

**Commissioner Bjorklund** asked what was meant by an inch.

**Commissioner Birken** explained that she believes the reference is for a miner’s inch, a unit of measure for water volume.

**Commissioner Bjorklund** suggested the reference to 3.V.I be omitted.

**Assistant Public Works Director Miller** stated he would look into this.

**Community Development Director Reilly** reported he would reconcile the numbering within the Ordinance prior to this item going to the City Council.

**Commissioner Jacobson** questioned what the length of time was for the long-term maintenance agreements.

**Assistant Public Works Director Miller** indicated the length of time would be agreed upon for each project through negotiations between the City Engineer, himself and the applicant.

**Chair Collins** opened the public hearing at 6:46 p.m.

**Chair Collins** invited anyone for or against the application to come forward and make comments.

There being no comment Chair Collins closed the public hearing at 6:46 p.m.

**Commissioner Burlingame moved and Commissioner Bjorklund seconded a motion to recommend approval of Planning Case 26-003 for Ordinance Amendments to Chapter 11 of the Arden Hills City Code concerning Subdivisions related to Stormwater Management directing staff to amend the numbering structure. The motion carried unanimously (7-0).**

**B. Planning Case 26-001 – 3535 Pine Tree Drive – Site Plan Review for Sign Standard Adjustment – No Public Hearing Required**

**Senior Planner Fransen** stated in Planning Case 24-009, the Applicant applied for a Master and Final Planned Unit Development to construct a 41,000 square foot headquarters fire station facility which was approved by the city.

**Senior Planner Fransen** explained the proposal included a 30 square foot freestanding monument with 36 square feet of signage and two (2) non illuminated wall signs for a total of 28 square feet to be located on the east and west elevations. At the Planning Commission meeting on July 10, 2024, the Applicant clarified the proposed monument signage and stated their intent to comply with the sign code and that flexibility would not be sought for signage.

**Senior Planner Fransen** commented since those approvals in 2024, and prior to applying for required sign permits, the Applicant determined that a change in the proposed signage is needed. The Applicant is proposing two (2) wall signs, one non illuminated 88 square foot sign reading “Lake Johanna Fire Department” and one internally illuminated 75 square foot sign reading “Station 110,” both on the eastern elevation of the building. In addition to the two wall signs, the Applicant’s plans include an edge lit graphic logo sign measuring 72 square feet that would also

be attached to the eastern elevation of the building. No wall signage is proposed for the west elevation of the building. The Applicant is requesting flexibility to allow the facility wall signage to exceed the permitted 45 square feet by 190 square feet for a combined total of 235 square feet.

**Senior Planner Fransen** added that for monument signage, the Applicant is proposing one (1) sign measuring 6 feet in height and 79 square feet in area with 33.5 square feet in non illuminated sign copy area. The proposed sign would exceed the permitted 37.5 feet by 41.5 feet and the sign copy area would exceed the permitted 25 feet by 8.5 feet.

**Senior Planner Fransen** stated based on the signage described, the previous PUD Amendment approval, and the requirements for the Subject Property's Sign District, staff advised the Applicant to submit a land use application for a sign standard adjustment as described in Chapter 12, Section 1260 of the city's Code of Ordinances. Adjustments to the requirements and standards for the height, number, type, lighting, area and/or location of a sign may be approved with a Site Plan Review or Planned Unit Development process. The sign flexibility that the Applicant is seeking under this proposal for the Subject Property has been initiated through the Site Plan Review process.

**Senior Planner Fransen** reviewed the Site Data, the Plan Evaluation and provided the Findings of Fact for review:

1. The Applicant applied for Site Plan Review to install 163 square feet in wall signage and 72 square feet in graphic signage on the eastern elevation of the building and install a 79 square foot freestanding monument with 33.5 square feet of sign copy at the subject property, 3535 Pine Tree Drive.
2. On December 9, 2024, the City Council approved a Planned Unit Development Agreement for the Subject Property.
3. The Subject Property is located in the B-2 General Business District and is guided as Community Mixed Use on the 2040 Land Use Plan.
4. The Subject Property is located in Sign District 7, where the maximum wall signage permitted is 45 square feet.
5. In Sign District 7, the maximum freestanding signage permitted is 25 square feet.
6. Graphic signs are not permitted in Sign District 7.
7. The Subject Property has no existing signage.
8. Adjustments to the requirements and standards for the height, number, type, lighting, area, and/or location of a sign or signs established by this Chapter may be approved with a Site Plan Review or a Planned Unit Development process as described for in Section 1320 and 1355 of the Zoning Code.
9. Flexibility through the Site Plan Review process has been requested for 163 square feet of wall signage and 72 square feet of graphic signage bringing the total building wall signage to 235 square feet.
10. Flexibility has also been requested for 33.5 square feet of freestanding signage.
11. The proposed signage plan does not conflict with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Code or the Comprehensive Development Plan for the City.
12. The application is not anticipated to create a negative impact on the immediate area or the community as a whole.
13. The proposed plan will not produce any permanent noise, odors, vibration, smoke, dust, air pollution, heat, liquid, or solid waste, and other nuisance characteristics.
14. A public hearing is not required for Site Plan Review.

