wall structure.

Councilmember Varlack requested clarification regarding the proposed wording, asking whether the 12-foot measurement referred to the height of the text wall and whether the top of the lettering would be limited to a maximum height of 16 feet.

Councilmember Brooks also sought clarification, asking whether the natural height measurement would be taken to the top of the lettering and whether that height could not exceed 16 feet.

Additional discussion took place regarding the proposed Creekhaven monument sign and the calculation of the effective text area.

Staff recommended establishing a maximum effective sign area of 100 square feet and a maximum height of 8 feet for monument signs located along Highway 6 and major thoroughfares. Staff then asked for Council feedback on whether to maintain the proposed 8-foot height limitation or increase the maximum height to 12 feet measured from natural grade.

Councilmember Varlack stated that he would support a maximum sign height of 10 feet while maintaining the proposed maximum effective sign area of 100 square feet.

2. Discussion on proposed amendments to the transparency requirements within the City's Unified Development Code (UDC).

Dinh Ho stated that state law does not regulate transparency requirements but does regulate façade standards. He explained that the City's Unified Development Code (UDC) establishes glazing and transparency requirements for nonresidential developments.

Dinh noted that the UDC currently requires 65 percent transparency along storefront façades facing major thoroughfares and visible side streets. He provided examples of recent developments, including CVS and AutoZone, that encountered challenges complying with the current transparency standards.

Councilmember Brooks asked how many building categories exist under the ordinance and requested examples of institutional uses. She stated that she would like a point of reference to better understand what 65 percent transparency looks like in practice.

Dinh responded that staff could compile examples of existing buildings and present them for comparison.

Councilmember Varlack stated that the City should be cautious about assuming a building's use will remain unchanged for 50 years. He noted that a facility serving one purpose today may be repurposed for a different use in the future. He further stated that the rationale behind the 65 percent transparency requirement is public safety and emphasized that the City should not be required to grant variances on a regular basis. Instead, developments should be designed to comply with the adopted standards. He provided an example to illustrate his point.

Les Hosey stated that institutional uses, such as schools and hospitals, are likely to remain consistent over time, whereas other commercial uses, such as restaurants, may change more frequently.

Brenda Dillon stated that maintaining transparency requirements is important for retail businesses.

Albert Cantu noted that the ordinance requires visibility approximately three feet into a building. He explained that the purpose of the transparency requirement is to allow police and fire personnel to see into structures for safety and emergency response purposes.

City Attorney Natasha Brooks stated that the key question is how much transparency is necessary to achieve the intended safety objectives. She also noted the importance of considering economic development and sales tax generation when evaluating the standards.

Dinh stated that the City should also consider how transparency requirements affect businesses such as restaurants and establishments with drive-through facilities.

Councilmember Brooks asked whether the Planning and Zoning Commission has categorized the most common variance requests and suggested that the City consider adjusting the ordinance language based on those findings.

Dinh Ho stated that staff would categorize variance requests by business use and develop recommendations regarding appropriate transparency percentages for each category.

3. Discussion on build-to line requirements in the City's Unified Development Code (UDC).

Dinh Ho stated that the discussion would provide staff with additional flexibility regarding setback lines. He explained that the ordinance applies to non-residential, commercial, institutional, and retail developments and includes specific requirements related to façade placement. Along Meridiana Parkway and all major thoroughfares, buildings are currently

required to maintain a 53-foot build-to line. If pipelines are present, the requirement increases to 71 feet. Several variances have already been submitted for facilities along Meridiana Parkway and Iowa Colony Boulevard. Dinh explained that the purpose of the build-to line is to create a consistent streetscape by aligning the fronts of buildings along the same line of sight. He further explained that while the zoning ordinance establishes a 25-foot setback line, the Unified Development Code (UDC) requires a build-to line along major thoroughfares and collectors. Challenges associated with the current requirement include limited development flexibility regarding building placement, reduced opportunities for landscaping along corridors, and parking areas extending close to the right-of-way.

Brenda Dillon commented on the significant number of pipelines within the city and stated that County Road 48 is expected to become a primarily commercial corridor in the future. She noted that the presence of pipelines severely limits buildable areas and emphasized that setback flexibility would make a substantial difference along CR 48.

Brian Johnson discussed parking placement behind buildings and pedestrian access from the front of developments in relation to site planning. He suggested considering a maximum setback line rather than a strict build-to line. He also discussed the importance of balancing parking, landscaping, and buffering requirements and provided examples related to parking layouts, landscaping, and buffers.

Les Hosey asked whether the city could consider implementing a build-to line of 25 feet with a maximum setback not to exceed 53 feet.

Councilmember Brooks asked about the pros and cons of locating parking areas for large “big box” developments. Dinh provided examples from the City of Pearland. Councilmember Brooks stated that she is still evaluating the city’s long-term vision and aesthetics, particularly in areas such as the lagoon district, and asked for clarification regarding the intended development vision for those areas.

Councilmember Murray commented that, unlike Houston, which does not have zoning regulations, the city’s current approach is beneficial. She thanked Dinh for the work and effort dedicated to the ordinance review.

Dinh asked whether the Commission and Council would support removing the build-to line requirement in exchange for enhanced landscaping standards.

Councilmember Varlack clarified that the discussion pertained specifically to commercial development. He stated that he would not oppose eliminating the build-to line requirement in favor of establishing a minimum setback with a maximum setback tied to a percentage of the property length. He also noted that the city would need to develop a more comprehensive landscaping ordinance. Dinh responded that the minimum setback requirements would continue to reference the zoning ordinance. Councilmember Varlack also provided an example from Irvine, California.

Mayor Pro Tem Greene-Scott asked whether the city would also evaluate residential setbacks and subdivision standards as part of a future discussion.


Dinh discussed the RCP grant with PMI and the ongoing UDC review with Kendig Keast. He stated that these topics would be addressed through those planning efforts. Brenda Dillon added that it is important to recognize the distinction between rural areas of the city and developments such as Sterling Lakes and Meridiana.

ADJOURNMENT


The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 P.M.

APPROVED THIS 2nd DAY OF JUNE 2026.

ATTEST:



Kayleen Rosser, City Secretary



David Hurst, Chair

