

City Business by Michael Leamons

At the February 13th Council Meeting, a Citizen Advisory Board was appointed to review Hico's Zoning Ordinance with an eye to making it a better fit. Since then, the Board has met three times and has made the following recommendations:

1. Garage sales. Reduce the requirements to: no more than 1 sale per quarter; the sale may not extend beyond 3 days; and, signs advertising the sale must be removed by the day after the sale.
2. Itinerant Vendors. Do away with all the zoning related regulations by noting, "Itinerant Vendors shall be allowed per the requirements of the City of Hico Peddlers Ordinance."
3. Carports. The current Ordinance prohibits the placement of carports in the front yard. It is proposed this exception be added: Where it is not possible to build an accessible carport to the side or rear of a residence, a custom-built carport may be located in front provided it doesn't obstruct the view of motorists and is designed to complement the residence, located 5' back from the property lines and approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z).
4. Zones. The current Ordinance has multiple zones. The Board has advised zoning be simplified to consist of the following: single family residential, multi-family residential, commercial, industrial and public facilities with manufactured housing and historical district overlays (with the overlays remaining in their currently locations). The Board has recommended some business activities now classified as "light industrial" be re-classified as "commercial".
5. Miscellaneous. The Board also recommended the removal and/or alteration of several "temporary use" provisions in the Ordinance.

There were significant differences of opinion within the Board concerning the carport exception and the proposal to reclassify some of the "light industrial" activities as "commercial". There were concerns front yard carports would detract from a neighborhood's appearance and some of the "light industrial" activities could prove a nuisance to adjoining residential areas.

On the other hand, a majority of the Board felt because of the way the town had been laid out and because of a citizen's need to protect his/her vehicle, a front yard carport should be permitted. Also, a majority desires the City's Zoning to be as business friendly as possible. There was, however, unanimous agreement many of the "light industrial" and all of the "heavy industrial" activities should be kept away from the City's residential neighborhoods.

An example of the area of disagreement is Hico Handrails. Unfortunately, that business is no longer here, but in the future should a business like that be allowed in a commercial zone where it could potentially abut a residential neighborhood? Regardless of what zoning decisions are made, existing businesses would be grandfathered and would be able to continue with their operations.

The P&Z is scheduled to consider these recommendations at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 28th. After reviewing and weighing-in on the recommendations, the P&Z will then forward the recommendations to the Council for action. Should the Council decide to simplify and re-configure the existing zones, it will probably be easier

to repeal the existing Ordinance and adopt a new one. Even then, a series of public hearings will be required.

The issues being raised by the Citizen Advisory Board are important to Hico's future. Be prepared to take part in the dialog. The Board decided not to meet again until April 11th to get a feel for how the P&Z and Council wish to proceed with its recommendations to date.

May God bless the City of Hico.