**Senior Planner Fransen** reviewed the options available to the Planning Commission for Planning Case Planning Case 26-001 for a Sign Standard Adjustment through the Site Plan Review:

1. Recommend Approval with Conditions
  1. The project shall be completed in accordance with the plans submitted. Any significant changes to these plans, as determined by the Community Development Director, shall require review and approval by the Planning Commission and City Council.
  2. A separate sign permit shall be required for each proposed sign.
  3. All signage shall meet all other requirements of Sign District 7.
2. Recommend Approval as Submitted
3. Recommend Denial
4. Table

**Chair Collins** opened the floor to Commissioner comments.

**Commissioner Bjorklund** inquired if staff had any examples where graphics signs have been permitted in this type of zoning district.

**Senior Planner Fransen** explained she did not have an example for this zoning district.

**Commissioner Bjorklund** questioned how the city viewed the sculpture.

**Senior Planner Fransen** indicated the sculpture did not have any words and therefore was not considered a sign.

**Community Development Director Reilly** reported the statue was not a sign, it was a sculpture. He explained art was not considered a sign and was not included in the sign request. He stated the U.S. Constitution only allows the city to regulate time, manner, and place when it comes to signs. He commented further on how the phoenix is considered graphic art.

**Lake Johanna Fire Chief Tim Boehlke** addressed the Planning Commission and explained the statue was not part of the sign request. He indicated the statue was included in the site plans, but he was uncertain the statue would move forward.

**Commissioner Jacobson** inquired if the fire station was located on County Road E, would the building be allowed to have more signs.

**Senior Planner Fransen** explained generally the sign districts that have frontage along Lexington Avenue have the highest allotment and those properties along County Road E would have the second highest allotment. She reported this property was located within Sign District 7, which allowed for less available signage.

**Commissioner Jacobson** asked what the total wall signage was for the fire station.

**Senior Planner Fransen** indicated the sign code allows for a total of 45 square feet of wall signage for the site and the request is for 163 square feet of wall signage.

**Commissioner Jacobson** commented after visiting several other fire stations, she noticed fire stations are open 24/7. She discussed how the signage on fire stations was not for wayfinding purposes because the buildings were always lit up. She questioned if it was necessary to exceed the sign code requirements by three times. She indicated she was not certain she could support having a wall sign this large on the fire station. She noted she was also concerned about the graphic sign.

**Chair Collins** commented on how Flaherty's had a graphic sign (a three-leaf clover), which was located just across the street from the fire station.

**Commissioner Jacobson** questioned if the city would be doing its due diligence by allowing the fire station to have three times the amount of signage that was allowed within City Code. She was of the opinion that fire stations were already recognizable without large amounts of signage. She indicated she was not comfortable with the proposed signage.

**Commissioner Bjorklund** agreed, noting the fire station did not have to market itself to the public. He explained he was also concerned about the graphic sign portion of this request.

**Commissioner Lindau** stated he believed the sign requests were reasonable.

**Commissioner Burlingame** reported all Lake Johanna apparatus, trucks and vehicles already have the phoenix emblem on them. He explained based on staff analysis it appears a sign standard adjustment was being evaluated primarily under Subdivision 3, which allows for consideration of the current land use. In this case, the land use was a public emergency services facility. He stated fire stations function differently than other typical commercial uses. He noted this building would serve as an emergency response facility as well as a civic landmark and community gathering space. He supported the building having a clear, visual identity, including symbolic identification as this could serve a legitimate public purpose particularly for public way finding and mutual aid. He indicated the plan evaluation notes the proposed signage was consistent with the purpose of the B-2 General Business District and would not negatively impact the adjacent properties. He appreciated the attention that was given to the lighting plan and the use of the red spectrum illumination. He recommended if this request were to move forward that the Commission be clear the support comes as a narrow civic exception tied to the public safety and community function of the facility. If framed in this manner, he could support the sign standard adjustment.

**Commissioner Birken** stated she supported the proposed sign design and noted she would be proud to have this fire station in her community. She realized the signage was three times the size that City Code would allow but was of the opinion the signs would look strange if shrunk down by two-thirds. She questioned why graphic signs were not allowed in the business district and she looked forward to the Planning Commission being able to review the sign code.

**Chair Collins** commented he supported the proposed signage and noted this was a unique case because this was a civic facility. He understood this project did not meet current sign standards but noted this was not the first sign standard adjustment that has come before the Planning Commission. He stated these were large signs, but noted this building was set back from the roadway and they were up high, which meant the scale had to be adjusted. He provided further information on how graphics were included in signs throughout the community.

**Commissioner Burlingame** stated if this request were approved, the Commission could consider language noting because this was a public emergency services facility, the use of graphic signage would not set a precedent.

