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The City of Solon
CITY HALL

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MEMORANDUM
ROBERT S. FANKLAND, AICP
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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DATE: JUNE 5, 2019

TO: EDWARD KRAUS, MAYOR
CITY COUNCIL

RE: PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE "MINOR EXTERIOR ALTERATION"
APPROVAL PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

Please find attached for your review, a proposed amendment to Section 1291.02, Item 1-C-1, of the Zoning Code (review of "Minor Exterior Alterations").

Background information regarding the proposed amendment is provided below, and should City Council ultimately wish to pursue this issue further, the next step would be refer the proposal to the Planning Commission for additional study and final recommendation.

BACKGROUND

The attached amendment is intended to substantially expedite the review process for "minor alterations" in order to optimize business friendly practices and advance sound economic development policies.

As you are probably aware, "minor alterations" consist of incidental changes to existing non-residential buildings and premises. These include such projects as adding or removing doors or windows, changing roofing materials, altering landscape plantings, adding emergency generators and/or other equipment, making minor shifts to parking spaces and drive aisles, etc..

Under the current process, "minor alterations" are exclusively reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission. On average, the Commission considers well in excess of 100 such applications each year, with 99% of these applications being approved due to their simplistic nature. (It has actually been more than a year since additional review of a "minor alteration" has been requested).

While the vast majority of applications are approved in one meeting, it should be noted that businesses can still be delayed by as much as 2 to 3 weeks from commencing even very incidental projects. This is due to minor reviews being tied to the regular Planning Commission meeting cycle.

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CLERK OF COUNCIL
CITY OF SOLON

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSAL

To address this issue, the attached amendment proposes adding the option of receiving approval of “minor alterations” at the administrative level, subject to an initial consultation with the Planning Commission Chairman (and/or their designee). If approved for administrative review, the project would then simply progress through the standard building permitting process, including all required reviews and sign-offs from the Building, Fire, Engineering, Traffic Engineer and Planning Departments, as warranted.

If administrative review is not approved by the Planning Commission Chairman, then the current Planning Commission review process for “minor alterations” would apply..

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed amendment is intended to substantially expedite approval timelines for Solon businesses seeking to perform minor and incidental alterations to their properties. This goal would be accomplished by reducing the scope of a typical “Minor Alteration” review from the Planning Commission level to the Administrative level, subject to all existing guidelines and requirements contained in the City Zoning Code, Codified Ordinances and the State of Ohio Building Code.

The current Planning Commission review process would be retained and utilized on an occasional and case by case basis, as determined by the Planning Commission Chairman and/or the Director of Planning and Community Development.

If adopted, the revised process will significantly reduce burdens on the Planning Commission, City Staff, and most importantly – on Solon Businesses.

CC: PLANNING COMMISSION
LON STOLARSKY, ASSISTANT LAW DIRECTOR
TOM LOBE, LAW DIRECTOR

**PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO
SECTION 1291.02, ITEM 1-C-1,
OF THE ZONING CODE**

“MINOR EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS”

**(Existing wording is designated in “black”. Proposed wording is designated in “red”.
And wording proposed to be eliminated is designated in “red and struck-through”)**

C. EXCEPTIONS TO THE SITE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS – The full Site Plan Review procedures set forth in this section need not apply to the following situations:

1. MINOR ~~EXTERIOR~~ ALTERATIONS - In order to promote more effective economic development and reasonable and proportionate project review ~~times~~ timelines, any incidental changes to office, commercial, and/or industrial zoned buildings or premises may be reviewed and approved ~~by the Planning Commission~~ as a Minor ~~Exterior~~ Alteration. ~~Proposed Minor Exterior Alterations shall be informally presented to the Planning Commission by City staff during a set portion of the regular public agenda specifically designated for such presentations. Approval of a Minor Exterior Alteration shall require the unanimous agreement of all members of a quorum of the Planning Commission and said approval shall require no further legislative review. A denied Minor Exterior Alteration may be submitted to the Planning Commission and City Council for full review under the requirements of the City Zoning Code, at the discretion of the property owner.~~ The determination as to whether a project qualifies ~~for~~ presentation as a Minor ~~Exterior~~ Alteration shall be made by the Director of Planning and Community Development, in accordance the provisions established herein.

~~Administrative approval of a “Minor Alteration” may be granted by the Director of Planning and Community Development, subject to notification and authorization from the Planning Commission Chairperson and/or their designee, and upon receipt of all other department approvals otherwise required for building permit issuance under the Ohio Building Code and the Codified Ordinances of the City of Solon. Refusal of the Planning Commission Chairman and/or their designee to authorize administrative approval of a “Minor Alteration” shall require that the project be submitted to the Planning Commission for informal review at a set portion of a regular public meeting of the Commission. The Planning Commission shall then have authority to approve or deny the minor alteration or to require full review of the project in accordance with Section 1291.02, Item 1, of the Zoning Code.~~

Examples of ~~alterations~~ projects that may be determined to qualify as Minor ~~Exterior~~ Alterations, include the adding, removing, or re-locating of windows, doors, or mechanical equipment; alterations to materials, colors or features ~~impacting having~~ incidental impact on ~~portions of a~~ structures; ~~incidental alterations to parking lots and drive aisles,~~ alterations to landscaping impacting incidental portions of the premises; and any other modification to buildings, structures, or premises that are substantially similar to the forgoing. Any project that requires variances from the Zoning Code or any other Codified Ordinance of the City of Solon shall not qualify as a Minor ~~Exterior~~ Alteration, ~~nor shall any modification to a nonconforming use.~~ All Minor ~~Exterior Modifications~~ Alterations shall require a Certificate of Zoning Compliance and/or Building Permit where otherwise required by the Building Code or Zoning Code of the City of Solon.