**Senior Planner Fransen** indicated this language could be included as a finding that notes the proposed use was a public use and identifying signage alerts the public this was a public facility.

**Commissioner Erler** requested the applicant speak further to the phoenix symbol and why this was chosen by the Lake Johanna Fire Department.

**Fire Chief Boehlke** explained the phoenix was adopted by the Lake Johanna Fire Department as its lead symbol years ago. He indicated it is used in a lot of different applications, including uniforms and is adopted as a symbol of public fire service. He reported the symbol is unique to this fire department as is the fire station number, which is Station 110. He stated the Station 110 designation is assigned by Ramsey County. He discussed how the fire department markets itself on a daily basis and was constantly working to show the value of the department to the community. He understood the fire department was asking for more signage than was allowed, but he questioned how old the City's sign code standards were. He stated he started out with smaller signs on the building, but it was apparent to him that the scale was off. He encouraged the Commission to consider how the size and scale of buildings was different from when the sign code was first written and therefore the size and scale of signage would have to be adjusted.

**Assistant Chief Matt Sather** provided further information on which signs would be illuminated on the building.

**Commissioner Burlingame** requested the Fire Chief speak to how this facility would serve as a community gathering space after severe storms or emergency situations.

**Fire Chief Boehlke** stated this building would not serve as a storm shelter, but noted tours, community events and open houses would be held at the new fire station. He anticipated the new fire station could serve as an EOC (emergency operations center) should an event occur in the community.

**Commissioner Bjorklund** asked if any social activities for the fire fighters would be held at the fire station.

**Fire Chief Boehlke** explained social activities would not be held at the fire station, but numerous training events would be hosted onsite.

**Commissioner Bjorklund** commented he still believed the proposed signage was leaning towards marketing. He was of the opinion the graphic is too large and should not move forward.

**Commissioner Lindau** indicated he supported the size and scale of the signs and graphics for the fire station. He discussed how the proposed signage tied the Lake Johanna Fire Department brand all together.

**Chair Collins** asked if there were any Commissioners that believed the graphic portion of the sign request should not move forward.

**Commissioner Bjorkland** indicated he could not support the graphic portion of the sign request. He explained the scale of the signs was also a concern for him.

**Commissioner Jacobson** recommended a finding be drafted to state not all businesses within this district can disregard the sign code standards.

**Commissioner Burlingame moved and Commissioner Bjorklund seconded a motion to recommend approval of Planning Case 26-001 for a Sign Standard Adjustment through the Site Plan Review process to install up to 163 square feet in wall signage, 72 square feet in graphic signage, and 33.5 square feet in freestanding signage at 3535 Pine Tree Drive based on the findings of fact and the submitted plans, as amended by the conditions in the February 4, 2026, report to the Planning Commission adding a finding of fact that reads: The Planning Commission finds the requested sign standard adjustment is appropriate due to the public emergency services use of the property and the functional need for clear identification and that approval of this request was based on the specific land use and site context and does not constitute a general precedent for Sign District 7.**

**Commissioner Bjorklund** reiterated that he would be voting against this request because he believed the signage was serving marketing purposes, was not needed at the proposed scale and was too costly for the public.

**The motion carried 6-1 (Commissioner Bjorklund opposed).**

**C. Planning Case 25-016 – 3628 Connelly Avenue – Site Plan Review – *No Public Hearing Required***

**Senior Planner Fransen** stated the Applicant has submitted a land use application for Site Plan Review and Variances at the Subject Property. The Applicant seeks to purchase the property and relocate an existing retail business, Scale Model Supplies, from Saint Paul to Arden Hills. The Subject Property is owned by Waters Edge Enterprises Inc., and the building is occupied by JV Pallets, a company that manufactures and recycles wood pallets. The existing use is an existing nonconforming use that has been in operation as a light industrial/manufacturing and warehousing site since 1959. The B-2 zoning district today does not allow this use as a principal use. The proposed retail use is permitted within the B-2 zoning district.

**Senior Planner Fransen** explained the proposal includes reconfiguring access to the parking lot and restriping parking spaces within the existing parking lot. Three existing parking spaces, partially located within the right-of-way, are proposed to be removed and replaced with landscaped areas. The Applicant proposes to convert an overhead door to a standard retail dual door entryway. Other minor modifications to the exterior of the structure are proposed for safe and convenient access to the structure for customers.

**Senior Planner Fransen** reported the proposal includes a request to allow for fewer on-site parking spaces than required in the Zoning Code. The Applicant states the existing parking lot accommodates up to 24 parking spaces and that this number is sufficient to operate the business. Scale Model Supplies has been in business for more than 43 years. The store specializes in model trains and model kits as well as other hobby-related products. The business owner seeks to downsize from a 20,000 square foot space located in Saint Paul and find a space compatible with growing the online sales side of the business. The Applicant anticipates using approximately 7,500 square feet for retail sales and the remaining 1,800 square feet would be allocated for